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## Major fire at Chandranagar, flames engulf five-storey building housing furniture and electronics showroom

Hyderabad: A major fire broke out at Anu Furniture and Electronics showroom located opposite Chandanagar Police Station on Thursday night, creating panic in the area. Geographic Reference

The blaze erupted at the store housed in a five-storey building, where a large quantity of furniture reportedly caught fire. As per information available, firefighters rushed to the spot with four fire engines and were working to bring the flames under control. Thick smoke and flames were seen billowing from the building as the fire spread through the furniture stocked inside.

## Combined Districts Team to tour Sri Lanka

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has approved the Sri Lanka tour of the Combined Districts Team, providing a valuable opportunity for young cricketers from across Telangana to gain international exposure and experience overseas playing conditions.

The decision was taken following the recommendations of the Single Member Committee headed by Justice Naveen Rao and was subsequently approved by the Apex Council of the association.

## PROPOSED PUBLIC REALM AND AMENITIES



## Musi phase-I will cost Rs 6,500-7,000 cr: CM

Hyderabad:, March 13

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy declared on Friday that the total cost of the 21-km stretch of the first phase of the Musi Rejuvenation Project would be around Rs 6,500 crore to Rs 7,000 crore, including that of the related Gandhi Sarovar Project (Rs 250 crore) and the Mahatma Gandhi statue (Rs 70 crore).

The Chief Minister revealed these details after a presentation on the Musi Rejuvenation Project Phase-I at a programme titled 'Musi Invites' organised by the Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (MRDCL). The Chief Minister targeted leaders of opposition parties, alleging that they were spreading lies on the project cost. "A few people with half knowledge and some others were deliberately trying to spread misinformation that the project cost is in over Rs one lakh crore, but the total project cost for 21 km is Rs 6,500 to Rs 7,000 crore. The Gandhi Sarovar will cost around Rs 200 crore to Rs 250 crore, which is not even 10 per cent of the total cost. They may be thinking they won't get name for what they didn't do."

He further said: "When good works are taken up for the welfare of people, don't create obstacles. Give suggestions. You may have studied in great institutes, but I studied in government schools. The government is not here to dominate people but as a watchdog," Revanth Reddy observed.

The Chief Minister recalled how he had visited several countries to study riverfronts for developing the economic system in the city. "I have understood what is required and what should be the future plan. For two years, I discussed it with consultants, environmental experts and examined minute issues," he said.

The Chief Minister said that Hyderabad has 1.34 crore population and by 2050 the population will be around 2.8 crore. The government was linking the Krishna and Godavari rivers for meeting the drinking water needs

of the people. He appreciated the works of Nizam rulers. "There may be difference of opinion on Nizam, but he has done some remarkable work. When floods came in 1908, he called tenders and appointed Mokshagundam Vishweshwaraya as a consultant and constructed Osmansagar and Himayatsagar, which are still used for quenching the thirst of the people," the Chief Minister commented.

Revanth Reddy attacked the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party and Bharat Rashtira Samithi stating that one party ruled for 12 years at the Centre and another for 10 years in the state. "Why they are not giving suggestions? I am there to take suggestions, but you are simply saying no (to the project). 'No' is not the solution for Musi River. We appointed world's best in financial consultancy paying Rs 160 crore. I suggest the opposition leaders to live at the banks of the Musi River for three months. I will provide fully furnished container houses to them," he said.

The Chief Minister said that the project was not against anyone and offered to ensure proper rehabilitation of the people getting displaced because of the Musi rejuvenation. He said that a project like this will bring over a lakh crore rupee economy. "I know 10,000 families will get affected. I have all the details, 10,500 houses earmarked and I will ensure they are provided all the relief. Houses will be constructed in 150 acres in land available near Amberpet police grounds," said Revanth Reddy.

The Chief Minister said that he would think about the real estate as it would bring investment to the state. "Why I should not think about tourism? A few people think that constructing a farmhouse was enough for them; it is for them to think like that," he added. He further said that Hyderabad was the best place in the world to live. "People from Dubai are now saying Hyderabad is safest place. We organised Miss World when 'operation Sindoor' was going on," Revanth Reddy recounted.

## New Iran top leader hurt, likely disfigured, says US Secy of War

New Delhi, March 13

US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth on Friday claimed that the new Iranian Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, had been injured during the ongoing conflict while President Donald Trump said the Iranian regime and its military had been decimated. In another development, two Indian nationals were killed and 10 others injured in an attack in Oman's Sohar early on Friday.

At press conference in Washington DC, Hegseth said, "We know the new so-called, not-so-supreme leader is wounded and likely disfigured."

The US Secretary of War also threatened to carry out the largest wave of strikes against Iran since the conflict began. "Today will be the highest volume of US strikes on Iran yet," he said, adding that Russia and China were not a "factor" in the Iran war.

Hegseth emphasised that the US was executing a precise plan to defeat, destroy and disable Iran's operational military assets at an unprecedented pace. Earlier in the day, Trump posted on social media platform Truth Social and described how he was enjoying "killing" the Iranian regime. "They've been killing innocent people all over the world for 47 years, and now I, as the 47th President of the US, am killing them. What a great honour it is to do so," Trump said.

"Iran's navy is gone, their air force is no more; missiles, drones and everything else are being decimated, and their leaders have been wiped from the face of the earth," Trump said. The US has unparalleled firepower, unlimited ammunition, and plenty of time.

Meanwhile, a US military plane crashed today. The US Central Command said a KC-135 refuelling aircraft went down in western Iraq. All six crew members on board the aircraft have died. "The loss of the aircraft was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire," the Central Command said. Two aircraft were involved in the incident. The second one landed safely. The planes were part of Operation Epic Fury.

The Indian Air Force had, in October last year, leased the same plane — KC 135 — from a private entity in the US.

Earlier on March 2, three US F-15 fighter jets had been lost to a friendly fire by Kuwaiti air defence. All pilots ejected safely, the US Central Command had said while acknowledging the loss of the three jets.

On the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz, Hegseth



said Iran was "exercising sheer desperation" by blocking a significant portion of the world's oil. "We have been dealing with it and don't need to worry about it," he said.

Meanwhile, Iran said it was flying out its sailors stranded in Kochi while its warship IRIS Lavan, that docked at the southern port city for maintenance, remained there.

Sources confirmed to The Tribune that 183 Iranian sailors were on board warship IRIS Lavan that docked at Kochi on March 4 for maintenance. Almost all of them, expect a few, were flying out.

The same day — March 4 — IRIS Dena was torpedoed by a US submarine 38 km west off the coast of Sri Lanka. The third Iranian ship — IRIS Bushehr — had sought help from Sri Lankans and was given shelter at Trincomalee — a port on the north-eastern side of the island country.

Also, Sri Lanka is repatriating the bodies of the 84 Iranian sailors, who had died on board IRIS Dena.

## Telangana declares Gurranguda area as reserve forest

Hyderabad: After a long legal battle, the Telangana government has declared Gurranguda forest area in the Amangal division in Rangareddy district as a reserve forest, a senior official said on Friday.

The state government has issued a Government Order (GO) notifying 424 acres and 31 guntas of forest land as Reserve Forest under Section 15 of the Telangana Forest Act, 1967.

According to a statement issued by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Dr. C. Suvarna, the government issued G.O. Ms. No. 7 dated March 9, 2026 through the

Environment, Forests, Science and Technology Department.

With this notification, the legal process concerning the land has been completed and the forest area now has official Reserve Forest status, ensuring stronger legal protection.

She stated that 102 acres in Survey No. 201/1 of Saheb Nagar Kalan village, part of this area, had long been under legal dispute. The matter, widely known as the 'Saheb Nagar Kalan case,' was heard in various courts for several years. Ultimately, the Supreme Court upheld the Forest Department's claim, reinforcing the need to protect forest lands from encroachments and unauthorised claims.

## Cooking Oil 'Scam' Exploitation of Common People Using War as an Excuse!

Greater Hyderabad BC Welfare Association Secretary Gurram Raghavender

""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 13 (Indian Chronicle):""Gurram Raghavender, Secretary of the Greater Hyderabad BC Welfare Association, has urged both the Central and State governments to take immediate action to resolve the difficulties arising from the disruption of gas supplies due to the war-like situation in West Asia. He said the impact is directly affecting households and hotels. Speaking to the media on Friday, he stated that the situation in Hyderabad has become alarming. Due to the shortage of cooking gas, several hotels and restaurants in the city have already been forced to shut down. He expressed concern that some traders are taking advantage of the war situation to increase the prices of essential commodities and make profits. He said the burden on common people is increasing, with the prices of everything from cooking oil to petrol rising sharply. In particular, people staying in hostels and working professionals are facing serious problems as hostels are unable to provide food due to the gas shortage. "Raghavender recalled that the Telangana Hotels Association had recently held an emergency meeting and expressed concern that it has become extremely difficult to run hotels under the current circumstances. The fact that restaurants are also on the verge of closing shows how serious the situation has become, he said. He added that due to the shortage of gas, hotels are unable to prepare tiffins and meals, making it difficult for the public to find food outside. He appealed to the governments to make alternative arrangements so



that the common people are not affected. He also suggested that all concerned departments should work together to restore gas supply as soon as possible. As the gas shortage is severely affecting the pockets and stomachs of the common people, he urged the government to take urgent measures on a war footing.

## Tight police security for Class 10 exams

Wanaparthy District SP Sunitha Reddy IPS

""Implementation of BNSS-163 (Section 144) at examination centres""SP orders closure of all Xerox centers""7,212 students appeared for the exams in 37 centers""Wanaparthy District Correspondent (Indian Chronicle)""District SP Sunitha Reddy IPS said that tight police security has been put in place at all the SSC examination centres in the district so that students can write the exams in a peaceful environment without any fear. Wanaparthy, March-13 The police department is taking special measures to ensure that the SSC annual examinations to be held in Wanaparthy district are conducted peacefully and transparently. SP said. Peace at the examination centres""BNSS to protect security 2023 Implementation of Section 163 (Section 144) It was revealed that they are doing it. In Wanaparthy district A total of 7,212 people appeared in 37 examination centers. Students will be writing exams. Exam Within 200 meters around the centers Five or more people Gatherings are prohibited. These restrictions are 14 March 2026 to 16 April 2026 are in effect until. Every exam From 07:00 am today Section until 03:00 pm 163 will be in force. Examination Xerox located in the surrounding areas of the centers Centers must during examinations The SP ordered the closure. To all police station officers in the district Security arrangements at examination centres Orders issued to be reinforced Students have electronic watches. or other electronic equipment testing It is advised not to bring it into the centers. He said that the district police department has made complete security arrangements so that the students can write the exams in a peaceful environment with-



out any worries. The district SP asked the public and parents to cooperate with the police department to maintain the transparency of the exams.

## EDITORIAL

### POLITICAL CRISES

ENGLISH DAILY, HYDERABAD

## On the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025

Good intentions do not necessarily lead to good outcomes, and it is important to recall this lesson of history in the context of the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025. Its pious objectives are more likely to lead to unintended horrors against free speech and individual liberty, and blatant misuses of state power. The intent of the proposed law is to define and penalise hate speech and hate-motivated acts that incite disharmony, hatred or violence against individuals or groups based on various protected characteristics. The corrosion of public spaces in free societies is indeed troubling, and governments, policymakers and the citizenry are justifiably concerned about this. Individuals and communities are targeted for their religion, race, sexual orientation, caste and gender through public platforms, particularly social media. There is a certain impunity from law that purveyors of hatred are guaranteed. They are often rewarded with political power and social influence. Starting with prejudice against fellow humans, hate speech is fuelled by misinformation and fake news oftentimes. Speech, prejudice and hatred create a vicious cycle, sometimes leading to violence against groups and individuals. Karnataka has more than its share of all these, and the State government must have thought that a specific law is the way to tackle this.

Such attempts around the world are creating more problems than they resolve. Restriction of speech on any ground is a bad idea, and when an agent of the state is authorised to determine what is allowed and what is not, it is a slippery slope. A case in point is how law enforcement in several western countries cracks down on peaceful pro-Palestinian speech as anti-Semitic. Most of the attributes that such laws, including the proposed one in Karnataka, are trying to define are indefinable concepts such as harmony, hate, enmity and ill will. All agree in principle that no one should spread hate or prejudice, and they go on to accuse opponents of doing it.

Considering the inescapable subjectivity in this determination, the powerful prevail. The Bill defines hate speech as any expression (spoken, written, visual, electronic) made in public view to deliberately cause injury, disharmony, enmity, hatred, or ill will against a person or group with a prejudicial interest, which is so sweeping and totalitarian that the risk of misuse will be manifold compared to any social good that can be achieved through this. The only reason why speech ought to be controlled in a free society is the imminent threat of violence, and existing laws are more than enough to tackle such situations. The Karnataka government is playing to the gallery. And it is playing with fire.

## Questioning Youth Are the Future of the Nation – Youth Must Prepare for Struggles on Public Issues

### -Leaders Attend Second Day of BPL Tournament

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“Kalluru Dharmendra, State General Secretary of the All India Youth Federation (AIYF), said that questioning youth are the future of the nation and called upon young people to be ready to fight against the problems faced by youth. He attended as the chief guest on the second day of the Bhagat Singh Premier League (BPL) tournament being organized by the AIYF Hyderabad District Committee at the C Grounds of Osmania University from March 12 to 17. On the occasion, he interacted with the players and formally inaugurated the matches by greeting the participating teams. Speaking at the event, Dharmendra said that youth must develop the courage to question issues such as injustice in society, corruption, unemployment, commercialization of education, and the spread of drugs. He said that youth who fail to question will fall into a state of helplessness,



while questioning youth can lead social change. He expressed concern over rising unemployment in the country, increasing burdens on students, and forces that are pushing youth towards drug abuse. He said it is the responsibility of every conscious young person to resist such trends. Dharmendra urged youth to unite and protect democratic values while opposing policies that mislead and exploit young people. He also called upon youth to draw inspiration from the sacrifice and revolutionary spirit of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, and to raise their voice against injustice in society. He emphasized that only through united struggles for education, employment, and social justice can people's rights be secured. AIYF also appealed to youth to stay away from drugs, focus on education, and actively participate in addressing social issues. He said that the power to change the country lies in the hands of the youth and encouraged them to move forward on the path of struggle. AIYF Hyderabad District Secretary Nerlakanti Srikanth, CPI Hyderabad District Committee member Chettukindi Srinivas, District Working President Sheikh Mahmood, District Vice President Kalyan, Mahesh, AISF Hyderabad District President Anil Kumar, Bhanu, and players from 10 teams participated in the event.

## Dream Of Owning A House For The Poor Fulfilled – Constituency In-charge Ajmeera Shyam Naik



“Indian Chronicle”(Jade Srinivas)February, 13.“Komaram Bheem – Asifabad:“Asifabad Constituency In-charge Ajmeera Shyam Naik said that the Telangana Congress government is committed to fulfilling the dream of providing a permanent house for poor families.“On Friday, he attended as the chief guest and inaugurated the newly constructed Indiramma house of beneficiaries Bale Rao Renuka Bai and Bharat at NGO Colony in the district headquarters. On this occasion, former DCC President Kokkiralra Vishwaprasad, Municipal Congress Floor Leader and Councillor Abdullah, Market Committee Chairman Manga, former MPP Baleshwar Goud, and Town Congress President Raffu participated and jointly cut the ribbon and performed the house-warming ceremony along with the beneficiaries.“Speaking on the occasion, Ajmeera Shyam Naik assured that every eligible beneficiary would receive an Indiramma house.He stated that the main objective of the Congress government is to fulfill the dream of home ownership for poor families. He also mentioned that more houses will soon be sanctioned in two to three phases.NSUI district leader Asif,Congress leaders Vairagade Govind,Nikhil,Asif, Safan,party workers, and a large number of local residents participated in the program.

## Fourth Class Employees President Aruna Receives Award

“Jagitial Correspondent, March 13 (Indian Chronicle): “Aruna, president of the Fourth Class Employees' Association, Jagityal district, received the "Women's Day" award. The valedictory function of the International Women's Day celebrations was held at the Jagityal district collectorate complex on Friday. Women from various associations, women employees, and officials participated in the event. District Additional Collector BS Latha and Jagityal MLA Sanjay Kumar were the chief guests.“Aruna was unanimously elected as the president of the Fourth Class Employees' Association, Jagityal district. She has been working tirelessly for the welfare of employees. The Women's Day award was presented to her by Additional Collector Latha and Jagityal Municipal Chairperson Samindla Vani Srinivas. On this occasion, Aruna was felicitated and congratulated by employees and others.



## Disabled Employees' Welfare Leader Visits Ailing Retired Officer at Gandhi Hospital



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“Merugu Shivakrishna, State General Secretary of the Telangana Vikalaangula Sadhana Samithi, visited retired employee Muthyala Anna at Secunderabad Gandhi Hospital and expressed support and solidarity. Muthyala Anna, who retired as a Junior Assistant from the Telangana Disabled Welfare Corporation after 38 years of service, has been undergoing treatment at Gandhi Hospital for the past few days due to health issues. During his service, Muthyala Anna played a key role in helping many persons with disabilities secure employment, obtain loans, and receive assistive devices through various government schemes. Shivakrishna met him at the hospital, enquired about his health condition, and offered encouragement. He also expressed hope that the blessings and support of the disabled community across Telangana would help him recover soon.

## C&D Waste Collection Drive Conducted in Boduppal Circle under Praja Palana – Pragati Pranalika

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“As part of the Telangana government's prestigious "Praja Palana – Pragati Pranalika" 99-day action plan, a special program was conducted in Boduppal Circle under the directions of Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy and the guidance of Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation Commissioner. During the program, a drive was carried out to collect and transport Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste according to a scheduled system. Deputy Commissioner A. Shailaja attended the program along with DEE (SWM) K. Jahnavi Shashank and addressed the media. Speaking on the occasion, she said that construction or demolition waste generated from building activities should not be dumped on roadsides or in open places. Instead, citizens should inform the municipal authorities for proper disposal. She stated that the waste will be collected and



transported by Ramky at a charge of Rs.420 per tonne. Residents and builders were requested to hand over such waste to the Ramky agency to ensure proper disposal. She also appealed to the public to cooperate with municipal staff in maintaining cleanliness and keeping the city free from debris and waste.

## Delay in Wage Payments Sparks Anger Among Rural Employment Workers

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 13,“Workers Demand Continuation of MGNREGA, Oppose Proposed V.B.G. Ramji Bill“Kagaznagar (Kumuram Bheem Asifabad District): A meeting of workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee



Act (MGNREGA) was held on Friday at Koyavagu village in Kagaznagar mandal of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district.“Addressing the gathering, Munjam Anand Kumar, District Convener of the Telangana Agricultural Workers Union, demanded that the rural employment guarantee scheme should be continued without any changes. He strongly opposed the proposed V.B.G. Ramji Bill, stating that it should be withdrawn immediately.“He alleged that the Union government is attempting to weaken the employment guarantee scheme by introducing new provisions. Earlier, the funding pattern for the scheme was 90% by the Centre and 10% by the State, but the proposed changes would alter

it to 60% by the Centre and 40% by the State. In a situation where state revenues are already declining, imposing additional financial burden on states is an unjust decision, he said.“Anand Kumar also expressed concern that workers who have been working since the Sankranti festival have not yet received their pending wages. Due to the delay in payments, many labourers are facing serious financial difficulties.“He further criticized the lack of basic facilities at worksites, stating that essential amenities such as drinking water, shade, first aid and tools are not being provided. He

warned that if the facilities are not arranged immediately, workers may intensify their protest.“The union demanded that the daily wage should be increased from ₹307 to ₹800, and that employment under the scheme should be extended to 200 days per year. They also urged the government to allocate ₹2 lakh crore annually for the employment guarantee programme.“In addition, the union suggested that workers should be provided ORS packets, tools such as spades and baskets, and first-aid medical kits at worksites.“Anand Kumar alleged that the rural employment guarantee scheme, which was introduced with the support of Left parties, is being gradually weakened by the present government.“A large number of MGNREGA workers participated in the programme.

## 20 villagers injured in bee attack..!

sangareddy indian chronical correspondent March 13- In Venkatapuram village of Sadashivpet mandal of Sangareddy district, on Friday, bees on a tree in the village suddenly attacked the villagers due to heavy winds. More than 20 people were injured in this attack. Due to this, the locals went to the Sadashivpet government hospital for treatment. Children were also injured in the bee attack.



## MP Raghunandan Rao & MLA Palvai Harish Babu Meets Nitin Gadkari, Seeks Fast-Track Approval for New Highways

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 13,“Request Made to Centre for Hyderabad–Nagpur Greenfield Expressway Alignment“New Delhi: Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari met M. Raghunandan Rao, Member of Parliament from Medak, and Palvai Harish Babu, MLA from Sirpur, at his official residence in New Delhi on Friday.“During the meeting, the leaders submitted a representation requesting the Union



Minister to finalize the alignment and initiate construction works for the proposed Hyderabad–Nagpur Greenfield Expressway. They also urged the Centre to expedite the construction of the proposed Bellampalli–Gadchiroli Greenfield National Highway.“Responding positively, Gadkari informed them that the process of finalizing the alignment for the Hyderabad–Nagpur Greenfield Expressway is currently underway.“Regarding the Bellampalli–Gadchiroli National Highway project, the Union Minister assured that the issues related to forest clearances would be resolved and the project would be taken forward.

## All Arrangements Completed for SSC Exams in Kagaznagar Mandal“1,596 Students to Appear for Class 10 Exams at Eight Centres

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 13,“Kagaznagar: All arrangements have been completed for the upcoming Class 10 (SSC) annual examinations, which will commence from Saturday, said Vasala Prabhakar, Mandal Education Officer of Kagaznagar.“According to the official, a total of eight examination centres have been set up in the mandal for the current academic year. The examinations will be conducted under the supervision of eight Chief Su-



perintendents, eight Departmental Officers, and 96 invigilators, while 1,596 students are expected to appear for the exams.“He stated that all necessary facilities have been arranged at the examination centres to ensure that students face no inconvenience. Adequate drinking water, electricity, furniture and sanitation facilities have been provided.“Prabhakar advised students to write their examinations calmly without any fear or anxiety.“The examinations will be conducted from March 14, 2026 to April 13, 2026, every day from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.“Students have been instructed to reach their respective examination centres by 8:30 a.m. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to enter the examination hall after 9:35 a.m., even if they are late by five minutes. Students and parents have been requested to take note of these instructions.

## ASHA Workers Demand Rs 18,000 Minimum Wage in Assembly Budget Session

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“Medchal-Malkajgiri District Secretary of the Telangana ASHA Workers Union, M. Revathi Kalyani, urged the government to fix a minimum wage of ₹18,000 for ASHA workers during the ongoing Assembly budget session and to stop harassment in the name of ANC targets. A representation was submitted to Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, requesting him to raise the issue in the Assembly and help resolve the problems faced by ASHA workers. CITU District Assistant Secretary K. Unnikrishna and Telangana ASHA Workers Union District Secretary M. Revathi Kalyani stated that the Congress party had promised during elections to implement a minimum wage of ₹18,000 for ASHA workers and demanded that the government fulfill this promise immediately by announcing it in the current budget session. They also demanded that adequate funds be allocated to the National Health Mission (NHM), which provides healthcare services to the poor, and that the pending honorariums for January and February be released without delay. They informed the MLA that around 28,000 ASHA workers in Telangana have been providing healthcare services to poor communities for nearly two decades. Most of them are women belonging to economically and socially weaker sections. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ASHA workers risked their lives to provide medical services to the public, they said. Recognizing their service, the World Health Organization (WHO) honored community health workers globally for their contribution. Despite their crucial role in delivering health services, ASHA workers continue to face several difficulties due to the absence of proper legal and welfare benefits. They expressed concern that, unlike neighboring Andhra Pradesh where fixed wages are provided, Telangana has not yet implemented a similar system. They also pointed out that nearly two years have passed since the Congress party came to power, but the promise made in its election manifesto to implement a minimum wage of ₹18,000 for ASHA workers has not yet been fulfilled. They further stated that assurances such as ₹50 lakh insurance coverage, death benefits, retirement benefits and other welfare measures remain unimplemented, causing concern among ASHA workers.



## Former Mayor Amar Singh Resolves Channareddy Enclave Road Issue Within Three Days

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“Residents and managing committee members of the Harihara Group gated communities—Anandamayi, Soukhya, and Viradhya—along with Channareddy Enclave Phase-1 and Phase-2 recently brought to the attention of former mayor Amar Singh the severe difficulties faced by local residents and commuters due to the badly damaged road at Channareddy Enclave. Due to traffic diversion in the area, vehicular movement on this road had increased significantly, leading to the formation of large potholes and damaged stretches that created dangerous conditions for motorists and pedestrians. Responding immediately to the issue, Amar Singh spoke with the concerned officials and builder Yadav Reddy and urged that urgent repairs be carried out. Acting swiftly on the request, builder Yadav Reddy arranged for resurfacing work and completed the repairs by laying a new layer on the Channareddy Enclave road. Local residents described the completion of the work within just three days as a remarkable and rare instance of quick implementation, noting that such civic works usually take much longer to complete. Following the completion of the repair work, the road was formally inaugurated with a traditional coconut-breaking ceremony. Congress senior leaders Pappula Anji Reddy and Jalender attended the event and expressed their support. Managing committee members Saidulu Goud, Sanjeev, Nagaraju, Praveen Reddy, Satish, Prem Kumar, Muralidhar Reddy, Nagaraju and Bhupesh were also present. Speaking on



the occasion, Amar Singh said that every issue faced by the public is important and that responding quickly to people's concerns is his responsibility. He said he was pleased that the Channareddy Enclave road problem was addressed promptly and added that he would continue to work proactively to resolve public issues in the future.

## MP Arvind urges Minister Komati Reddy to take advance measures for Godavari Pushkaralu arrangements

“Jagityal Staff Reporter, March 13 (Indian Chronicle) :“MP Arvind Dharmapuri has requested the state government to make comprehensive arrangements at the ghats along the Godavari river in the Nizamabad parliamentary constituency, keeping in view the upcoming Godavari Pushkaralu-2027. He met Minister Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy and made the request.“MP Arvind stated that millions of devotees are expected to visit the ghats along the Godavari river in Nizamabad and Jagityal districts. He emphasized the need for special infrastructure arrangements at major ghats like Kandakurti, Pochampad, Tadapakal, and Valgonda, which are expected to witness huge crowds.“The MP requested the government to take advance measures on aspects such as ghat development, road expansion, traffic management, drinking water, toilets, sanitation, police security, CCTV cameras, medical camps, ambulances, fire services, electricity supply, high mast lights, special RTC buses, and parking arrangements.“He urged the state government to sanction the required funds and complete the works in mission mode to ensure that the millions of devotees visiting during Pushkaralu face no inconvenience.



## Malkajgiri MP Writes to Union Railway Minister Seeking Development of Bollaram Railway Station

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etela Rajender has written to Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw requesting the development of Bollaram Railway Station located in the Malkajgiri parliamentary constituency. In the letter, he stated that Bollaram Railway Station serves as an important transit point for thousands of daily passengers, including employees, students and industrial workers. He noted that the station plays a crucial role in connecting the northern parts of Hyderabad with other areas of the city. However, with the increasing number of passengers, the existing facilities such as platforms, waiting halls, ticketing counters and other passenger amenities are inadequate. He emphasized that modernization of the station is necessary to ensure passenger safety and convenience. In this context, he urged the Union government to include Bollaram Railway Station under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme for comprehensive development. He said that inclusion in the scheme would help provide modern facilities and improved infrastructure, making travel more convenient for passengers. He further stated that the development of the station would not only benefit local residents but also strengthen the railway network in the Hyderabad region. He requested the Railway Ministry to take necessary steps for the early development and modernization of Bollaram Railway Station.



## Mitra Eye Medical Camp organized successfully in Ammayapalli village

“Village Sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud“Wanaparthy District Correspondent ( Indian Chronicle)“A free eye medical camp was organized in Ammayipalli village under Chinnambavi mandal under the auspices of Mitra Kanti Hospital of Wanaparthy district. The chief guest of the program was Village Sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud, Village Congress Party President Mohan Reddy, Senior Congress Party Leader Ananth Naresh Goud, and Ward Members Allenna Goud, Pavani Kavinder Goud, Venketesh Goud, Kuruva Buddhaiah, Moulali and the village people, along with the hospital management, inaugurated the free eye medical camp by Mitra Kanti Hospital near the Gram Panchayat (Rachhakatta) at 9 am. Village Sarpanch Kavitha Prabhanjanam Goud said On this occasion, he informed that all the people of AmmayPalli village should take advantage of this free eye medical camp and get their eyesight and vision checked for preventive purposes. The Mitra Eye Hospital team distributed medicines free of cost. All the people of the village took advantage of this opportunity. On behalf of the people of the village, the village sarpanch Madhagouni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud expressed special thanks to the hospital management for organizing many programs in a way that the people of Ammay Palli village can take advantage of.



## Mallanna Kalyanotsavam Held as Part of Mallareddy's Golden Wedding Anniversary Celebrations



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 13, (Indian chronicle):“A Mallikarjuna Swamy (Mallanna) Kalyanotsavam was organized at the Boipally Camp Office as part of the 50th wedding anniversary (Golden Jubilee) celebrations of former minister and Medchal MLA Chamakura Mallareddy. The religious ceremony was conducted in a devotional atmosphere with special prayers and rituals performed for the well-being and prosperity of the family and devotees. Followers, party leaders and supporters attended the event and participated in the celebrations.

## Ramzan Tohfa Distributed by Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 13 (Indian Chronicle):“Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy distributed Ramzan Tohfa at Aksha Masjid in Seven Hills Colony under the Uppal Division. Parameshwar Reddy attended the Ramzan Tohfa distribution programme held on Friday as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that the Congress government is supporting minorities in every possible way. He recalled that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, minorities have been given important positions in the government and are being provided with opportunities and responsibilities. He further alleged that the previous government neglected minorities, while after the Congress came to power, greater importance is being given to minority welfare. Several leaders and community members participated in the programme, including Committee President Afzal, Abdul Sattar, Khader Basha, Basha, Khader Vali, Saleem, Khaiil, Sunku Shekhar Reddy, Krishnaiah, Srinivas, Bhaskar Reddy, Manda Murali Krishna Reddy, Amar, Satyam, Prem Goud, Pranay Yadav, Tummala Devender Reddy and others.



Sangareddy, Indian chronicle correspondent March 13: “State Chief Electoral Officer Sudarshan Reddy has instructed the officials to complete the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process undertaken as part of the revision of the voters' list expeditiously. On Friday, he held a review of the progress of the SIR with the collectors and election officers of all districts through video conference with the state election officials from Hyderabad.“Speaking on the occasion, he said that the mapping process should be carried out comprehensively so that no mistakes are made in the special revision of the voters' list. Supervisors and AEROs should be constantly visited at the field level and the process should be monitored. He said that the list should be carefully examined so that the vote is not registered in the name of the same person at two places. He said that booth level agents should be appointed by political parties and ID cards should be mandatory for BLOs. He ordered that the details of deceased voters, pending applications and demographic similar entries should be completed expeditiously.“District Collector P. Praveenya, who participated in the meeting from the Sangareddy Collectorate video conference hall, said... The SIR process in the district will be completed effectively without any errors.“Later, speaking to the district officials, he said that good progress is being made in the revision process and advised the officials to achieve the set targets with the same enthusiasm. He instructed the tehsildars to resolve the pending DSE issues quickly. He said that supervisors and BLOs should work in coordination to speed up the mapping process in the district and mandal level officials should continuously monitor it.“Additional Collector Pandu, RDO Rajender, ERO Patan Cheruvu Ambadas Rajeshwar, H Section Superintendent Vijayalakshmi, Election Department officials and others participated in this meeting.“[5:02 PM, 3/13/2026] +91 76618 98185: End

## C. Kurumaiah takes Charge as new SI of Pangal Pangal new SI meets the District SP as a courtesy

Wanaparthy District Correspondent (Indian Chronicle) Wanaparthy District SP Sunitha Reddy has given clear directions to the new IPS officer to perform his duties with the highest priority given to discipline, public safety and legal commitments in the police department. C. Kurumaiah, who took Charge as the new IPS officer of Pangal, met District SP Sunitha Reddy IPS at the Wanaparthy District Police Office on Friday and presented a bouquet of flowers. Speaking on the occasion, the District SP said that police officers should always be available and serve the people by performing their duties with ethics, honesty and commitment. PeopleHe advised the SI to perform his duties responsibly and further strengthen the trust placed in the police. The new SI C. Kurumaiah, who previously served as the Mahabubnagar CCS SI, has come to Panugal Police Station on transfer. Srinivasulu, who had been working as the Pangal SI till now, has gone to the Wanaparthy District Police Office on transfer. Speaking on the occasion of assuming the new responsibility, SI Kurumaiah said that the cooperation of the people is very crucial for maintaining peace and security in the Pangal area. He said that he will move forward together with the people in upholding the law and provide effective police services.



## Grand Celebrations of Munnuru Kapu International Women's Day in Habsiguda Division

Program held under the leadership of Munnuru Kapu State President Bandi Padma  
Munnuru Kapu women enliven the event with songs and cultural activities

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 13 (Indian Chronicle): International Women's Day celebrations of the Munnuru Kapu community were held in a grand manner in Habsiguda Division. The program was conducted under the leadership of Munnuru Kapu State President Bandi Padma. State Vice President Umarani, along with Akula Sandhya Rani, Kasana Tulasi, Katam Padma, Sujatha Naidu, Shailaja, Sangeetha, and SriLakshmi, and a large number of Munnuru Kapu women participated in the event. Speaking on the occasion, State President Bandi Padma addressed the women and said that women should excel in all fields and must make the necessary efforts to achieve success. She also urged that, in the upcoming GHMC elections, tickets reserved for women under the reservation quota should be given to deserving women candidates. She expressed concern that women are often treated merely as a vote bank and are not adequately supported to grow politically and socially. She stated that although there is a 33% reservation, many times the seats are filled by bringing in wives of male



leaders rather than giving opportunities to women who have worked hard. She emphasized that India can truly stand strong only when women take the lead in all sectors. She also expressed her strong belief in the capability of women and affirmed that she would always play a leading role in supporting and encouraging them. The celebration became lively as Munnuru Kapu women entertained everyone with songs, games, and cultural performances, creating a festive atmosphere.

## PAC Chairman Gandhi Thanked by Police Battalion Commandant Ramakrishna



Indian Chronicle: Ramakrishna, Commandant of the 8th Police Battalion—along with AC Rambabu, Satyanarayana, and SI Mahender Reddy—paid a visit to the residence of Serilingampally MLA and PAC Chairman Arikepudi Gandhi to express their special gratitude. They thanked him for facilitating the construction of CC roads and undertaking various other development works within the jurisdiction of the Police Battalion. Speaking on this occasion, senior Congress party leader Sheikh Chand Pasha stated that they would continue to work diligently, under the initiative of MLA Arikepudi Gandhi, to ensure the further development of the Police Battalion area.

## Development and Welfare Programs Being Implemented Across the State: Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy



Eligible Poor to Receive Indiramma Houses Within the Next 3 Years 99-Day Program Launched to Resolve Ground-Level Issues Minister Ponguleti and District Collector Participate in Praja Palana-Pragathi Pranalika Program at Dammaigudem, Thirumalayapalem Mandal Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 13, (Indian Chronicle): State Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy stated that the government is implementing welfare schemes while ensuring development in every region of the state. On Friday, Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy participated in the Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika program held at Dammaigudem village in Thirumalayapalem mandal, along with District Collector Anudeep Durishetty. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that it has been 2 years and 3 months since the people's government came to power and that under the leadership of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, several welfare schemes for the poor are being implemented along with ongoing development works. He stated that priority has been given to infrastructure development, including roads, drainage systems, and other basic facilities in both villages and towns. To address issues at the grassroots level, the government has initiated a 99-day special program. He assured that the electricity problem in Dammaigudem village will be resolved by Saturday. The minister further said that the government

is committed to fulfilling every promise made to the people during the elections. He noted that several promises have already been implemented, including the issuance of new ration cards, construction of 4.5 lakh Indiramma houses, and the supply of fine rice through the ration system. He announced that another phase of Indiramma houses will be sanctioned in April, and the government has taken responsibility to provide Indiramma houses to all eligible poor families within the next three years. As part of the 99-day program, he emphasized that Dammaigudem village should be developed as a model village. District Collector Anudeep Durishetty stated that public representatives have been trained on various activities to be implemented during the 99-day Praja Palana-Pragathi Pranalika program. Initially, the focus has been placed on improving sanitation and clearing pending files in the villages. The collector advised that funds released to the Gram Panchayat should be effectively utilized to resolve local issues during the program. As part of the sanitation drive, he directed that not only roads but also Anganwadi centers and surroundings of government offices should be cleaned. The program was attended by Panchayat Raj SE Venkat Reddy, Special Officer of Paleru Constituency Ramesh, Khammam RDO Srinivas, Tahsildar Wilson, MPDO Silaru Sahebu, the village Sarpanch, officials, public representatives, and others. Issued by the District Public Relations Officer's Office, Khammam.

## Protest Demanding Reduction in Increased Gas Prices Demonstration with Firewood Stove and Empty LPG Cylinder by AIDWA Uppal Committee

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 13 (Indian Chronicle): Under the leadership of the AIDWA (All India Democratic Women's Association) Uppal Circle Committee, a protest was organized at Vivek Nagar Crossroads in Ramanthapur Division demanding a rollback of the increased LPG gas prices. As part of the protest, activists demonstrated with a firewood stove and an empty gas cylinder to highlight the burden of rising cooking gas costs on common households. Speaking on the occasion, AIDWA District General Secretary M. Vinoda and AIDWA Uppal Circle President R. Urmila demanded that the Central Government immediately reduce the gas prices and withdraw the recent hike. They said that instead of empowering women, the increase in LPG prices is pushing many families, especially women, into further hardship. They criticized the government for claiming to promote women's empowerment while simultaneously implementing policies that increase financial pressure on households. They emphasized that true empowerment for women can only be achieved when they progress socially, economically, and politically. The leaders also stated that global peace is essential to prevent the rise in fuel prices such as petrol, diesel, and LPG, and called upon world nations to avoid wars and maintain peaceful relations. They demanded that the government ensure stability and immediately roll back the increased gas prices. AIDWA leaders K. Lakshmi Bai, P. Lakshmi, P.



Meghamala, M. Ailamma, K. Sattamma, Anjamma, Sattamma, Navya and others participated in the protest.

## Fraud can be prevented only through awareness. Wanaparthy DCSO Kashi Viswanth

Wanaparthy Correspondent (Indian Chronicle) Under the auspices of Wanaparthy District Consumer Welfare Society On the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day, a consumer awareness seminar was organized at KGBV Wanaparthy Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya under the auspices of the Wanaparthy District Consumer Welfare Society on Friday under the chairmanship of DSO Kashi Viswanadham. Addressing the awareness seminar, DAC Vishwanadh advised students to be careful about frauds and to check the manufacturing expiry date when buying an item. Students were advised to inculcate the spirit of questioning right from their student stage. Similarly, notebooks were distributed to the students of DSO Kashi Viswanadham. Wanaparthy District Consumer President Bankala Ravinder said Consumers are not getting the right value for every rupee they pay, they are buying goods with money, they are paying various taxes, but they are not getting proper government services, there are many types of adulteration in food items, starting from milk, oil, ghee to luxury items, especially in bandi coats, starting from mirai shops, hotels, restaurants, dhabas, they are using inferior oil, chemicals, dyes, in violation of regulations, they are using meat, fish, chicken stored in refrigerators, the sellers of vegetables, meat, mats, fruits in the market are cheating in weighing, and when they go to hospitals, they are writing unnecessary tests, causing financial loss to



the consumers, moreover, despite the government's orders to prescribe generic medicines and recently the Supreme Court has also ordered to prescribe generic medicines, some doctors are writing branded medicines due to the anger of the commissions. KGBV Principal Lohitha, Sunitha Manimala, Zarina Begum Padmavati, and Mahendra teachers participated in this program.

## MMC Commissioner Vinay Krishna Reddy Conducts Extensive Field Visit Under 99 Days Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 13 (Indian Chronicle): As part of the prestigious 99 Days Praja Palana - Pragathi Pranalika being implemented by the state government, Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC) Commissioner T. Vinay Krishna Reddy conducted an extensive field visit in Uppal Bagayat, Ramanthapur, Anand Nagar, Netaji Nagar, and the surroundings of Ramanthapur Lake. During the visit, he reviewed sanitation conditions, management of construction and demolition (C&D) waste, and the implementation of women empowerment programs. Special Inspection on Construction Waste in Uppal Bagayat In Uppal Bagayat, the Commissioner personally inspected the issue of illegal dumping of construction and demolition waste. He held a review meeting with the Assistant Engineer and Deputy Engineer to assess the situation. The Commissioner observed that waste generated from house and apartment construction activities was being dumped on vacant plots and roadsides, causing inconvenience to local residents. Commissioner's Directions The Commissioner issued the following instructions to officials: Identify those responsible for illegally dumping construction waste. Take immediate steps to remove the dumped waste. Ensure that SAT autos collect and transport the waste properly as per municipal regulations. Create awareness among builders, house owners, and local residents about proper management of C&D waste. Maintain strict monitoring to prevent such illegal activities in the future. Review of Sanitation in Ramanthapur - Anand Nagar The Commissioner also visited Anand Nagar in Ramanthapur, where he interacted with SAT auto sanitation staff. He directed officials to: Ensure daily door-to-door garbage collection from every household without exception. Encourage residents to hand over waste regularly. Maintain coordination among sanitation workers to keep the area clean and hygienic. Cleanliness Measures Near Netaji Nagar - Ramanthapur Lake The Commissioner inspected the surroundings of Ramanthapur Lake near Netaji Nagar. He observed that accumulation of garbage in the area was leading to environmental pollution and increasing mosquito breeding. Residents and representatives of the local colony association met the Commissioner and explained their problems. In response, he instructed officials to: Conduct a large-scale cleanliness drive with the support of colony residents and municipal sanitation teams. Completely remove the accumulated garbage. Take necessary measures to control mosquito breeding. Ensure permanent cleanliness and proper maintenance around the lake area.



ulated garbage. Take necessary measures to control mosquito breeding. Ensure permanent cleanliness and proper maintenance around the lake area.

## US "pretty close" to trade deal with India, Trump says tariffs will come down



New York/Washington: The US is "pretty close" to reaching a "fair trade deal" with India, President Donald Trump has said, adding that he will lower the tariffs imposed on New Delhi "at some point." "We're making a deal with India, much different deal than we had in the past. So right now, they don't love me, but they'll love us again," Trump said on Monday. He made the remarks during a ceremony in the Oval Office, where Sergio Gor was sworn in as America's Ambassador to India by US Vice President JD Vance. "We're getting a fair deal, just a fair trade deal. We had pretty unfair trade deals. They're very good negotiators, Sergio, so you have to take a look at that, if you would please," Trump said.

"But we're getting close. Scott, I think we're pretty close to doing a deal that's good for everybody," Trump said to

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who was present in the Oval Office for the swearing-in ceremony. "That's right," Bessent responded to Trump. "In the old days, do you think (former US President Joe) Biden would ask that question? I don't think so. 'How are we doing with India?' He didn't know about India. He didn't know a damn thing. That's okay," Trump said. Trump was asked about the trade deal with India and whether he is willing to consider lowering the current tariff rate imposed on Delhi. "Well, right now the tariffs are very high on India because of the Russian oil, and they've stopped doing the Russian oil. It's been reduced very substantially. Yeah, we're going to be bringing the tariffs down," Trump said. "At some point, no, at some point, we're going to be bringing them down. Without tariffs, this country would be in such trouble as they were for many years." Relations between New Delhi and Washington have been reeling under severe stress after Trump imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including 25 per cent for New Delhi's procurement of Russian oil. India had described the US action as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable" while maintaining that its energy policy is guided by its own national interest. Five rounds of talks have been completed so far for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement between the US and India. Last month, an official had said in New Delhi that the two countries are "very near" to concluding the proposed bilateral trade agreement, as both sides are converging on most of the issues. The official had said that the two countries are sorting out the language of the agreement.

## US Senate passes bill to reopen government, awaits House approval

Washington: The US Senate approved a sweeping funding measure aimed at ending the 41-day government shutdown that has severely impacted federal agencies and disrupted millions of lives nationwide. The bill now heads to the House of Representatives for approval before going to President Donald Trump for his signature. The legislation extends government funding through January 2026 and provides full-year budgets for several key agencies. It also restores pay and employment for thousands of federal workers who were furloughed during the shutdown.

Senate leaders reached the final agreement after days of negotiations, following a Sunday vote in which eight Democrats crossed party lines to help advance the bill. On Monday, too, the Senate voted 60-40 to reopen the federal government. As part of the compromise, Republicans agreed to hold a separate vote by mid-December on extending health care tax benefits, a key demand from Democrats. The concession angered some in the Democratic base, who wanted the issue addressed directly in the bill. "The American people have now awoken to Trump's health care crisis," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Monday before voting against the legislation. "Democrats demanded that we find a way



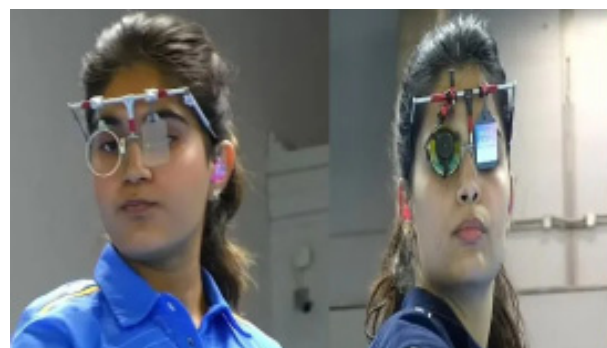
to fix this crisis and quickly, but Republicans have refused to move an inch. So, I cannot support the Republican bill that's on the floor because it fails to do anything of substance to fix America's healthcare crisis," he added. House Speaker Mike Johnson has called lawmakers back to Washington, signalling a possible vote later this week. Senate Republican leaders said they expect Trump to sign the legislation promptly once it reaches his desk, formally ending the shutdown. The ongoing government shutdown, the longest in US history, has disrupted federal services, delayed payments, disrupted air travel, and strained the broader economy.

## India's Bhaker, Singh miss podium in women's 10m air pistol final at ISSF World Championships in Cairo

Cairo: Double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker and multiple Asian Games medallist Esha Singh suffered a setback in the women's 10m air pistol final, as India's top two shooters failed to win a medal in the ISSF World Championships here on Monday. Manu, who won individual and mixed team bronze in 10m air pistol at the Paris Olympics, was leading during the final before a poor 8.8 on her 14th shot saw her drop from the top spot to seventh. She finished with a score of 139.5. Esha, who recently won World Cup gold in Ningbo, China, also failed to convert her promising start into a medal. Inconsistent shots and nerves got the better of her. After a superb 10.7, the 20-year-old faltered with an 8.4 on her 14th shot, finishing sixth in the eight-shooter final.

China's 20-year-old Yao Qianxun claimed the biggest medal of her young career with an excellent score of 243.0. Hong Kong-China's Ho Ching Shing (241.2) and Wei Qian (China, 221.4) took the silver and bronze medals, respectively. India earned some consolation with a team silver. Esha (583), Manu (580), and Suruchi Inder Singh (577) aggregated 1740 points to finish second.

Both Esha and Manu entered the final after strong performances in the qualification rounds. Esha, who became the youngest-ever national champion in air pistol at the age of 13 and represented India in the women's 25m pistol at the Paris Olympics, shot superbly to finish in fourth place in the qualification round with a score of 583.



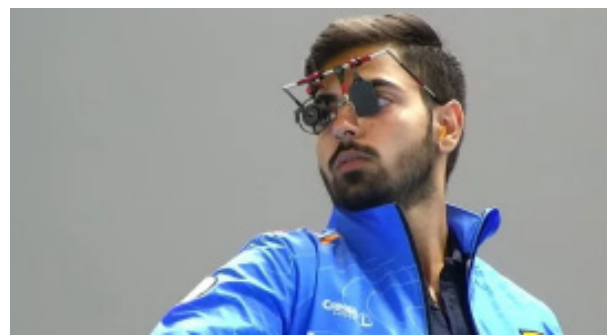
She even recorded a rare perfect-100 in the third series to enter the final with confidence. Manu shot 580 in qualification, securing sixth place and making it to the eight-shooter final. She briefly took the lead with a superb 10.7 on the 13th shot, but the next shot, an 8.8, resulted in her elimination. The third Indian shooter, 19-year-old Suruchi, who has won four World Cup gold medals this year to rise to No. 1, shot satisfactorily to score 577. However, in such a high-class field, it was only good enough to place her 14th among 99 shooters. India currently stands fifth on the medals table with one gold, three silver, and two bronze. China leads the table with six gold, three silver, and two bronze medals.

## Samrat Rana makes history with gold in men's 10m air pistol at ISSF World Championships

Cairo: Samrat Rana etched his name into the history books by winning the men's 10m air pistol gold medal at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Championship Rifle/Pistol in Cairo on Monday, becoming the first Indian ever to clinch the individual air pistol world title. Rana, competing in his first senior World Championships, held his nerve in a tense final to deliver a stunning performance, finishing with a score of 243.7, just 0.4 points ahead of China's Hu Kai. His compatriot Varun Tomar completed a double podium for India, taking home the bronze medal with a score of 221.7.

"I still can't believe it. It was my first senior World Championships and winning gold is unbelievable," Rana was quoted as saying by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) on Monday. "I was just focusing on my technique, not looking at the screen and trying to repeat the process." Rana became only the fifth Indian shooter to win a world title in an Olympic event, joining the elite list of Abhinav Bindra, Rudranksh Patil, Tejaswini Sawant, and the mixed team pair of Shiva Narwal and Esha Singh.

The 22-year-old started strongly in the final, holding a 0.3-point lead after the first two-shot elimination round. However, midway through the final, he slipped to third place with 181.2, trailing Tomar by just 0.2 points. Showing remarkable composure, Rana stormed back in the next six shots — producing two perfect 10.9s — to seize control of the



contest. With the title on the line, he needed at least a 10.3 on his final shot to edge out Hu Kai — and he delivered a 10.6 to secure the gold. Earlier in the day, both Rana and Tomar dominated the qualification round, each shooting 586, with Rana finishing on top. Along with Shrayan Kumar (582), who narrowly missed the individual final, the trio also combined to clinch India's men's 10m air pistol team gold medal. However, the day wasn't all smooth sailing for India. Paris 2024 Olympic medallists Manu Bhaker and Swapnil Kusale endured tough outings. Bhaker, competing in the women's 10m air pistol final, was leading midway before an 8.8 on her 14th shot dragged her down to seventh place.

## Critics call proposed changes to landmark EU privacy law 'death by a thousand cuts'



Privacy activists say proposed changes to Europe's landmark privacy law, including making it easier for Big Tech to harvest Europeans' personal data for AI training, would flout EU case law and gut the legislation. The changes proposed by the European Commission are part of a drive to simplify a slew of laws adopted in recent years on technology, environmental and financial issues, which have in turn faced pushback from companies and the U.S. government.

EU antitrust chief Henna Virkkunen will present the Digital Omnibus, in effect proposals to cut red tape and overlapping legislation such as the General Data Protection Regulation, the Artificial Intelligence Act, the e-Privacy Directive and the Data Act, on November 19. According to the plans, Google, Meta Platforms, OpenAI and other tech companies may be allowed to use Europeans' personal data

to train their AI models based on legitimate interest. In addition, companies may be exempted from the ban on processing special categories of personal data "in order not to disproportionately hinder the development and operation of AI and taking into account the capabilities of the controller to identify and remove special categories of personal data." The draft Digital Omnibus proposes countless changes to many different articles of the GDPR. In combination this amounts to a death by a thousand cuts," Austrian privacy group noyb said in a statement. Noyb is known for filing complaints against American companies such as Apple, Alphabet and Meta that have triggered several investigations and resulted in billions of dollars in fines. "This would be a massive downgrading of Europeans' privacy 10 years after the GDPR was adopted," noyb's Max Schrems said. European Digital Rights, an association of civil and human rights organisations across Europe, slammed a proposal to merge the ePrivacy Directive, known as the cookie law that resulted in the proliferation of cookie consent pop-ups, into the GDPR. "These proposals would change how the EU protects what happens inside your phone, computer and connected devices," EDRi policy advisor Itxaso Dominguez de Olazabal wrote in a LinkedIn post. "That means access to your device could rely on legitimate interest or broad exemptions like security, fraud detection or audience measurement," she said. The proposals would need to be thrashed out with EU countries and European Parliament in the coming months before they can be implemented.

## Parasocial is Cambridge dictionary's Word of the Year 2025; delulu, slop among new entrants

According to Cambridge officials, the year was marked by interest in one-sided parasocial relationships that people form with celebrities, influencers and AI chatbots. When Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce announced their engagement, many fans felt a deep connection to the singer and the American footballer, even though most had never met them. Millions of fans related to Taylor Swift's confessional lyrics about dating, heartbreak and desire, leading to what psychologists describe as "parasocial" bonds with stars. Lily Allen's "breakup album" "West End Girl" leant into parasocial interest in her love life. The spontaneity, imperfection and confessional nature of podcast hosts have been said to replace real friends and to catalyse parasocial relationships. The emergence of parasocial relationships with AI bots saw people treat ChatGPT as a confidant, friend or even romantic partner. These led to emotionally meaningful — and in some cases troubling — connections for users, and concerns about the consequences.

"Parasocial captures the 2025 zeitgeist. It's a great example of how language changes. What was once a specialist academic term has become mainstream. Millions of people are engaged in parasocial relationships; many more are simply intrigued by their rise. The data reflects that, with the Cambridge Dictionary website seeing spikes in look-ups for parasocial," Colin McIntosh of the Cambridge Dictionary said. "The language around parasocial phenomena is evolving fast, as technology, society and culture shift and mutate: from celebrities to chatbots, parasocial trends are fascinating for those who are interested in the development of language," he added. The term parasocial dates back to 1956, when University of Chicago sociologists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl observed television viewers engaged in "para-social" relationships with on-screen personalities, resembling those they formed with "real" family and friends. They noted how the rapidly expanding medium of television brought the faces of actors directly into viewers' homes, making them fixtures in people's lives. In 2025, the "chronically online" developed parasocial relationships with YouTubers and influencers who they feel they know, becoming invested in all the twists and turns of their personal lives. The global mania around "The Summer I Turned Pretty" finale saw fans dissecting every romantic relationship in the drama series on TikTok and Instagram, as they encamped into "Team Conrad" or "Team Jeremiah".

Simone Schnall, professor of Experimental Social Psychology at the University of Cambridge, explained that parasocial is an inspired choice for Word of the Year. "The rise of parasocial relationships has redefined fandom, celebrity and, with AI, how ordinary people interact online. We have entered an age where many people form unhealthy



and intense parasocial relationships with influencers. This leads to a sense that people 'know' those they form parasocial bonds with, can trust them and even to extreme forms of loyalty. Yet it is completely one-sided. "As trust in mainstream and traditional media breaks down, people turn to individual personalities as authorities, and - when they spend many hours consuming their content - develop parasocial bonds, treating them more like close friends, family or cult leaders. When an influencer has so many followers, people assume they are trustworthy," Schnall said. Other words that had a significant impact in 2025 include 'slop', 'pseudonymization', 'vibey', 'breathwork', 'doomspending' and 'memeify'. While 'slop' refers to content on the internet that is of very low quality, especially when it is created by artificial intelligence, 'pseudonymization' is a process in which information that relates to a particular person, for example, a name or email address, is changed to a number or name that has no meaning so that it is impossible to see who the information relates to. 'Skibidi' is a humorous slang term with varied meanings, including "cool," "bad," or even used with no meaning at all for a joke. 'Delulu' is a play on the word delusional, which means believing things that are not real or true, usually because you choose to. The Cambridge dictionary defines 'tradwife' as a married woman who stays at home, taking care of the cooking, cleaning and children and shares this lifestyle on social media. 'Memeify' is to turn an event, image or person, into a meme (an idea, joke, image, or video that spreads very quickly on the internet). 'Glazing' is the excessive use of praise or flattery, especially by AI chatbots, in a way that seems insincere and artificial. It is sometimes seen as a way of compensating for weak input from an AI. 'Breathwork' is a technique that involves the conscious control of your breathing and is intended to produce physical and mental benefits. 'Doom spending' is the activity of spending money that you cannot afford in order to make yourself feel better. People sometimes engage in it when they feel anxious and uncertain about the future.

## Cloudflare outage disrupts ChatGPT, X, other internet services



Hyderabad: Internet infrastructure provider Cloudflare says it is deploying a fix for an issue that caused global outages for ChatGPT, social media platform X, League of Legends and other prominent internet services. Cloudflare said on its status page earlier Tuesday that it identified an issue that was impacting multiple customers. There were reports of widespread 500 errors as well as Cloudflare Dashboard and API failing. In the process of remediating the issue, Cloudflare said it had to temporarily disable certain services for United Kingdom users. "We have made changes that have allowed Cloudflare Access and WARP to recover. Error levels for Access and WARP users have returned to pre-incident rates.

## UN Security Council endorses Trump's Gaza peace plan, authorises stabilisation force

United Nations: The UN Security Council has adopted a draft resolution endorsing US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan and authorising the establishment of an international stabilisation force in the enclave, with the American leader describing it as a "moment of true historic proportion". The US-drafted resolution was adopted in the 15-nation Council on Monday evening with 13 votes in favour, none against, and abstentions by China and Russia. It endorsed Trump's 'Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict' announced on September 29, which envisions Gaza as a "deradicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours" and is redeveloped for the benefit of its population. The resolution also welcomed the establishment of a 'Board of Peace' (BoP), described as a "transitional admin Trump congratulated the "world" on the "incredible vote" in the Council that acknowledged and

endorsed the Board of Peace. Trump said he will chair the Board, which will "include the most powerful and respected Leaders throughout the world". The vote comes a day before Trump is scheduled to host Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman at the White House. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesperson Stephane Dujarric, in a statement, said the adoption of the resolution on Gaza is an "important step" in the consolidation of the ceasefire, urging all parties to abide by it. Guterres commended the continued diplomatic efforts of Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye, the US, and regional states and underlined the importance of moving towards the second phase of the US plan, leading to a political process aimed at achieving a two-state solution. "It is essential now to translate the diplomatic momentum into concrete and urgently needed steps on the ground," the UN statement said,

## There can only be one goal in the Candidates: to play for first place



No German has played at the Candidates since 1991. So Matthias Bluebaum gave German chess a reason to celebrate when he finished runner-up at the Grand Swiss tournament in September and became the first player after Robert Hubner to make it to the Candidates, the qualifying event to determine the challenger for the World championship. Bluebaum, who was in the North Goan village of Arpora recently for the Chess World Cup, spoke on various topics including the rise of the sport in Germany. Excerpts: With Vincent Keymer, we have a top player now. He is the World No. 4. We also have players like Frederik Svane, Donchenko and myself, and we have done well at the World Cup. We just have a lot of strong, and still more or less young, players. I mean, I am the oldest of this generation, at 28. On looking forward to the Candidates tournament I am definitely looking forward to it, and the location (Cyprus) seems nice for me. It is in Europe, so there is no huge time difference, which is of course already quite a small bonus. I guess it is like just a one-hour time difference. I am just looking forward to playing there. Even though I will be a huge underdog, there can only be one goal in this tournament: to play for first place. That is the only place that matters, after all. So even as an underdog, I have to try to do that. I hope to do my best there. On what clicked for him at Grand Swiss in Uzbekistan, where he produced his career-best show was playing decent chess. I was not making many mistakes. But you also have to get a bit lucky in a sense for things to go well. I made more or less boring draws in the first two games. And then in the third round, I got a nice win. And also, in the fourth round, I could win. And then suddenly, my score was plus two. After that I played against R. Praggnanandhaa; he wanted to win with black pieces, but he just made an error in time trouble. Of course, he is a stronger player and he was putting himself under a bit of pressure to beat me, because he was probably feeling it was a game he could win and it would increase his chances to do well. I was just lucky in a sense that people were pushing against me. And I could collect some points. I was playing quite well. If you win against top players you have to play really well. You can't just get lucky. You also have to actually find some good moves. But, yeah, everything went perfectly for me at the Grand Swiss. In the end, it was just about keeping control of the nerves and just surviving the last games. In the last round, I already knew a draw would give me great chances. But still, you get nervous and you know you are playing one of the best players in the world. It was tough, but somehow I managed to keep my nerves in con-

trol.

On him being more consistent as a player these days it is not that I play different openings or completely changed my way to study chess. Something is just clicking right. Chess is also a very mental game. It is really also just being in the right mindset, to just feel confident about your moves and just trust your calculations. Once you are in the right mindset, things might just click. And right now that is a good phase for me. On playing against fellow-Germans in tournaments like the World Cup and Grand Swiss it is always very tough. I don't like playing against the other Germans. It is quite tough for me. I have known everybody more or less since childhood. And I don't really enjoy playing against them, but it is also part of the process. At the Grand Swiss, I also had to play this game against Vincent, which turned out to be quite decisive for the tournament. And there I just got lucky in the end. We are all professionals and we have to play against each other from time to time if that is the pairing. On playing at the World Cup without having the pressure of qualifying for the Candidates on the one hand, less pressure can be helpful, but on the other, it can also be bad because I was lacking motivation to prepare for as many hours as I did during the Grand Swiss. Sometimes it can be helpful because you are not so stressed and you just feel like you can play freely. But sometimes it can also have some opposite effect, like you are not as motivated as your opponent. But one thing is clear: many favourites got knocked out at the World Cup. It is normal for the (knock-out) format, but it also just shows that the general strength of chess players is very high and that everybody can beat everyone. On large number of fans coming to watch the World Cup in Goalt is always great to see interest in chess. There have been many fans waiting outside the playing venue, which is great. In Germany, too, interest has also increased in the last few years, but it is nowhere close to this level. Yes, it is a bit unusual for a chess player. We usually are a bit shy, introverted and do not interact too much with people. Here, you are kind of forced to give autographs and do pictures or something, but it is quite nice. There are so many fans. At the end of the day, that is what you want: for the sport to grow and have a good fan base. So it has been great. The interest is huge in India. It is clearly one of the biggest countries in the last few years. They won the last Olympiad with a huge performance, and they have the current World champion. On becoming a professional chess player in Germany in Germany, I had to finish school anyway, and then after school, I took a one-year break along with one friend of mine who was also Grandmaster with a 2600 rating, so also a very strong chess player. We both finished school at the same time, and we both played chess for one year. But then we both went on studying, because it is still the normal thing to do in Germany. Also, I have three older sisters who all went studying, so for me, it was just not even really a question. I was sure at some point I was going to study. I never really dreamt of becoming a chess professional at that point. Okay, I always kept playing chess. I already had a rating of 2600 when I started studying. Once I finished studying, I told myself, okay, if not now, there will be no choice anywhere else to become a chess professional. Either now or never, because if you start a job, you can't be a chess professional at the same time. Also, when I finished my bachelor's degree, it was COVID time, so there was no way to even play chess. Actually, it was kind of nice I could still study online, so I could still do that. After finishing my master's thesis, I just felt it was the perfect time to focus on chess. So I have been doing that for three years, and I guess for the moment, I am definitely going to continue playing chess professionally. I am still not sure if I am going to do it for my whole life, but for now, of course, it is going really well, especially this year, so I am very happy about that.

## Telangana's expanding infra shaping it to reach \$3 trillion goal: Governor at Global Summit-2025



Asserting that Viksit Bharat by 2047 and Telangana Rising represent clear and purposeful national goals, Governor Jishnu Dev Varma has said setting targets, planning strategically and executing with discipline require clarity and a forward-looking mindset. As Bharat moves with determination toward becoming a US \$30 trillion economy by 2047, Telangana too is progressing with confidence toward becoming a US \$3 trillion economy by 2047. This progress is visible across the State today.

There is a renewed focus on democratic and socio-liberal values, where citizens' voices are heard more clearly. "Transparency, accountability, active engagement, and regular reporting are strengthening trust between people and the government," the Governor said. Mr. Jishnu Dev Varma declared open the two day Telangana Rising Global Summit-2025 at Bharat Future City on Monday (December 8, 2025). He reminded writer Amitav Ghosh's saying "History is about the stories we choose to remember and the lessons we seek to learn." Telangana chose a story of inclusive growth with women, farmers, youth, and children at its core under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. Women's empowerment was advancing through initiatives such as electric buses operated by self-help groups, retail enterprises, and solar projects, making women active contributors to the economy. Environmental restoration, including the management of lakes by women's groups, was supporting both ecology and livelihoods.

Education was evolving through community involvement in schools inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's Young India, while skills and sports universities were preparing youth for present and future opportunities. "The future depends on the work done today," he said. Telangana's expanding infrastructure — airports, renewable energy, transport networks, and smart zoning — was shaping a modern state aimed at reaching the US\$ 3 trillion goal. Stable and clear policies continued to attract investment and innovation. The gig-workers policy supporting women artisans and establishing rest centers, was an example of responsiveness to emerging needs. "The Government of Telangana is also focused on building a skilled workforce through vocational and technology-based training aligned with current and future industrial requirements," the Governor said amid applause from the

participants. The participants included representatives of global technology majors, pharma and other employment intensive fields. He said the State's development roadmap aligned with the national mission of Viksit Bharat, envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and built on inclusive growth, sustainability, and innovation. "Strong infrastructure and progressive governance place Telangana firmly on this path."

He reminded that Governments acted as stewards of the people and accountability would strengthen confidence. Telangana's vision was defined by clear milestones and consistent progress. "Learning from the past is essential for building the future. Telangana's development reflects this understanding through its pursuit of justice, prosperity, and unity," the Governor said. Foresight and determination had enabled the State to convert plans into tangible outcomes, shaping a model of growth that benefits society as a whole. "As the world takes note of the opportunities emerging in Telangana, I stand here with firm conviction to say: Telangana will fulfill its mission of becoming a 3 trillion dollar economy by 2047," he said. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said a decade after formation of Telangana, the government was trying to make Telangana the country's most developed State and one of the best in the world. "We asked experts to tell us what we can achieve by 2047, when India will celebrate its 100th year of Independence? This is how Telangana Rising 2047 was born," he said. After asking people what they wanted, the government consulted experts and officers of the Central Government, ISB and NITI Aayog. The State was fortunate that leaders from all sectors business, corporate, policy, diplomats, government and experts have all come here. "Today and tomorrow, we will keenly listen to all your ideas and feedback," he said.

## Pankaj Tripathi-backed comedy-drama show to return for season 2

The first season was released on YouTube on November 27 with Gulshan Devaiah, Manoj Pahwa, Seema Pahwa, Girija Oak Godbole and Neha Dhupia playing pivotal roles. The show tells the story of a dysfunctional family that decides to go to therapy together. Speaking about the show, Pankaj, who has co-produced it with Ajay Rai, said, "The phenomenal response to Perfect Family has been heart-warming. As this was my debut production, seeing the audience embrace the story and its message means a lot. I am happy to extend my support for the next season as well. The love and encouragement from viewers has motivated us to plan Season 2, and we look forward to bringing an even more impactful chapter to them."

## European nations set to discuss tightening of migration rules



European leaders will call for a toughening of migration policies on Wednesday (December 10, 2025) in a move critics say bends to pressure from far-right groups and harms basic human rights protections for vulnerable people. Ministers from 27 EU member nations are meeting in Brussels to discuss countering migrant smuggling, with a keynote speech by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. In Strasbourg, France, representatives from the Council of Europe — 46 countries from Iceland to Azerbaijan — are expected to debate making deporting migrants easier for signatories to key treaties.

Denmark was part of a nine-nation attempt last year to curtail the power of the European Court of Human Rights, the independent legal arm of the Council of Europe. Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland argued that the court's interpretation of rights obligations prevented them from expelling migrants who commit crimes. That effort ultimately failed, but support for its basic tenets has since grown. The European Court of Human Rights handles complaints against the Council of Europe, under the European Convention on Human Rights, including many cases involving migrants and

asylum-seekers. The intergovernmental organisation is not an EU institution and was set up in the wake of World War II to promote peace and democracy. Centrist and left-wing parties across Europe are coalescing around the idea of tougher migration policies as a way to blunt the momentum of far-right politicians exploiting discontent over immigration.

The Prime Ministers of Denmark and the U.K. published an op-ed in the Guardian newspaper on Tuesday (December 9, 2025) calling for tightening migration controls to deny entry to those seeking better economic opportunities, as opposed to fleeing conflict. "For decades, citizens in our countries have demanded action. So we are acting — not to exploit these issues and stoke grievances as some do, but to find real solutions," wrote Mette Frederiksen and Keir Starmer. "The best way of fighting against the forces of hate and division is to show that mainstream, progressive politics can fix this problem."

Illegal border crossings into the EU were down 22% from January to October this year, according to Frontex, the EU's border and coast guard agency. The agency recorded 152,000 unauthorised border crossings in the first 10 months of the year. Most migration to Europe happens legally, by air, with some immigrants overstaying tourist visas. The EU has spent billions of euros (dollars) to deter irregular migration, paying countries in Africa and the Middle East to intercept migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. At the same time, European nations facing labour shortages and an ageing population are in desperate need of more workers and have been investing in programs to attract and train foreign workers. The Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, said ahead of the Strasbourg meeting that the European Convention on Human Rights was "the final safeguard of individual rights and freedoms across our continent." "The convention's future and Europe's direction are inseparable," he added.

## Indian applicants of H4, H1B visas in a quandary as US consulates reschedule physical interview dates

EMS News Agency, Dec 12

Thousands of US work and dependant visa aspirants who came to India for H4, H1B visa stamping have been told that their physical interviews have been rescheduled. The job aspirants are receiving personal email messages from the US Consulate officials about shifting the date for physical interviews to March, April and May effectively putting their careers at risk. The affected Indians have taken to social media to share their plight and are reaching out to journalists.

"I'm currently in India and recently got done with my biometric appointment on December 5. My consular appointment was supposed to be on December 15 which got rescheduled to March 2026. I am supposed to fly back on January 1, if I don't go I might lose out on my job. I'm trying to reschedule my appointment but there are no slots available. Please help!" wrote one aspirant on social media. There are a slew of such social media posts but the number of affected applicants could not be ascertained. H4 Visa applicants have also been affected. "Just 1 day before, we completed biometrics for H4. Today morning, we are given a good morning surprise that your appointment is cancelled and moved to 5 months later. Now, what a mother will do without her nine year child who is in US, and she came to India for appointment," wrote one affected applicant.

The US Embassy in India, on December 9, put out a statement advising the aspirants. "If you have received an email advising that your visa appointment has been rescheduled, Mission India looks forward to assisting you on your new appointment date. Arriving on your previously scheduled appointment date will result in your being denied admittance to the Embassy or Consulate," says the message. Left



in a quandary are families in the two countries. "I have finished my biometric appointment. The new consulate appointment has been moved five months away, it is not feasible to stay in this country as we have our jobs, family, pets, and assets back in the US. Kindly advise on the options to expedite the interview appointment?" wrote another worried woman about the changed date. Some of the applicants had their interview slots shifted beyond five months according to information shared by the father of a woman applicant. "My daughter, for instance, came to India for stamping. Biometric was done on December 8. All of a sudden, the physical interview, which was scheduled for December 18, has been rescheduled post April. Jobs are at stake now. It's understood that all interviews scheduled post December 15 have been rescheduled," shared a parent in Hyderabad. The Hindu has reached out to the US Consulate in Hyderabad. The story will be updated as and when more information is available about this ongoing development.

## U.S. backs Japan in dispute with China over radar incident



The United States has for the first time criticised China for aiming radars at Japanese military aircraft during a training exercise last week, incidents that the Asian neighbours have given differing accounts of amid escalating tensions. The run-in near Japan's Okinawa islands comes after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi triggered a dispute with Beijing last month with her remarks on how Tokyo might react to a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan. China claims democratically governed Taiwan and has not ruled out using force to take control of the island, which sits just over 100 km (62 miles) from Japanese territory and is surrounded by sea lanes that Tokyo relies on. "China's actions are not conducive to regional peace and stability," a State Department spokesperson said late on Tuesday (December 9, 2025), referring to the radar incident. "The U.S.-Japan Alliance is stronger and more united than ever. Our commitment to our ally Japan is unwavering, and we are in close contact on this and other issues." China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Japan, late on Tuesday (December 9), scrambled jets to monitor Russian and Chinese air forces conducting joint patrols around the country. The Chinese fighter jets aiming their radars at the Japanese planes on Saturday (December 6) was the most serious run-in between the East Asian militaries in years. Such moves are seen as a threatening step because it signals a potential attack and may force the targeted plane to take evasive action. Tokyo blasted the moves as "dangerous". Beijing, however, said that the Japanese aircraft had repeatedly approached and disrupted the Chinese navy as it was conducting previously announced carrier-based flight training east of the Miyako Strait.

Speaking to reporters in Taipei on Wednesday (De-

ember 10), Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said China's drills were "very inappropriate behaviour". "We also call upon China to demonstrate the responsibility befitting a major power. Peace is priceless; war has no winners. Peace must be fostered by all parties, and China shares this responsibility," he said. Relations between Asia's two largest economies have soured sharply since Takaichi told parliament last month that a Chinese attack on Taiwan could amount to a "survival-threatening situation" and trigger a potential military response from Tokyo. Beijing has demanded she retract the remarks, accused Tokyo of threatening it militarily and advised its citizens not to travel to Japan. U.S. Ambassador to Japan George Glass has publicly expressed support for Japan in several social media posts since the diplomatic dispute began, but President Donald Trump and other senior U.S. officials have remained silent. Mr. Trump, who plans to visit Beijing next year for trade talks, telephoned Takaichi last month, urging her not to escalate the dispute, people with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

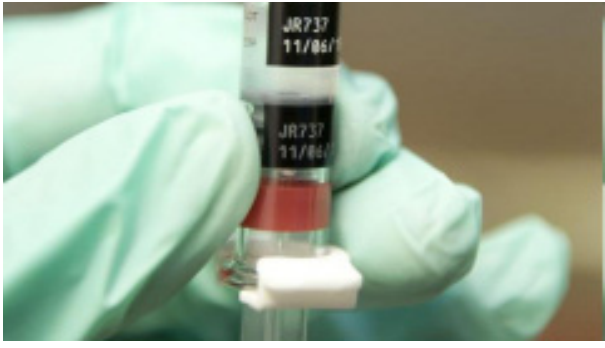
## Family members worry about safety of fishermen jailed in Bangladesh

Several fishermen's families are worried about the safety of their dear ones, who have been stranded in Bangladesh for the last two-and-a-half months. The fishermen who belong to Konda Rajupalem village of Bhogapuram mandal, Vizianagaram district, went fishing on boats from Visakhapatnam on October 13, 2025.

The fishermen — including Maripalli Chinnappana, Surada Appalakonda, Maripalli Praveen, Ramesh, Chinna Appanna, Seetayya, Appanna, and Ramana — crossed the international waters and were caught immediately by the Bangladesh Coast Guard on October 22, 2025.

Speaking to The Hindu here, Kondarajupalem Sarpanch Surada Chinna Rao and Vadaballija Community Sankshema Sangham president Parimella Vasu urged the government to take necessary steps to bring them back safely to their native places.

## U.S. vaccine panel upends hepatitis B advice in latest Trump-era shift



An advisory panel appointed by the Trump administration's vaccine-skeptic health secretary voted Friday to stop recommending that all newborns in the United States receive a hepatitis B vaccine. The move to end the decades-old recommendation is the panel's latest contentious about-face on vaccine policy since its overhaul by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. earlier this year. U.S. health authorities previously recommended all babies, not just those born to mothers believed to have hepatitis B, receive the first of three vaccine doses just after birth. The approach aimed, in part, to prevent transfers from mothers who unknowingly had hepatitis B or had falsely tested negative, and had virtually eradicated infections of the potentially deadly liver disease among young people in the country. After delaying the vote by a day, the panel on Friday passed its new recommendation for "individual-based decision-making," in consultation with a health care provider, when children are born to mothers testing negatively for the disease. The decision to vaccinate at birth should "consider vaccine benefits, vaccine risks, and infection risks."

The new recommendation was immediately condemned by several medical groups who noted widespread shortcomings in U.S. maternal health screening as well as the possibility of infections from others. "This irresponsible and purposely misleading guidance will lead to more hepatitis B infections in infants and children," American Academy of Pediatrics President Susan J. Kressly said in a statement. The vote was 8-3. Trump-appointed officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are expected to formally adopt the recommendations at a later date. The panel also voted to recommend that babies who

are not vaccinated at birth wait at least two months to get the initial dose, and that blood tests be done to measure antibodies before a second dose. Panel overhaul After becoming health secretary, Kennedy sacked every member of the once-staid Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), replacing them with figures whose vaccine-skeptic views track more closely with his own. It has since set to work on reviewing prior recommendations — already tweaking advice on Covid-19 and measles shots. Medical experts fear the push could further contribute to declining vaccination rates in the United States. The panel on Friday also began a broader review of the childhood vaccination schedule, and sparked further controversy by allowing testimony from lawyer Aaron Siri, a close Kennedy associate known for spreading unfounded theories on the subject. While U.S. President Donald Trump vocally supports Kennedy's policies, some in the Republican Party have pushed back, notably Louisiana Senator Bill Cassidy. Medical doctor Cassidy condemned the ACIP decision on Friday, noting the original recommendation was never "a mandate" to get the job. CDC officials "should not sign these new recommendations and instead retain the current, evidence-based approach," he said on X. Cassidy's expression of alarm, like his prior statements against Kennedy, provoked criticism after he provided the key vote to confirm the health secretary in February. The United States had urged universal vaccination at birth against hepatitis B since 1991, advice also recommended by China, Australia and the World Health Organization. But several ACIP members argued Friday's decision would align the United States with other economically developed countries such as France and Britain. The repercussions of the ACIP's vaccine recommendations are broad because federal guidelines often dictate whether vaccines are paid for by health insurance companies in the United States, where a vaccine can cost hundreds of dollars. But the committee's influence is waning amid withering criticism from the U.S. scientific and medical community, with Democratic-led states announcing they will no longer follow its recommendations. Ahead of the vote, Dr. Cody Meissner, one of the few dissenting voices on the advisory committee, urged his colleagues not to change the current recommendations. "Do no harm is a moral imperative. We are doing harm by changing this wording," he warned.

## Kyiv's clear message to New Delhi: Not a single Ukrainian drone sent to Pakistan



"I nearly escaped the jaws of death a few days ago when a Shahed landed near my apartment," a friend from Kyiv texted me, barely two weeks after I left the city. Her message was not unusual. In today's Ukraine, people have learned to identify the threat not by sight, but by sound. They know the whirring of a reconnaissance quadcopter, the low growl of a Russian Orlan-10, or the menacing chainsaw-like buzz of the Iranian-origin Shahed kamikaze drone. The sky tells its own story every night and Ukrainians have learned to read it for survival.

Almost four years into the full-scale invasion by Russia, one unmistakable transformation defines this war: its high-tech, drone-driven nature. To use a cliché, it was described as the weapon of David in the battle between David vs Goliath. Drones are no longer the preserve of militaries alone; they are part of everyday vocabulary. The residents of Kyiv can distinguish which direction a loitering munition is coming from. Residents instinctively move away from windows when they hear the now-familiar mechanical hum overhead. I became particularly interested in the subject because nearly six months ago, my own native region was pulled into the shadow of drone warfare. From May 7-10, in the tense days following the 2025 Pahalgam terrorist attack, India and Pakistan exchanged drones across the border. For four nights, sleep became impossible for many of us who had direct or indirect connection with the border areas. Most of the damage occurred after the drones were shot down, when high-velocity debris fell and struck the surrounding buildings. I knew a few families whose rooftops were torn open, whose windows shattered, whose children woke in terror at sounds they could not comprehend. And yet, to be precise, what unfolded was not drone warfare in the true sense as it was merely a glimpse, a faint and unsettling preview of what the future may hold. Luckily, no one was injured or died as a result of drones. Following Russian President Putin's State visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reportedly prepares to welcome Ukrainian President Zelenskyy to India. In view of this, Kyiv has conveyed a message to New Delhi with striking clarity. I was told in Kyiv by a senior official in the Ukraine military investment portfolio, who knew the exact details, was categorical: no Ukrainian drone has ever been supplied to Pakistan. "Like many countries, including Pakistan, Islamabad had expressed a letter of intent in earlier years to buy UAV technology and this is where the matter stands." But the official insisted that the conversations never materialised into any export, transfer, or co-production.

In their telling, at no point did Ukraine's drone industry, or its political leadership, authorise the sale of military-grade UAVs to Pakistan. This assertion becomes particularly important, especially in light of reports during Operation Sindoor alleging that Pakistani forces were being supplied with drones originating from Ukraine. This claim has circulated but remained difficult to independently verify. This assurance helps put into perspective the complexities of a defence industry that, especially after 2022, has become one of the world's most scrutinised. It is a fact that the Ukrainian battlefield experience has ignited global interest, as drones have arguably emerged as the single most transformative instrument of warfare in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. For countries like India, where drone production is expanding rapidly in the private-public space, the implications are particularly

significant or important to factor in. No other weapon system has risen to prominence as swiftly, nor reshaped battlefield calculations as dramatically. With each passing month, refinements in drone technology, from first-person-view kamikaze units to long-range strategic systems, have redrawn the contours of the conflict. What might have once been a lopsided confrontation, given Russia's overwhelming superiority in tanks, armour and infantry numbers, has been fundamentally altered.

For Ukraine, a country facing a far larger military adversary, drones, I was told, became not just tools of war but equalizers as innovations that offset traditional disadvantages and, in many instances, turned vulnerability into tactical advantage. By now, across the world, everyone has seen how the tanks without the support of drone are a sitting duck targets of the cheap drones. But the game is constantly evolving. What struck me most was not just the machines themselves, but the concepts behind them, the understanding that a remotely operated device can both eliminate an enemy position and save a wounded comrade without risking another human life. Ukrainian units now routinely deploy drones to reach injured soldiers trapped under fire; the small machine hovers low, providing cover or creating a diversion until the wounded man can climb on and be pulled to safety. In a war defined by distance and precision, even rescue has become unmanned. But nothing has transformed the battlefield as dramatically as FPV (First-Person View) kamikaze drones. Piloted through video goggles, they are cheap, fast, and lethally precise. For as little as USD 300-500, an FPV drone can destroy equipment worth millions like a tank, an artillery piece, or an armored vehicle. Ukraine now manufactures these drones on an industrial scale, producing tens of thousands each month and training specialised drone strike brigades to operate them. And then there are the long-range deep-strike drones, capable of travelling 600-1,000 km or more. These are the systems that have shaken assumptions about distance and safety, reaching deep into Russian territory.

If Russia's advantage is industrial mass, Ukraine's answer has been ingenuity. Drone production has multiplied several times over, driven by volunteers, private companies, diaspora support, and a wartime State that views drones as the equaliser. From small quadcopters costing a few hundred dollars to heavy long-range strike drones capable of hitting refineries inside Russia, Ukraine has built a diverse, layered drone ecosystem. While Moscow has reportedly carried out missile and drone attacks on Ukraine's power grid and cities in past winters and ahead of this winter, Kyiv has stepped up drone attacks on oil depots, airfields and other targets inside Russia. Entire swarms, sometimes six or seven drones at a time, are launched with the understanding that most will be intercepted. The intent is that even if several are knocked out by air defence, one or two may break through to strike their intended targets. This logic of saturation is now central to modern warfare. On 10 November 2024, this became the basis of one of the largest drone assault on Moscow since the start of the war took place as an estimated 70 drones launched toward the Russian capital. A similar pattern played out during the India-Pakistan skirmish in May, when both countries deployed surveillance drones to probe and map each other's air-defence readiness. The objective was not merely to gather intelligence but to understand how many systems would be activated, how quickly they would respond, and whether a concentrated wave of drones could penetrate the defensive grid. In many ways, the Ukrainian-Russian battlefield, high-tech, adaptive, and drone-saturated, offers a glimpse of what future conflicts elsewhere in the world may increasingly resemble. In the end, from my own sleepless nights during the India-Pakistan drone exchanges to the conversations in Kyiv, one lesson stands out: drones may dominate the skies, but it is human ingenuity and clarity of intention that ultimately define their meaning. From Kyiv's standpoint, that meaning is unmistakable which is defence, survival, and a refusal to be broken.

## Winds of change in music

As Chennai prepares to immerse itself in yet another music season, the decision of the Music Academy — one of the city's premier institutions — to invite music director A.R. Rahman to inaugurate its 99th annual music conference and concerts reflects a significant shift from its prior view on music. 'Isaignani' Ilaiyaraaja, who blends Carnatic ragas with folk and western classical music, inaugurated the music festival of the Academy in 2017. Changes have caught up with the sabhas in many ways. Even the language of performance is no longer an issue. Singers who once chose Telugu or Sanskrit compositions of the Carnatic Trinity and keerthanas in other languages to showcase their vidwat at the Music Academy now frequently opt for Tamil songs as the main item, or even for the ragam-tanam-pallavi.

A variety of factors has ushered in this shift. The old-timers who traced their roots to the composite Thanjavur region along the Cauvery, or to the courts of Ramanathapuram, Ettayapuram, and villages in Tirunelveli — once the living links between past and present — have almost vanished from the scene. The musical landscape is now dominated by a new generation groomed in Chennai and they are cosmopolitan in outlook. Though the majority are still Brahmins and follow the conventional kutcheri format on stage, their professional lives extend well beyond its boundaries. Their work is marked by collaborations with artists from other genres, experiments with new forms, and performances for new and diverse audiences. In the age of the Internet, they no longer relate to Carnatic music solely as a sacred, bhakti-oriented art. Tradition and sampradaya, as a result, cannot be interpreted in the old ways. Carnatic music is a full-time profession today. When artistes collaborate across genres they do so not just for popularity but with commitment and understanding.

Among the new experiments is Band Coom, comprising singer Susha, violinist Shreya Devnath, and percussionist Praveen Sparsh — each with a strong Carnatic background — along with parai artistes Deepan and 'Rocket' Raji (Rajendran) of the Friends Kalai Kuzhu troupe. The members of A Carnatic Quartet — featuring violinist Shreya Devnath, mridangam artiste Praveen Sparsh, nagaswaram player Mylai Karthikeyan, and thavil player Jeevanantham — have explained how collaboration and exchange of ideas have enriched their playing and deepened their understanding of music. The Chennai Sangamam, organised by the DMK government headed by M. Karunanidhi (2006-11) and



driven by MP Kanimozhi, also facilitated encounters between Carnatic and folk artistes, and took Carnatic concerts to public parks. Vocalist Sanjay Subrahmanyam, in his memoir On That Note, recalls how he once resolved to be a purely classical singer even as others — including P. Unnikrishnan, Bombay Jayashri, and Nithyasree — were breaking barriers between Carnatic music and cinema. Yet, he too eventually sang for films. After the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid expansion of digital platforms, audiences no longer feel compelled to attend live concerts; they can simply listen from home. This has pushed artistes to tailor their concerts and collaborations to suit an invisible, dispersed audience. Sid Sriram balances careers as playback singer and Carnatic vocalist, as did K.J. Yesudas before him. Almost all the singers of the Quarantine From Reality, a popular music programme produced by Subashree Thanikachalam, were Carnatic vocalists. Puritans who look down on other musical forms often forget that Papanasam Sivan, celebrated as the Tamil Tyagaraja, had a long and successful innings in cinema as a composer. G.N. Balasubramaniam, a trendsetter in Carnatic music, acted and sang in films. M.S. Subbulakshmi and N.C. Vasanthakokilam too had notable film careers. In his book, A Southern Music: The Karnatic Story, T.M. Krishna notes that the first major change that Rahman brought to cinema was the quality of sound, whether local or instrumental. His arrival coincided with leaps in technology that transformed how film music was produced and experienced. "Elements of Carnatic music have appeared throughout the history of South Indian film music..." he writes. "Rahman and his successors have at times used Carnatic ragas as superficial sources of melodies."

## Ocean warmed by climate change fed intense rainfall, floods that killed over 1,600 in Asia: Study

The rapid study by World Weather Attribution focused on heavy rainfall from cyclones Senyar and Ditwah in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka starting late last month. The analysis found that warmer sea surface temperatures over the North Indian Ocean added energy to the cyclones. Floods and landslides triggered by the storms have killed more than 1,600 people, with hundreds more still missing. The cyclones are the latest in a series of deadly weather disasters affecting Southeast Asia this year, resulting in loss of life and property damage. "It rains a lot here but never like this. Usually, rain stops around September but this year it has been really bad. Every region of Sri Lanka has been affected, and our region has been the worst impacted," said Shanmugavadivu Arunachalam, a 59-year-old schoolteacher in the mountain town of Hatton in Sri Lanka's Central Province. News in Frames | An island ravaged by a cyclone After the fall: Uprooted trees line the damaged buildings in Gampola town following the landslide. A drenched prince: Muddy floodwaters partially submerge a Buddha statue in Kelaniya following Cyclone Ditwah. Grit through grief: In Kandy, people sift through the wreckage for survivors and possessions after landslides. Desolate outlook: Amid the debris of a landslide in Gampola, Kandy, a woman holding a child observes the damage to a temple. Precious cargo: People carrying pets and other possessions make their way through a flooded street in Wellampitiya following heavy rain. Rescue mission: Evacuation under way in Kotmale, Nuwara Eliya, for Indian passengers with the help of Sri Lankan authorities. Photo: Indian Air Force-X via ANIPicking up pieces: People salvage belongings from a flooded house after flash floods in Wellampitiya on the outskirts of Colombo. For a spot of sun: Flood-hit residents collect their belongings from railway tracks in Kandy after drying them. On the edge: A damaged house perches dangerously at a landslide site in Warathenna, Kandy. Heartwarming gesture: Helping hands assist an elderly man across a flooded street in Wellampitiya.

Sea surface temperatures over the North Indian Ocean were 0.2° Celsius higher than the average over the past three decades, according to the WWA researchers. Without global warming, the sea surface temperatures would have been about 1° Celsius colder than they were, according to the analysis. The warmer ocean temperatures provided heat and moisture to the storms. When measuring overall temperatures, the world is currently 1.3° Celsius warmer than global average during pre-industrial times in the 19th century, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "When the atmosphere warms, it can hold more moisture. As a result, it rains more in a warmer atmo-



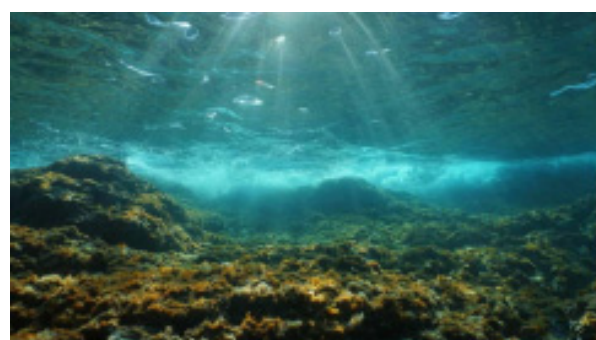
sphere as compared to a world without climate change," said Mariam Zachariah, with the Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College London and one of the report's authors. Using tested methods to measure climate impacts quickly, the WWA is a collection of researchers who use peer-reviewed methods to conduct rapid studies examining how extreme weather events are linked to climate change. "Anytime we decide to do a study, we know what is the procedure that we have to follow," said Zachariah, who added that they review the findings in house and send some of their analysis for peer review, even after an early version is made public. The speed at which the WWA releases their analysis helps inform the general public about the impacts of climate change, according to Zachariah. "We want people everywhere to know about why something happened in their neighbourhood," Zachariah said. "But also be aware about the reasons behind some of the events unfurling across the world." "The WWA often estimates how much worse climate change made a disaster using specific probabilities. In this case, though, the researchers said they could not estimate the precise contribution of climate change to the storms and ensuing heavy rains because of limitations in climate models for the affected islands. Climate change boosts Asia's unusually heavy rainfall. Global warming is a "powerful amplifier" to the deadly floods, typhoons and landslides that have ravaged Asia this year, said Jemilah Mahmood, with the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, a Malaysia-based think tank that was not involved with the WWA analysis. "The region and the world have been on this path because, for decades, economic development was prioritised over climate stability," Mahmood said. "It's created an accumulated planetary debt, and this has resulted in the crisis we face." The analysis found that across the affected countries, rapid urbanisation, high population density and infrastructure in low lying flood plains have elevated exposure to flood events.

## Commercial deep-sea mining is killing marine life

Deep beneath the sea thrives a massive mining industry that extracts cobalt, sulfides and polymetallic nodules (layers of iron and manganese hydroxides) from thousands of metres under the ocean. Now a group of researchers got together to understand the impact of mining projects on marine life. In the latest edition of Nature, they reported their findings of before and after scenarios of a large-scale test of commercial deep sea machine mining on the abyssal plain of the eastern Pacific Ocean. The depth of mining was 4,280m beneath the sea, and the project recover over 3,000 tonnes of polymetallic nodules.

The scientists created a species-level sediment-dwelling macrofaunal dataset to assess fauna and biodiversity for two years before and two months after test mining. They found that the density of macrofauna (relatively large invertebrates such as annelid worms, peracarid crustaceans and molluscs) decreased by a staggering 37% within the mining tracks and a 32% reduction in species richness.

The growing deep-sea mining industry prioritises nodule mining with a focus on a six-million-sqkm area of the central Pacific Ocean called the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ). This zone possibly holds over 21 billion tonnes of nickel, cobalt and copper-rich polymetallic nodules, said the paper. For test project, the largest of its kind, the collector tracked over 807km of abyssal seafloor of the CCZ, within a 27x47km test field recovering over 3,000 tonnes of nodules using a riser-pipe. This was done in October 2022 by the Nauru Ocean Resources (a wholly owned subsidiary of The Metals Company) and the company AllSeas. The scientists created a dataset, over two years, of the large species-level quantitative abyssal sediment-dwelling



macrofaunal study, using a Before-After-Control-Impact design. They sorted 4,350 sediment macrofauna and 3,826 specimens (88%) were identified to a total of 788 species. "We found evidence of significant natural temporal declines in macrofaunal density across all sites during the pre-impact period of November 2020 to September 2022... Similar patterns of change were observed across all phyla," concluded the authors. Having found "significant changes" in sediment-dwelling macrofaunal density, diversity and community composition following a large-scale test of a polymetallic nodule machine mining, the paper underscores "the importance of integrated species-level taxonomic work in assessing ecological responses to disturbance and the risks of biodiversity loss." Meanwhile, the Indian Ministry of Earth Sciences launched a "Deep Ocean Mission" in 2021 to explore the deep ocean "for resources" and "develop deep sea technologies" for the sustainable use of ocean resources.

## Fraudsters used 6,500 bank accounts to split Rs 58 crore they cheated from 72-year old Mumbai share trader and his wife to avoid money getting tracked



After Maharashtra cyber police was alerted about the scam, they began a probe and started looking through details of the various bank accounts where the money had been transferred. After Maharashtra cyber police was alerted about the scam, they began a probe and started looking through details of the various bank accounts where the money had been transferred. Maharashtra Cyber police, probing one of the largest cyber cons in the country, where a 72-year-old share trader lost Rs 58 crore in a 'digital arrest' fraud, have found that the fraudsters used 6,500 bank accounts across the country to stagger the ill-gotten gains in a bid to avoid it being tracked. An officer said that cyber fraudsters strategised carefully to ensure that the money is spread out immediately after the crime so that it could not be blocked in one or few accounts. So far, seven account holders and their handlers have been arrested by the police.

An official said that the 6,500 accounts that have been used in the fraud are all within the country. "In some cases, withdrawals have been made by fraudsters from a bank using a cheque to break the link of accounts across which the money has been transferred," a senior official said. The official added that after withdrawing the money by cheque, they deposit the money in another account of the same bank which is unlinked to the other accounts and thus, is not traced by cops. "Earlier they would withdraw money from ATMs where we could identify them from the CCTV camera as it would be one person at one time. Now when we

try checking bank CCTVs, it is outsourced to a third party and nabbing them becomes difficult. Even if we do, it becomes difficult to identify the accused as many people are present at one time in the bank," the official said. "As we learn about their various modus operandi, fraudsters too keep evolving their methods. After they realised we managed to block particular accounts, they used tricks like spreading the money across hundreds...or in this case thousands of accounts," the official added. He added that so far they have arrested five persons whose accounts were used or who used others bank accounts to move the money. "Usually in digital arrest cases, we find that calls are made from countries like Laos and Cambodia while money is moved across accounts, converted into cryptocurrency and sent outside the country to the masterminds," the official added.

In this particular case, the 72-year-old complainant was first called by the accused on August 19 who claimed to be from the ED and CBI. The accused told the complainant that there was "illegal funds" in his bank account and that they were placing him under digital arrest. The accused also sent some documents to prove that they were "genuine officers". The accused asked the complainant and his wife to transfer funds to their account so that they can verify the money was genuine following which they were told that the money would be transferred back to their accounts. Between August 19 and October 8, the complainant and his wife transferred Rs 58.13 crore through RTGS to various bank accounts provided by the accused. The police found that the money was transferred through 18 bank accounts across Maharashtra and other states. After Maharashtra cyber police was alerted about the scam, they began a probe and started looking through details of the various bank accounts where the money had been transferred. Accordingly, they identified three mule account holders who had provided their accounts identified as Abdul Khullil (47) from Malad, Arjun Kadwasara (55) from Chira Bazaar and his brother Jetharam (35) from Mumbai Central who were placed under arrest on Wednesday. Four others were arrested on Thursday. The cyber police are currently interrogating the accused to get some details about the main accused who carried out the scam.

## Karnataka govt approves occupancy certificate exemption for buildings on small plots in municipalities

The Karnataka government on Thursday decided to issue notifications to exempt buildings built on properties measuring 1,200 square feet, and going up to three floors, from the mandate of occupancy certificates if the building plan has an approval in areas under state municipalities and municipal corporation laws. "Cabinet has decided to exempt from obtaining Occupancy Certificate (OCC) for buildings up to 1,200 sq ft in area constructed with the approval of the Government on plots up to 1,200 sq ft in area under the authority of the Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964," the cabinet noted.

The cabinet also decided to issue a notification under the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976, to exempt buildings going up to three floors on plots with areas of 1,200 sq feet from obtaining an occupancy certificate, subject to the plan approvals for the buildings. "Keeping in mind the convenience of the public, it is appropriate to exempt buildings of this scale from the requirement of obtaining an Occupancy Certificate," the cabinet noted. Greater Bengaluru Authority region OC exemption

Last month, the Karnataka government had issued a notification exempting small-scale residential buildings in the Greater Bengaluru area from obtaining occupancy certificates. The government order issued by the Urban Development Department provided relief to homeowners constructing residential buildings on plots up to 1,200 sq ft. Under the directive, buildings with ground plus two floors or three floors constructed on plots not exceeding 1,200 sq ft within the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) jurisdiction will not require occupancy certificates. The exemption in Bengaluru was under Section 241(7) of the GBA Act, which came into force earlier this year. This section specifically empowers the government to "notify the category of building which shall be exempted from obtaining occupancy certificate".

The Karnataka government has been deliberating decisions for creating "equal opportunities in all applicable laws regarding the functioning of local bodies across the state" for building possession certificates. The move is expected to benefit the construction sector, particularly small-scale residential projects. According to official data, approximately 4,000 buildings on sites smaller than 1,200 sq ft receive plan approvals annually from Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike zonal offices. Currently, building plan approvals are processed through the automated 'Nambike Map' system. Draft plans are provided the same day upon application, and the final plan ap-



proval is granted within 15 days. According to government officials, the traditional occupancy certificate process involved extensive site inspections and comparative verification between constructed buildings and approved plans, creating a substantial workload for local body officers, leading to potential delays and a lack of transparency. By eliminating the occupancy certificate requirement for small buildings, the government aims to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka government has postponed a decision on providing electricity and water connections to existing buildings constructed without obtaining completion certificates and occupancy certificates. A large number of these buildings are in Bengaluru. Many buildings are in limbo as electricity and water supply agencies have refused to provide connections without these certificates following a December 2024 Supreme Court order that bars public utility providers from granting connections to unapproved structures. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed officials to examine whether other states were uniformly implementing the apex court's order. The chief minister's office said that the state, while respecting court orders, must also find a solution to the problems faced by the public. A meeting chaired by the state chief secretary with Siddaramaiah and senior ministers on October 8 remained inconclusive. During a previous cabinet meeting, the state advocate-general had cited sections of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, which provides for exemptions for buildings without occupancy certificates. Section 241 of the Act allows the government to notify the category of buildings to be exempted from obtaining OCCs, the advocate-general said. "The Government may notify a category of buildings which can be exempted if there is proper justification and application of mind for doing the same.

## High Court adjourns plea seeking CBI probe into IPS officer Y Puran Kumar's death

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday adjourned the hearing of a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the suicide of senior IPS officer Y Puran Kumar, after observing that the petitioner's counsel was not prepared with arguments. Chief Justice Sheel Nagu, who was heading the bench, expressed displeasure over the lack of readiness and listed the matter for a later date.

During the hearing, the bench posed a series of pointed questions. "What are the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court for a CBI probe?" the Chief Justice asked, to which the counsel sought time to respond. Chief Justice Nagu then remarked, "Why did you start arguments when you are not ready?" before asking, "How do we decide that the case is fit for transfer?" The counsel again requested additional time, prompting the court to adjourn the case. The counsel representing the Union Territory (UT) of Chandigarh opposed the plea, submitting that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has already been set up to probe the incident. He pointed out that the

First Information Report was registered on October 9, two days after the incident, and the PIL was filed on October 13. The UT counsel argued that the petitioner, Navneet Kumar of Ludhiana, had no personal connection to the matter and approached the court merely after reading newspaper reports. "There is no allegation of bias or political interference," he said, questioning the maintainability of the petition. The PIL, filed under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution, seeks a CBI probe into the alleged suicide of Kumar, a Haryana-cadre IPS officer found dead on October 7 at his official residence in Chandigarh with a gunshot wound to the head. Multiple suicide notes were reportedly recovered, including one dated September 7, allegedly naming eight IPS officers and two IAS officers as responsible for his mental distress and alleging abetment, caste-based harassment, and conspiracy. The petitioner, a 43-year-old NGO president, claims that the Chandigarh Police investigation is compromised due to institutional overlap, as the deceased served under

## Months after Bengaluru cricket stadium stampede, Karnataka Govt begins process to set up new 80,000-capacity stadium at cost of Rs 2,350 crore



The Karnataka Cabinet Thursday decided to consider clearances for a new cricket stadium after a Detailed Project Report (DPR) is prepared, following an in-principle approval by the Karnataka Housing Board (KHB) to facilitate the construction of a stadium for 80,000 spectators in rural Bengaluru. The new cricket stadium has been projected as being necessary for Bengaluru, as the existing M Chinnaswamy Stadium, operated by the Karnataka State Cricket Association, has a capacity of only 33,000 spectators. The Cabinet mentioned in a note on Thursday, "The Karnataka Housing Board has given in-principle approval to the implementation of the project of an international-level cricket stadium and complex on a 75-acre plot of land in Indlavadi village under the Comprehensive Development Plan in Suryanagar-4th Phase Layout, Bangalore City, at a cost of Rs 2,350 crore. The KHB has been asked to present it again before the Cabinet for a decision after a detailed project report." "The Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru is old and has a capacity of only 38,000. Many cities, both big and small, have stadiums that are bigger than Bengaluru. A Bengaluru Stadium, which meets the needs of the city with all the modern facilities, is a must for the city," it further said. In arguments in the Karnataka High Court in a suo motu case taken up by the court over the stampede deaths, the state advocate general told the court that the cause of the stampede was the nearly 2.5 lakh fans trying to access the stadium, which can accommodate 33,000 fans.

"The event (at the stadium) was organised on behalf of RCB by DNA Event Management. KSCA is in charge of the stadium. All the security is provided by them in the stadium. All the deaths happened at the entry gates of the sta-

dium. The problem is that 33,000 people were expected – which is the capacity of the stadium – but 2.5 lakh people turned out," Advocate General K M Shashikiran Shetty told the Karnataka High Court. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is an avid cricket enthusiast and often watches matches at the KSCA stadium in Bengaluru, was also asked after the stampede regarding the capacity and traffic problems linked to the present stadium, and he responded, saying, "The government will look into this matter." According to senior state officials, including those from the police department, "the long-term solution to prevent incidents like the stampede is the relocation of the cricket stadium to a higher capacity facility somewhere on the outskirts of the city." The Justice John Michael D'Cunha judicial commission set up to probe the June 4 stampede at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium has recommended that no major public events should be held at the stadium till safety measures are installed. The commission recommended the introduction of several measures at the stadium – including adequate entry and exit gates, integration with public transport facilities, and infrastructure for emergency responses – before conducting any future public event.

"Until such infrastructural changes are made, continuing to host high-attendance events at the current location poses unacceptable risks to public safety, urban mobility and emergency preparedness," the judicial commission has said in a recommendation made in a report submitted to CM Siddaramaiah on July 11. The commission stated in its report that without addressing "systemic limitations" at the Bengaluru cricket stadium – located in the heart of the city on the M G Road – it would not be appropriate to hold large public events at the stadium. Given the systematic limitations, "the commission strongly recommends that stadium authorities consider relocating events that are expected to attract large crowds to venues that are better suited for such large gatherings," the report has stated. "The design and structure of the stadium were unsuitable and unsafe for mass gathering. All the entry and exit gates were directly opening into the public footpath. Spacious and organised holding area for crowd were not provided at the entry, as a result, the audience were forced to queue up on the footpath or the road abstracting and endangering the pedestrians and vehicular movements as well as giving scope for the miscreants to join the crowd aggravating the risk especially in the absence of proper security management," the Justice D'Cunha commission report said.

## 'Appreciation I received motivated me to keep running': Meet the 55-year-old cop who won the Delhi Half Marathon

Singh participated in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon for the first time in 2015, finishing first in the Delhi Police Cup category. Singh participated in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon for the first time in 2015, finishing first in the Delhi Police Cup category. Subhash Singh has been running half marathons since 2015 and has won several. Last Sunday, the 55-year-old Delhi Police head constable took part in the Delhi Half Marathon – and came first in the 55-59 category. He completed the 21-km race in 1 hour, 26 minutes, and 54 seconds – the fastest time recorded in the age category. Congratulating him on his success, the Delhi Police, through its official X account, stated, "Your dedication and determination are truly inspiring." Singh, who hails from Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu, is posted at the Delhi Police Academy (DPA) in Jharoda Kalan, where he provides sports training to new recruits. He runs daily to maintain his fitness and plays basketball and other sports. Head constable Subhash Singh (Express Photo) Head constable Subhash Singh (Express Photo) Speaking to The Indian Express, Singh said, "Except the Covid period when it was paused, I have participated in every marathon organised in Delhi and other cities since 2015." Singh participated in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon for the first time in 2015, finishing first in the Delhi Police Cup category. "I was posted in the New Delhi district at the time. The appreciation I received from my seniors after that victory motivated me to keep running for the force," Singh said. "My dream is to participate in the Procram Slam run in the future. I have already reg-



istered for upcoming races in Kolkata and Mumbai, and I hope to make my force proud," Singh added. Having retired from the Indian Army from the post of Havildar, Singh joined the Delhi Police as a constable in 2007. He was promoted to head constable three years ago. He lives with his wife and two sons in a rented accommodation in Delhi's Rohini. In 2024, Singh secured the first prize in the Tata Mumbai Marathon in the 50+ age category, completing the 21-km race. "Our whole family has always believed in staying fit. My younger son plays basketball alongside his studies," he added. Over 40,000 runners participated in the Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2025 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Among them were 600 Delhi Police personnel, ranging from constables to DCPs. The marathon featured three race categories: 5 km, 10 km, and 21 km.

## Video of Punjab AAP MLA's son firing gunshots at a party goes viral; 'it's a toy gun', claims Jiwan Singh Sangowal

Sangowal Video Harjinder Singh, Ludhiana Assistant Commissioner of Police (South) said that the MLA's son has been called for questioning with the weapon seen in the video. A purported video of the son of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal allegedly firing gunshots in the air during a party in Punjab's Ludhiana district went viral Friday, prompting the police to launch an investigation into the incident. In the video, Jaggal Singh, the younger son of AAP's Gill MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal, is purportedly seen firing multiple times in the air using a weapon. Police sources said that the incident happened during a pre-wedding party at Gill village of Ludhiana district a few days ago. In the video, MLA Sangowal's elder son Davinder Singh alias Laadi is also seen in attendance with his brother. As Jaggal purportedly fires from the weapon multiple times on the dance floor, his brother, Davinder, then puts his hand on his shoulder and asks him to stop. Ruling AAP MLA ?@JiwanSangowal's son Jaggal Singh allegedly opened fire multiple times at a party some days ago in Gill village of Ludhiana district. Police says investigation has started and the son has been called for questioning with the weapon Harjinder Singh, Ludhiana Assistant Commissioner of Police (South) said that Jiwan Singh Sangowal's son has been called for questioning with the weapon seen in the video to verify facts. "We have called him for questioning and to verify details. Action will be taken accordingly," said the ACP. MLA Jiwan Singh Sangowal confirmed to The Indian Express that the man



seen firing in the video was his son. He, however, claimed that his son Jaggal was firing from a "toy gun."

"It is the handiwork of Opposition parties, including Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) to defame us. They have made the video viral to defame me, our party and the AAP government. In the video, the weapon from which my son is seen firing is a toy gun, and not an original one. It's a sort of air gun that children play with on Diwali and is commonly available in homes," claimed the MLA. Divya Goyal is a Principal Correspondent with The Indian Express, based in Punjab. Her interest lies in exploring both news and feature stories, with an effort to reflect human interest at the heart of each piece. She writes on gender issues, education, politics, Sikh diaspora, heritage, the Partition among other subjects. She has also extensively covered issues of minority communities in Paki

# What is the role of a pay commission? | Explained



The Central government has constituted the 8th Central Pay Commission (CPC) with retired Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai as the Chairperson. It also consists of Professor Pulak Ghosh, faculty at IIM Bangalore, as a part-time member and Pankaj Jain IAS, Secretary to the government of India, as member-secretary. It will submit its report within 18 months.

What is a pay commission?

Pay commissions are set up in India by an executive order based on a Cabinet decision. The role of the CPC is to go into various issues of salary structures, retirement benefits and other service conditions of Central government employees, including defence personnel, and make suitable recommendations on the changes required. The first CPC was set up in 1946.

What are its terms of reference?

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the pay commissions are finalised by the Union Cabinet. The TOR of the 8th CPC requires it to consider certain factors while making its recommendations. They include economic conditions of the country and the need for fiscal prudence; need to ensure adequate resources for developmental expenditure and welfare measures; unfunded cost of non-contributory pension schemes; impact of recommendations on State government finances that usually adopt the recommendations of the CPC; and the prevailing emolument structure and working conditions available for central public sector undertakings and private sector employees.

What are the international practices?

Globally, till the 1970s, the compensation system for the public sector was aimed at achieving equity by benchmarking them with similar roles in the private employment market. In the 1980s, efficiency replaced equity as the key principle in determining compensation. Starting with the 1990s, performance and incentives became the key principle while balancing them with affordability. At present, public sector compensation systems are evolving to recruit and retain individuals with appropriate competencies and skills, while attempting to contain the total cost to the public exchequer. As per global standards the key characteristics of fair compensation in the public sector are clear philosophy, ability to attract talent, internal equity, external competitiveness and clarity. In India while internal equity is given adequate weightage, external competitiveness lags behind when it comes to compensation for top positions. It is interesting to note some comparative data for large democracies on certain parameters of public sector employment summarised in Table 1. It can be observed that while the general perception in our country is that public sector employment and wages are gargantuan with limited efficiency, it is lesser in almost all parameters when compared to other major democracies.

What next?

There are certain key aspects of the TOR that require attention. First, the TOR requires the CPC to compare the pay structure of the public sector with the private sector. This has been addressed even in earlier pay commissions. Entry level posts in the public sector have significantly higher salaries than their private counterparts while it is the opposite for higher posts and specialist roles. The compression ratio, that is, the ratio of lowest to highest salaries in the Central government has been fixed at 1:12.5 in the seventh CPC. Privileges and perks coupled with job security is a significant intangible that makes up for lower salary packages in top government posts. However, this needs to be revisited with respect to certain top posts and specialist roles in order to attract and retain talent. Second, intangibles like learning and development, training, and work environment including flexible working and health promotion are not part of the TOR. It may be expected that the Commission will address these issues in its final report. Finally, the 8th CPC has been mandated to consider economic conditions, need to ensure adequate resources for welfare, and unfunded cost of non-contributory pension schemes. The pension bill for the year 2025-26 is estimated at ₹2.76 lakh crore out of the total revenue expenditure of ₹39.44 lakh crore of the central government. The impact of non-contributory pension schemes on the government exchequer needs to be borne in mind while making recommendations. However, welfare measures are political decisions that keep evolving. New schemes are announced by the Centre from time to time. Considering these factors, a commission with members from the judiciary, academia and bureaucracy may not be equipped to assess the impact. There may also be a case for broad basing the commission with finance and human resource professionals to bring in diverse opinions. Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified.' He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal.

# SIR in Tamil Nadu: a controversial exercise



As anticipated, the DMK and its allies in Tamil Nadu have launched an attack against the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls ahead of next year's Assembly elections. Their concern is that the exercise, being conducted with undue haste, could precipitate arbitrary deletions and additions of voters, particularly affecting minorities and members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They believe that it effectively functions as a de facto National Register of Citizens. In a petition filed before the Supreme Court, the DMK has contended that by imposing citizenship-like burdens of proof upon electors, the SIR exceeds its statutory remit and infringes upon citizens' fundamental right to vote. Its argument centres on the proposition that the unilateral 'imposition' of such an unprecedented, resource-intensive, and socially disruptive process upon a State, without consultation or demonstrable administrative exigency, transgresses the federal structure of the Constitution, recognised as part of its basic structure. The party has emphasised that in bypassing statutory safeguards, the State concerned has effectively been reduced to a mere implementing agency for centrally determined, unilateral processes, thereby posing a grave risk of disenfranchising large numbers of bona fide voters. It has informed the Court that the manner in which the SIR has been directed to be conducted is found neither in the Representation of the People Act, 1950, nor in the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

Ever since more than 68 lakh names were deleted from the voter lists in Bihar, triggering outrage from Opposition parties, the DMK and its allies have been apprehensive about the exercise. There were allegations that genuine voters, particularly Muslims, were removed from the

rolls. The DMK and its allies view the SIR as a "ploy" to deprive legitimate voters of their right to franchise. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has emphasised the need for an authentic and transparent electoral roll, saying adequate time must be given to complete the process.

The DMK and its allies convened an all-party meeting to discuss the issue, although it was boycotted by the AIADMK and the BJP and several smaller factions. The DMK-led alliance has announced Statewide demonstrations on November 14 against the SIR, which commenced on November 4. About 68,700 booth-level officers were engaged in the enumeration, with each officer tasked to cover a vast number of households within a short period. The party has even established a help centre with a dedicated telephone number to address citizens' concerns regarding the SIR. Former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has dismissed these concerns, contending that since the entire exercise is being carried out by State government employees, any discrepancies would be the DMK's responsibility. BJP State president Nainar Nagenthran echoed similar sentiments, urging his party members to remain vigilant against what he characterised as a conspiracy to remove voters from the rolls. However, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, headed by actor Vijay, has also opposed the SIR. Voters in Tamil Nadu appear increasingly confused by the contradictory positions of the DMK and its allies on the one hand and the AIADMK and its partners on the other. Mr. Stalin has cautioned that the details sought by the ECI in the enumeration form may leave even the more discerning sections of the electorate bewildered, potentially resulting in deletions on the pretext of non-compliance with procedural requirements. To underscore his point, he recalled the clarification provided by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) regarding the requirement to affix a new photograph to the form. While the CEO stated that this was optional, it remains unclear whether Electoral Registration Officers across the State will adopt a consistent approach to the matter. The abbreviated time frame of 30 days to complete the exercise will, according to the DMK and its allies, be disastrous. The DMK and its allies also believe that the inclusion of lakhs of migrant workers from Hindi-speaking States would alter the demographic composition of the voters' list and favour only the BJP and its allies. They believe the inclusion is an indirect strategy employed by the BJP to gain a foothold in Tamil Nadu. The DMK-led alliance now pins its hopes on the Supreme Court.

# What South Asia wants from COP30



ceeding 35°C — from around 100 to approximately 200 annually — by 2100. The region-specific economic and non-economic impacts are diverse — Nepal's glacial lake outburst flood, coastal threats in the Maldives, India facing sweltering heatwaves, and Sri Lanka's emerging drylands and water stress. The support that is needed

What is required is adequate technical, institutional and financial support to develop and implement plans domestically. Mainstreaming locally-led adaptation practices can also complement scientific innovation and strengthen local ownership. Internationally, deliberations must proceed to reach consensus on fundamental, simple, and non-burdensome indicators under the Global Goal on Adaptation. These indicators must be multi-dimensional and adaptable for use at regional and national levels, focusing on tracking progress rather than penalising countries with limited capacity. Third, ambitious action must begin by investing in trust. The past is marred by delayed finances, broken promises and diluted commitments from developed countries. The current geopolitics is not conducive to an ambitious climate outcome. Further, an easy exit from a climate agreement not only leads to increased emissions but also undermines trust in the process. Analysis by the CEEW shows that developed countries are not on track to meet their 2030 NDC target. Hence, developed countries must fulfil their existing pledges and build momentum with ambitious NDCs aligned with 1.5°C, reinstating faith in multilateralism. Fourth, deliver climate finance that is predictable (sustainable funding), adequate (meets the needs and balanced with mitigation), fairly distributed and accessible (easy, low-transaction cost access with priority for vulnerable countries), and non-debt inducing (grants and highly concessional financing instruments). For this, the Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T (\$1.3 trillion) must be underpinned by clear pathways: who delivers, how much, by when, and with what accountability. Without clarity, the \$300 billion adaptation target by 2035 is meaningless. South Asian countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries, must call for a tripling of adaptation finance with operational clarity. And, South Asia's needs are urgent. Dedicated regional allocations from multilateral funds such as the Green Climate Fund, the Loss and Damage Fund, and the Adaptation Fund can simplify and amplify access to predictable finance. Most importantly, design and launch a 'South Asian resilience finance facility' to mobilise and channel innovative finance to support domestic priorities and fast-track nature-based solutions.

Fifth, climate transition cannot be left to nation-states alone; non-state actors must become engines of scale. Non-state actors such as sub-national entities, the private sector, civil society, youth, academic institutions, as well as businesses can supplement state efforts toward enhancing ambition. The private sector can unlock finance. Sub-national entities can align with domestic goals and deliver. Civil society can conduct independent assessments to expedite the process of bridging domestic capacity gaps and, regionally, develop a regional compendium to share promising traditional knowledge, practices, and systems across the region. Youth can mobilise urgency, innovation and intergenerational equity into climate solutions. Businesses can mainstream sustainability into markets and value chains. If done rightly, it can reinforce a cycle of verified action that builds trust and accountability within the multilateral climate governance. Ultimately, transformation hinges on the convergence of finance, technology and innovation. There are several examples of innovative solutions being deployed; however, fewer examples demonstrate their ability to deliver systemic transformations. Most of the South Asian countries are still largely excluded from international technology flows. A recent report by the CEEW shows fewer than one in three initiatives focus exclusively solely on Africa, Asia, or Latin America — most span multiple regions or are often clubbed with countries in the Global North. Financially, it is imperative to channel capital towards the climate agenda through blended finance instruments, debt-for-nature swaps and market mechanisms with an explicit focus on vulnerable regions. Digital innovation, including artificial intelligence, big data, digital public infrastructure (DPI), blockchain and remote sensing, can unlock new forms of data cooperation and efficiency. The time for promises is now over. Delivery will be the only currency of trust at COP30. That delivery must rest on three mutuals: mutual clarity (about responsibilities and pathways), mutual cooperation (that recognises both vulnerabilities and opportunities), and mutual implementation (turning promises into practice, across borders and sectors). South Asia is leading, innovating and demanding that multilateralism be restored to credibility through delivery.

# What if the richest wealth isn't money at all?



Money is not always wise. Let's pause talking about it for a moment. Are you a college graduate with zero net worth? Haven't built a business empire yet and don't own any luxury possessions? Don't worry. You are still wealthier than a 65-year-old billionaire with a private jet in one crucial sense: TIME. A healthy teen has roughly 60-70 years of life ahead, equating to nearly 3,00,000 to 3,50,000 wakeful hours to learn, experiment, create, and build. He might not have wealth deposited in a bank, but he is time rich with more hours in his life. In contrast, a 65-year-old, who has created immense financial resources and freedom, is not rich enough in terms of wealth of time. Time, and probably health, might not be on his side to pivot, explore new ventures, or recover from shocks or failures. Time is non-renewable. Time is compounding. The more you have, the more power you gain over learning, skill-building, growth, and life choices. In his bestselling book *Outliers - The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell suggested that mastering any skill requires roughly 10,000 hours of deliberate practice. By investing just four hours every day into learning high-value skills, a 20-year-old graduate accumulates roughly 1,460 hours per year. With nearly 40 years left until retirement, he has around 58,400 hours of time ahead. Applying Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000-hour principle to build real expertise, the young graduate has ample time to master five or six skills. Each skill can become a gateway to new opportunities and career pivots, both during his career and even after retirement. Time, in this sense, is the invisible currency that compounds quietly in the background, while most people focus only on the compounding of money through SIPs, equity or other financial instruments. It is time that compounds into mastery, freedom, and meaningful achievements, if spent wisely. Most people are not truly time-poor, but they are constantly leaking it. Hours quietly vanish into thin air owing to unconscious habits such as binge-watching, doomscrolling, social-networking, checking notifications instantly, or mindless multitasking. Even if you waste one hour a day, it adds up to 365 hours a year and over 40 years, that becomes 14,600 hours, enough time to master at least one or two new skills, write a book, or build a passive income stream, or transform health and fitness. Time, when managed wisely, compounds in multiple ways money cannot. Hence, instead of chasing millions and billions, if you count your hours and use them judiciously, you can create wealth that no bank account could ever hold. Fortunes can be rebuilt from scratch, but lost time is gone forever. Money multiplies, minutes melt. Often, people say, "I don't have time". Unlike money, which is unevenly distributed, time is the ultimate leveller. Every human, rich or poor, young or old, has the same 24 hours in a day. What differs is awareness and how those hours are spent. Time-money paradox Many people are of the opinion that high-paying jobs automatically makes them wealthy. Yet, the reality is often the opposite. Spending long hours in a routine, high-paying role might increase your bank balance, but if considerable time is not invested in learning, building skills, or exploring new opportunities, the true potential of both time and money would be lost. You might earn more, but you would fail to compound your financial intelligence, entrepreneurial ability, or marketable skills, the real

skill-sets or assets that could multiply income far faster than a salary ever would.

The irony: people trade their finite hours, the precious time, for money, but because the work is often repetitive, mechanical or low-value in terms of learning and long-term growth, they miss the chance to turn each hour into a leveraged asset. Early-career professionals who focus solely on income generation may end up years later with an impressive resume, but limited freedom, knowledge, or alternative income streams, leaving them dependent entirely on their salary and active work for financial security. A time billionaire flips this equation. He treats every hour as an asset, strategically investing it in learning high-value skills, building financial literacy, or launching ventures. His goal is not merely to earn money but to use time efficiently, allowing decades of effort and learning to compound into both wealth and genuine financial freedom. Recognising this paradox empowers you to escape mundane routine jobs and consciously invest your hours where they generate the highest financial leverage. If you treat TIME as your most valuable asset, then every Rupee, every decision, and every opportunity will compound into true wealth. Invest in you, master your hours, then financial freedom will follow naturally.

# In Delhi study, ragas in the operation theatre cut anaesthesia use

At first glance, the photograph looks like a scene from a science-fiction film or one of those viral, digitally altered images. A woman lies calm on an operating table under bright white lights, a headset snug over her ears. But it's real and was taken inside a hospital in New Delhi more than a year ago. It's a snapshot of an unusual clinical trial by a group of anaesthesiologists from Lok Nayak Hospital and Maulana Azad Medical College. They wanted to investigate if music flowing through headphones during a minor surgery could soften the blow of strong medicines. "All our surgeries are in completely new environments for patients and we give them general anaesthesia to produce unconsciousness," Sonia Wadhavan, director professor of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care at Maulana Azad Medical College, said. "But since all these groups of drugs come with some amount of side effects, we asked: if we integrate music therapy with our anaesthetic agents, can it help us reduce the requirement of these drugs?"

Dr. Wadhavan and her team designed a randomised controlled trial, which is a kind of experiment where people are split into groups by chance, like drawing names from a hat, to see if something truly works. One group listened to slow, soothing ragas for the entire surgery; the other did not. The results were telling: people who heard the music needed about 15% less anaesthetic. Their heart rates stayed steady, their blood pressure held firm, and stress hormone levels fell. The study suggested that music helps patients heal with less strain and less medicine. The study, published in the October 2025 edition of the journal *Music and Medicine*, ran over 11 months. Fifty-six adults planning gallbladder removal, a common surgery to take out the small organ that holds digestive fluid used to break down fats, volunteered for this research. The patients were split into two groups: one listened to soft flute and piano music during surgery; the other wore identical noise-cancellation headphones and were in silence. The music the researchers chose wasn't random. It featured two Hindustani ragas: the bright, uplifting tones of Raga Yaman and the calm, soothing notes of Raga Kinvani.

First, implementation remains the Achilles heel of climate action. The gap between what is promised in action and finance, and what is delivered, is glaring. Whether it is in implementing the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) or delivering finance, the challenge remains. So far, only 65 countries have submitted enhanced NDCs

A decade after the Paris Agreement, the climate crisis has only intensified. South Asia bears the brunt as monsoon floods, landslides and heatwaves. These shocks unfold amid a fractured global order — multilateralism under strain, climate pledges weakened, and trade protectionism rising. The withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement, yet again, has tested the credibility of global processes. Yet no single actor, however powerful, can halt collective action. Others must and are stepping forward. Small island-states, emerging economies and coalitions of the willing have taken the lead. Increasingly, this mantle is passing to South Asia, home to nearly two billion people facing an extraordinary diversity of climate risks. Inaction is not an option. There have been wide consultations (as COP30 Special Envoy for South Asia) with government and civil society representatives across Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. We have listened to localised concerns, recognised many areas of convergence for messages that negotiators are taking to COP30 in Brazil, and identified several opportunities for regional climate cooperation. South Asia's concerns and priorities We realised that South Asia's response is pragmatic and collaborative: regional coalitions, investment in renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture and integration of climate adaptation into development planning. Its climate leadership may be emergent, but it is driven by necessity, experience and the moral imperative to protect its people and signal to the world that action cannot wait. The discussions yielded five concerns and priorities of South Asian countries.

First, implementation remains the Achilles heel of climate action. The gap between what is promised in action and finance, and what is delivered, is glaring. Whether it is in implementing the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) or delivering finance, the challenge remains. So far, only 65 countries have submitted enhanced NDCs. Further, a recent study by the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW) revealed that out of the 203 initiatives assessed (launched since 2015), approximately 5% of the initiatives have achieved their stated goals. This underscores the need for the Global South to harness regional cooperation to create impactful and targeted initiatives. Climate pledges require robust governance, including a clear plan and timeline for reporting progress. Willing countries can, first, strengthen a regional forum to build a common stance and advance shared action that can be recognised at platforms such as the G-20, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and BRICS. Moreover, ensure governance structures are inclusive, giving voice to the underrepresented, such as subnational governments, local communities and women. Also, strengthen regional cooperation by sharing knowledge, aligning priorities and scaling technology solutions across borders. Initiatives such as India's Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and Nepal's Sagarmatha Sambaad focused on mountain vulnerabilities, show how focused partnerships can advance both national and regional goals. Second, climate adaptation must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with emission mitigation. According to the ADB, South Asia could experience an increase in days ex-

## With QCO rollbacks underway, Commerce Ministry weighs quick response to dumping concerns



The anti-dumping wing of the Commerce and Industry Ministry, Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), is weighing provisional legal measures aimed at a quicker response to industries' concerns over dumping of goods from various countries, a senior government official said. Amid a comprehensive revamp of quality control orders (QCOs) that have resulted in rollbacks of standards on over 20 products, which could rise to 208 products if Niti Aayog's suggestions are implemented, imports are likely to increase. This comes at a time when US tariffs globally are reshaping trade flows, particularly impacting Chinese goods. While China's exports to the US have dipped, exports to other countries, including India, are on the rise.

"We are strengthening our DGTR framework to see that we can respond to industry's concerns over dumping in a time-bound and faster manner. A time frame has been set internally to complete investigations swiftly. We are looking at provisional measures required in any case where there is clear evidence of an injury to the domestic industry. These are legal provisions that other countries are also using," the official said. According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), dumping is when a country exports a product at a price lower than its "normal value," which is usually the domestic price or below the cost of production. Dumping itself is not illegal, but the WTO allows importing countries to take action against it if it causes material injury to their domestic industries. These actions are known as anti-dumping measures and are governed by the WTO's Anti-Dumping Agreement. Former trade officer and head of think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), Ajay Srivastava, said that as QCOs are rolled back, India must closely monitor import trends—daily if required—to ensure the absence of quality rules does not trigger a surge of dumped or sub-standard materials.

"For polymers, fibres, metals and intermediates where QCOs have been withdrawn, global suppliers may attempt to offload excess inventory at predatory prices. Continuous surveillance of customs data, DGTR alerts, and landed price patterns will help the government act swiftly through anti-dumping, safeguard or tariff-rate measures if unfair trade practices emerge. This approach preserves the benefits of the QCO rollback—lower costs, smoother supply chains—while protecting domestic industry from injury caused by dumped imports," Srivastava said. Amid trade shock due to US tariffs, India's overall exports in October registered a 12 per cent decline. At the same time, imports surged to a record \$76 billion. While the surge was primarily led by a 200 per cent surge in gold import bill, non-oil and non-gold imports have also gone up by 12 per cent, official data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Monday showed. In the absence of a trade deal with the US, the risk of a further decline in exports and a surge in imports could put further pressure on the trade deficit, which also surged to its highest at \$41 billion in October. In what could increase the import bill further, Indian public sector refiners on Monday signed a one-year deal for American liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports. However, the government expects a range of measures, from a loan moratorium to the Export Promotion Mission (EPM), to help export growth. A working paper released by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) in September this year had said that imports fell by 13 per cent in the year after a QCO notification and by 24 per cent over the long term, indicating the impact of a sharp rise in QCOs during the last three years.

"Intermediate goods face the steepest decline. QCOs lead to a 16 per cent reduction in imports in the year of notification, a 17.5 per cent decline in the subsequent year, and a 30 per cent fall over the long term. Overall, QCOs suppress imports—especially of intermediate inputs critical to domestic production—without improving export performance, challenging their efficacy in boosting competitiveness," the CSEP report said. The surge in the use of these orders has had a substantial impact on supply chains. Between 2016 and 2025, the number of products brought under mandatory QCO coverage grew from fewer than 70 to nearly 790, including one Omnibus Technical Requirement (OTR) that covers 20 products. The implementation of QCOs restricts the import, manufacturing, distribution or sale of products covered under the orders without a Standard Mark, except under a valid licence from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

## Railways launches new policy to boost bulk cement transport; sets freight rate at Rs 0.90 per tonne/km

As part of efforts to diversify the transportation of commodities via rail to meet new demands, Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday launched a new policy to facilitate the movement of bulk cement, along with a new rate. The new rate for bulk cement has been rationalised to Rs 0.90 per tonne per km. Earlier, it was based on different distance bands.

Vaishnaw said that the policy will ensure the supply of bulk cement from plants to terminals near consumption centres in specialised wagons, which will be cost-effective and environmentally friendly. The Railways will also facilitate the setting up of bulk cement terminals across the country under its Bulk Cement Terminal policy, the Minister said. The consumption of bulk cement, in place of bagged cement, is increasing, and in some metro cities, it has crossed a 50 per cent share. "The policy has been launched while keeping the middle class in mind, which will help them to get construction material at reduced price. The policy will cut down the transportation costs by 30 per cent. Earlier the freight rate was in slabs. For example, the plant at 200 km and 210 km had to pay different rates, whereas there is not much difference in the distance between them. Now, it is the flat rate of Rs 0.90 per tonne per km for actual distance. Now it will not matter how far the cement plant is, it has now become uniform and has eliminated the biases," said Vaishnaw. He further said that with the implementation of the Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal Policy, the construction of the terminal or railway sidings has become easy. "With the new policy, we will see many cement terminals now. The CONCOR has launched a special container for the bulk cement transportation, which will be pollution-free. In the next reform we will focus on another industry," the Minister said. Almost 17 per cent of the total cement transported in a year moves via the Railways. During FY25, a total of 87 million tonnes (MT) of cement was transported via the Railways. Out of this, 80 MT of cement



was bagged (in covered wagons) and 7 MT was bulk cement transported through special wagons and containers. Total freight loading by the Railways during the period was over 1,600 MT, of which coal had the highest share at almost 50 per cent. Vaishnaw said that with this policy, the Railways is targeting an increase in its share of bulk cement vis-a-vis road to 30 per cent in the next five years. Cement Manufacturers' Association secretary general Apama Sharma said that the policy will ensure the faster movement of cement. "If you look at the cement industry, almost 18-20 per cent of the cement consumption is bulk, and of this, 10 per cent bulk cement is moved by the Railways. Also, given the fact that we are looking at a market where 60-65 per cent of the cement consumption is dominated by under 300 km distance. In this segment, we do not find bagged movement very viable. So, the policy appears timely, it will ensure the faster movement," said Sharma. Railway officials said that facilities such as hoppers, silos, bagging plants, etc. will be developed under the policy, which will help in unloading the cement. For this, the Railways will provide its land and give concession to the cement companies to develop the bulk cement handling terminals.

## Raising global capital to fund decarbonisation 'very, very difficult', says former MoS Jayant Sinha

Casting doubt over various estimates of financing required to decarbonise India, former Minister of State for Finance Jayant Sinha has warned that raising global capital to fund such endeavors is "very, very difficult" and that even Indian corporate capital expenditure has not been what may be conservatively required to mitigate climate change due to carbon emissions from power, transport, steel, and cement sectors. Referring to the findings of various studies, Sinha said at a seminar on Tuesday that \$50 billion-\$100 billion of additional corporate capital expenditure in the current decade was needed for India to be on a meaningful decarbonisation path. But this would be difficult, he said, considering corporate capex in India has flattened in recent years. The seminar discussed a recent report by former Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor Rakesh Mohan and former Executive Director Janak Raj, both of whom are now at New Delhi-based think-tank Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP). As per the report by Mohan and Raj, India's annual climate finance requirement for 2022-2030 is \$54 billion. In contrast, the Larry Summers and NK Singh-led independent expert group formed under India's G20 Presidency in 2023 estimated additional annual spending of \$3 trillion by developing countries by 2030. Sinha, who was Minister of State for Finance from late 2014 to mid-2016 and then in the civil aviation ministry for the subsequent three years, is currently the President of Mumbai-based sustainable and climate investment private equity firm Eversource Capital. Before his decade-long stint as Member of Parliament that ended in June 2024, he was a Partner at consulting firm McKinsey for over 13 years and Partner and Managing Director for India at philanthropic investment firm Omidyar Network, among other positions. Sinha also warned that global capital was not interested in investing in India's capital-intensive infrastructure projects when better opportunities were available in developed markets such as the US in high-return sectors



such as artificial intelligence (AI). "I say this as President of Eversource Capital. I am in the middle of this set of issues in terms of raising capital... And it is very, very difficult. Global capital, frankly, just looks at it and says 'If I can put capital in an AI data centre in Virginia and get 18 per cent dollar (return), why would I go for 15 per cent rupee IRR (internal rate of return)?' No fiduciary, no pension fund, no insurance company is going to put (in) money," Sinha said.

"Whether global capital is going to come in and fill in a \$15 billion gap or \$54 billion gap is a theoretical question. The practical question is can we mobilise large pools of domestic capital so that we are in control of our destiny." According to the former minister, for the country to achieve the government's objective of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2070, coal-fired power plants will have to be shuttered by the mid-2040s. "We have to be on a very different decarbonisation trajectory from what the government is saying. And all that the government has right now is for the power sector... For the other industrial sectors, there is no baseline case right now.

## 24 mg/dL vs 13 mg/dL: What these sugar spike numbers reveal about desi khand



An Instagram user, rohanseghalofficial, shared that drinking tea with desi khand helps keep his blood sugar levels steadier than those with white sugar, which can cause spikes. As someone without diabetes, he found that stable glucose levels make him feel better and reduce his food cravings. "Prevention is the best medicine. Research today shows that high blood sugar variability over time can lead to health issues, including diabetes, heart disease & obesity," he shared in his post. His test revealed that "after drinking tea with desi khand, his blood sugar went up by only 13 mg/dL. When he used white sugar, his blood sugar increased by 24 mg/dL."

But is desi khand really better than white sugar?

To answer this, we consulted Dr R Sundararaman, Senior Consultant in Internal Medicine at SIMS Hospital in Chennai. He explained, "Honestly, not by much. Desi khand is less processed, yes, but in the body, it behaves almost the same as regular sugar. Once you add a spoonful of it to your tea, your pancreas does not know the difference. It still has to deal with a quick rise in glucose." The doctor fur-

ther explained, "Although desi khand may have a slightly lower glycemic index, the difference is very small. For people with diabetes or borderline blood sugar, seeing desi khand as a healthier choice can be misleading. The blood sugar spike will still happen."

Does drinking tea with desi khand, either on an empty stomach or after a meal, affect blood sugar levels?

Yes, timing matters, the doctor said. "Drinking sweetened tea on an empty stomach often causes a bigger rise in blood sugar because there is nothing to slow down how fast it is absorbed. After a meal, the rise is much smaller." If you enjoy sweet tea and do not want to stop, a few small changes can help, Dr Sundararaman added: "Try using only half a teaspoon of sweetener instead of a full teaspoon. Also, avoid drinking sweetened tea first thing in the morning." If you often experience glucose spikes, consider having your tea with a small protein or fibre-rich snack. "Add flavour with cardamom, ginger, or cinnamon to help you use less sweetener. These steps will not completely stop the spike, but they will reduce its size. For someone without diabetes who is tracking glucose for prevention, is a 24 mg/dL rise, as pointed out by the Instagram user, after tea, worrying? Dr Sundararaman explained, "A single spike of 20 to 30 mg/dL after tea is normal. Even healthy people have these changes. Our blood glucose levels are supposed to rise and fall during the day based on what we eat. What matters most is the pattern, he added. "If these spikes occur multiple times a day, or if your fasting levels gradually increase over several months, then it is worth noting. Regular daily spikes from sugary beverages, such as tea and juices, or high-sugar snacks can gradually lead to insulin resistance." Therefore, a 24 mg/dL rise is not a problem in itself. However, if it occurs daily and you also consume other sweet foods or drinks, it can become an issue over time, the doctor concluded.

## 'He said, just work, do whatever you want': Smriti Irani recalls how she got married to Zubin Irani in a parking lot; why simple beginnings often lead to stronger bonds

Love stories often come with grand gestures, romantic proposals, or elaborate ceremonies. But sometimes, the simplest beginnings become the strongest foundations. Recently, actor-turned-politician Smriti Irani shared the surprisingly straightforward story behind her marriage to businessman Zubin Irani. Speaking in a candid interview with Mashable India, Smriti revealed that before tying the knot, she had one clear condition. She said, "Zubin is someone I had known for many years. So he asked, 'What's the issue?' I said, 'The issue is that I want to work.' He said, 'I'm okay with you working.' So I gave him that look — 'Oh, you're giving me permission?' He said, 'Arey yaar, just work. Do whatever you want.' I said yes. I need to work. He's like done. It was literally a handshake. So we got married in the parking lot of my mother's building. And it was a weird one because I was also working. And he said, 'Listen buddy, will you land up for the wedding?' I was like, yeah, yeah."

Smriti added that the next day, after their unconventional "parking lot wedding," the couple met for lunch at the Taj Hotel, which she described as the "high point" of their celebration. Soon after, both went back to work, with Zubin leaving for Sydney. Sharing what she believes has kept their marriage strong, she reflected, "He went for work. I went for work. That's it. No big romance happening. That's how it lasts. When you don't have these fairy tale stupid ideas."

Can practical, low-drama beginnings sometimes create stronger partnerships than romantic or idealised ones?

Sonal Khangarot, licensed rehabilitation counsellor and psychotherapist, The Answer Room, tells indianexpress.com, "Yes, practical, low-drama beginnings like Smriti Irani's 'handshake' metaphor often reflect emotional maturity rather than lack of romance. They're rooted in mutual respect, clarity, and shared values — qualities that sustain relationships long after initial passion fades. This idea aligns closely with simmer dating—the modern trend of taking things slow, allowing emotional connection and trust to develop organically instead of rushing into intensity." When partners prioritise calm communication and steady growth over grand gestures, Khangarot notes, it allows love to mature at a natural pace. So yes, practical, low-drama beginnings can often create stronger, more resilient partnerships than romanticised ones, because they're built on reality, not illusion.



How important is it for couples to maintain their individual identities and routines in the early stages of marriage?

Maintaining individual identities and routines early in marriage is one of the most underrated yet essential aspects of a healthy relationship. Psychologically, it allows both partners to preserve a sense of autonomy and self-worth, preventing enmeshment and dependency. "When each continues pursuing personal goals and routines, it strengthens self-esteem and reduces resentment. This balance between togetherness and individuality fosters emotional regulation, curiosity, and mutual respect — qualities vital for long-term harmony. As a psychologist, I see that couples who maintain their individuality tend to communicate better, feel more fulfilled, and grow together without losing themselves in the process," notes Khangarot.

How can unrealistic expectations about love and marriage affect long-term relationships?

Unrealistic expectations often set couples up for disappointment, Khangarot says, as they measure real relationships against idealised versions of love. When partners expect constant passion or perfect understanding, they overlook the effort and compromise that genuine intimacy requires. "As a psychologist, I see that emotional maturity begins with accepting imperfection in oneself and one's partner. It grows through honest communication, empathy, and learning to navigate conflict rather than avoiding it. Couples who replace fantasy with realism build stronger emotional foundations, where love feels steady, grounded, and deeply respectful — not dramatic or performative. That's what truly makes it last," concludes the expert.

## What's special about a \$12.1 million or 1070.92 crore toilet?

How much would one be willing to pay for a toilet? It could be as much as \$12.1 million or 1070.92 crore if it comes in 18-karat gold and carries the signature of Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan. That's the amount his toilet sculpture titled America, weighing 101.2 kg, fetched at a Sotheby's auction on November 18. The bidding began at around \$10 million, based on the price of the gold it carried on the given day. Belonging to a collector who had acquired it in 2017 from the Marian Goodman Gallery in New York, this is one of the editions of the flushable artwork made by Cattelan. Another edition was famously placed at the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2016, where it could be used by visitors and often had a queue of people lined up to take a look. The museum had also reportedly offered to lend it to US President Donald Trump when he had asked to borrow a Vincent



van Gogh painting.

In 2019, it was moved to Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England, from where it was stolen. Two people were convicted for robbery earlier this year, but the toilet was never recovered, and it is believed that it was melted for its gold. A note on the sculpture on the Sotheby's website states: "At every juncture, America

— much like its conceptual forefather, Marcel Duchamp's Fountain — has been championed, scandalised and credited with fostering a revolutionary discourse on what art should mean and what that meaning is worth. Today, however, with the value of art scrutinised at every turn, America constitutes a kind of checkmate, opposing even Cattelan's most caustic ad-

versaries with the absolute objectivity of its value." Cattelan has previously garnered attention for his satirical and provocative themes. Among others, he is also the artist behind the 2019 Comedian, the banana duct-taped to a wall that sold for \$6.2 million at a Sotheby's auction last year. In 2016, his wax figure of Adolf Hitler kneeling sold for \$17.2 million at a Christie's auction.

## Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant in list of probables in Delhi's Vijay Hazare Trophy squad



The Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) announced that Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant have been added to the list of probables in the Delhi team for the upcoming Vijay Hazare Trophy. The list of probables also included the players who are taking part in the ongoing Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. Last week, Kohli had informed the DDCA that he will be available for selection for the Vijay Hazare Trophy, India's domestic one-day tournament. This was after the BCCI's diktat which had asked both him and Rohit Sharma in November to play in the Vijay Hazare Trophy to remain in contention to play for India.

"Virat Kohli has confirmed to the DDCA today that he will play the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Though he has nothing to prove it shows that he still retains passion for the game. His recent hundred against South Africa shows he is still one of the best players in the world. Him playing the domestic tournament will be a motivation for the youngsters," DDCA secretary Ashok Sharma had told The Indian Express last week. Delhi begin their Vijay Hazare Trophy campaign against Andhra Pradesh in Alur on December 24. Kohli had a brilliant series against South Africa and was adjudged Player of the Series for his 302 runs across the three matches. The 37-year-old Kohli bludgeoned an unbeaten 65 in 45 balls to power India to a nine-wicket win over South Africa in the third ODI in Visakhapatnam, making light work of a target of 271 and thus sealing a 2-1 series win. The innings came after Kohli scored centuries in both of the previous matches of the series – a masterful 135 in Ranchi and 102 in Raipur, thus taking his career tally in the format to a scarcely believable 53 tons. With his exceptional performance in the series, Kohli climbed up to No 2 in the latest ICC rankings, just one place behind Rohit. Kohli hasn't been the top ranked ODI batter since he conceded his position to Pakistan's Babar Azam in 2021.

## Which Indian cricketer did Yashasvi Jaiswal compare to Dabangg, Dhurandhar and Saiyyara?

Calling Hardik Pandya bold and Shubman Gill the "most hardworking", Yashasvi Jaiswal drew parallels with Bollywood films for his teammates. Invited for the TV channel Sports Today's 'Aajtak Agenda' (ATA) live talk show in Delhi, Jaiswal was asked who he associated with certain film names. The most hardworking? (mehenati) Jaiswal picked his captain Shubman Gill. "Shubman is the hardest worker. For his consistent routines, diet, skills, running and his training is unbelievable," he said. For Dhurandhar, famous for its long-haired actors, he picked Rohit Sharma.

His answer for Bahubali surprised the host the most. "Yuzi Bhai", he said, referring to Yuzvendra Chahal. Prabhas is shown as a beefy warrior, but Jaiswal said it was because the legspinner was strong ("tagdey") mentally. "Saiyyara, which means an orbiting planet, but which the host thought means a star, was assigned by Jaiswal to Virat Kohli. The talk show host called him north star too. The 'Dabangg' of the team as per Jaiswal, was Hardik Pandya. "Hardik is Diler, enjoys cricket a lot and plays with a dabangg (audacious) style." When asked to pick someone to frontline Yeh Jawani Hai deewani starting Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone, Jaiswal cracked up the audience by saying, "Me only! It's my time to be youth." Earlier in the interview, Jaiswal recalled how he had fulfilled a long time dream of scoring a ODI century for India. "It was always my dream to make India ODI century. I wanted to fully enjoy and savour the first ton," he told ATA. He also recalled how soon after his century in the SA ODI series, Kohli had urged him to celebrate it with a specific Bollywood song. "Virat paaji said you should dance like a filmstar on the



song lagan lagan lagan lagi (a Sukhwinder earworm from Tere naam where Salman made famous the centre parting of straight hair for men). He said "Tu bhi kar, paaji's sense of humour is brilliant, he picks on words quickly," Jaiswal told ATA. The India opener would also recall his brother's sacrifice in prioritising Yashasvi's cricket ahead of himself when he came to live in Mumbai. My father also told me to not stress – because we have a shop anyway. But I'm grateful to my brother, now he's scored a century for Tripura in Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy. I like conversing with him because he understands me. We focus on fitness together and discuss diet and tell each other to not eat." There was also a heartwarming tale of when he would go to school. "Not often. I went only sometimes. But I really wanted to learn English. Someone told me I should listen to English, read books and newspapers so I would read from anything available," he told ATA.

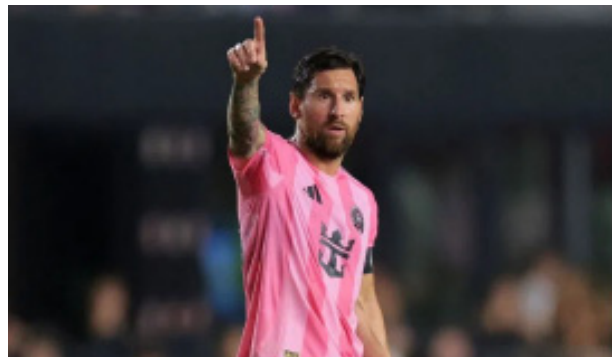
## Messi's G.O.A.T. India Tour set to dazzle, but without the football magic of 2011

Kolkata: Argentine superstar Lionel Messi's long-awaited return to India, after a magical maiden visit back in 2011, will be high on glitz but low on actual football, promising a spectacle that may not recapture the raw sporting frenzy that once shook the Salt Lake Stadium here. His artistry in a competitive match will be missing this time. It would be quite unlike 2011 when more than 85,000 fans packed the stadium, some even perched on terrace edges, to watch Argentina edge Venezuela 1-0 in a FIFA friendly.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner is not scheduled to play serious football on the 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025'. It is a fully promotional, and commercially-curated event which will begin on Saturday here and wind up on Monday in New Delhi. Yet, for a city that once worshipped Maradona, Pele, dazzled Dunga and embraced Ronaldinho, the arrival of Messi even without football is unmissable because Kolkata cannot ignore him. The organisers have opened 78,000 seats at the Salt Lake Stadium with ticket prices going up to Rs 7,000 for his 45-minute appearance on Saturday morning, raising questions on whether the city will respond with the same unrestrained passion.

Messi will spend less than 72 hours in India but will traverse four metropolis — Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi — in what has increasingly begun to resemble a high-profile roadshow involving chief ministers, corporate heavyweights, Bollywood celebrities and even a scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill, a self-confessed Messi admirer, is also expected to meet him after the Dharamshala T20I on December 14. Messi's last appearance in India remains etched in memory when on September 3, 2011, he danced past defenders, mesmerised with his left-footed grace and triggered waves of ecstasy in a packed stadium. Though he didn't score, fans left believing they had witnessed greatness. The highlight of the tour will be a 45-minute philanthropic fashion event in Mumbai on Sunday, featuring Messi, his long-time strike partner Luis Suarez and Argentina midfielder Rodrigo De Paul. "There will be celebrity models, cricketers, Bollywood celebrities, millionaires, founders, Tiger and Jackie Shroff, John Abraham among others," said Satadru Dutta, sole promoter of the tour. Suarez will also feature in a Spanish music show. The organisers have requested Messi to bring "some memorabilia" of his trophy-winning 2022 World Cup campaign which will be auctioned during the Mumbai leg. The Mumbai event at Wankhede Stadium will be preceded by a Padel Cup at the CCI. Kolkata will welcome Messi on Saturday. He will stay at a five-star hotel on EM Bypass and attend a sponsor-exclusive meet-and-greet in the morning.

Kolkata will also have a new 'Messi landmark' near the Sreebhumi Clock Tower (the Big Ben replica) on the VIP Road with a giant 70-foot statue of the Argentine World Cup winner holding aloft the Trophy. The inauguration will be a virtual ceremony from his hotel room after police denied permission for a public event. A 25ft x 20ft Messi mural, planned for next year's Durga Puja season, will also be unveiled and later presented to Messi at the Salt Lake Stadium. After the event, Messi fly to Hyderabad at 2 pm. The Hyderabad leg was added to the itinerary after Messi's proposed friendly in Kochi was cancelled. Once there, he will attend the GOAT Cup — a festival backed by Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy — featuring a 7v7 celebrity



Lionel Messi returns to India for a high-profile, non-competitive tour across Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi, featuring promotional events, celebrity interactions, and philanthropy.

match, penalty shootouts, a masterclass for young talents and a musical tribute.

Messi will conclude his tour in Delhi, where he will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Minerva Academy's prodigies, who swept the Gothia Cup, Dana Cup and Norway Cup earlier this year, will be felicitated in his presence. A nine-a-side celebrity match will also be held. Messi's visit adds a fresh chapter to Kolkata's unmatched love affair with the beautiful game. It began in 1977, when Pele and the New York Cosmos played a 2-2 exhibition against Mohun Bagan at Eden Gardens, a night that is part of the city's folklore now. Pele, following his hip surgery returned in 2015 reuniting with Mohun Bagan's class of '77 and thanking the crowd with the iconic line: "You can never have another Pele." Brazil's Dunga, Bebeto, Mauro Silva, and Colombia's flamboyant Rene Higuita have all made visits over the years. Higuita thrilled crowds with his trademark 'scorpion kick' saves in 2012, while Dunga inspired youngsters with talk of discipline and youth development. Germany's connection runs deep too as Oliver Kahn's farewell match in 2008 drew more than one lakh to Salt Lake Stadium. But perhaps no one stirred Kolkata quite like Diego Maradona, whose 2008 and 2017 visits saw nearly a lakh people throng the stadium to catch a glimpse of him. And then there was Diego Forlan, who arrived to roaring crowds in 2010 fresh off his Golden Ball-winning World Cup campaign. Handshake visit; ex-footballers snubbed Not everyone is swept by the frenzy though and former footballers feel "hurt and insulted" for not being invited. Former India and Mohun Bagan midfielder Gautam Sarkar, who famously man-marked Pele during the 1977 exhibition match, minced no words. "These are nothing but gimmicks. Messi is coming only to do a hand-shake... Pele had come here and actually played with us," the 75-year-old told PTI. Ironically, Messi arrives at a time when Indian football is grappling with serious uncertainty. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has failed to secure a commercial partner for the Indian Super League (ISL), and with the season already deep into December, its resumption remains unclear. "Instead of bringing Messi, our focus should be on how to improve football in the country. We must give utmost priority to Indian football and bring back the glory of the past," Sarkar said. Former India defender Subrata Bhattacharya too felt "insulted".

## 'Is communication alive with Sanju?': Robin Uthappa questions India team management over Samson T20I snub for Shubman Gill



Former India batter Robin Uthappa questioned the need to have disturbed the Sanju Samson-Abhishek Sharma T20I opening association after Shubman Gill fell for a golden duck in the second T20I against South Africa at his home ground in Mullanpur on Thursday. Gill's patchy form since his return to the T20I fold after a year, starting with 2025 Asia Cup in September, has raised questions given that the Punjab batter hasn't turned up with big knocks after displacing Samson. In 2024, Samson emerged as India's top batting performer post the T20 World Cup, smashing three hundreds in five innings against Bangladesh and South Africa. The Kerala batter became the first man to record three centuries in a calendar year before losing out his spot to Gill, who returned to the side after over 14 months as vice captain.

Gill has failed to score a half-century since his return in 17 consecutive innings as a T20I opener, the worst such stretch for an India opener in the format. Uthappa questioned as to why did the team management helmed by Gautam Gambhir need to disrupt the combustible Samson-Abhishek combination. "Suryakumar [Yadav] said Gill opened the bat-

ting before Sanju Samson got the opportunity to open. But once you have him the opportunity, he has got three hundreds in that and has done really well. He's averaging the second or third highest after Abhishek Sharma. He must be thinking what wrong have I done to not find a spot? Is that communication alive with Sanju Samson, where they've said, 'We are going to try Shubman out for a few games, if it doesn't work out, you jump straight back in'," Uthappa said on his YouTube channel. Gill batting opposite to his strengths Uthappa also observed that Gill is not attempting to stick to his strengths in the format since his comeback. "He's batting completely opposite to what actually works for him and what actually gives him success. He's the kind of T20 batter who gets in a little bit. He's not a Sanju Samson or Abhishek Sharma type of opening batter. He's the kind of guy who gets in, and once he gets in, you can't get him out," said Uthappa. "But he has to go through that passage of batting those first ten balls and scoring a run-a-ball or striking at 120 and up the ante after that. Because once he bats those first 15-18 balls, it's almost impossible to get Shubman Gill out. So he's doing something that's counterintuitive to his batting right now," he added.

With less than two months to go for India's opening game of the 2026 T20 World Cup in Mumbai, Uthappa said that it is imperative that India slot in their second opener immediately. "You want to figure out what works best leading into a World Cup because the Sanju-Ahishhek pair was working. It was a pair that complemented each other and brought the middle order into the game, whether it worked or not. For example, it was on the back of Sanju's hundreds that Tilak came in and scored his hundreds in South Africa. So that was a working piece that was changed, albeit to accommodate Shubman Gill," the 2007 World Cup winner added.

## 'The dew factor': Dale Steyn reveals why teams opt to bowl first a lot more in T20 cricket

South Africa fast bowling legend Dale Steyn has said that dew was playing a significant role in teams opting to bowl first in evening T20 fixtures. Responding to a comment on X (formerly Twitter), the 42-year-old said that South Africa would have won the first ODI at Ranchi had they not lost early wickets, and the same may have been the case with India in the second T20I at Mullanpur, highlighting the impact of dew in day-night matches. Steyn also emphasised how aspects such as planning and setting up matches had taken a back seat, and other elements such as power hitting had taken a greater precedence in the modern game. "Dew. Here, right now, it's the dew factor. SA should have won the first ODI, but early wickets cost them, same can be said for last night. 3 polls in the power play, pretty much gone after that. However, in general, it just seems the new way, power hitters and 6 hitting ability backed over planning and setting. New school thoughts," Steyn wrote. Here, right now, it's the dew factor. SA should have won the first ODI but early wickets cost them, same can be said for last night. 3 polls in the power play, pretty much gone after that. However in general, it just seems the new way, power hitters and 6 hitting ability...

Steyn added that the dew's effect was seen in the way Jasprit Bumrah could not control the ball as well as he often did, adding that a ball soaked in dew was one of the hardest things to control. "Yeah it does, saw last night how many full



tosses were bowled (even Bumrah). The wet ball just slides on better, takes away mystery for spinners, even if you can't read them the ball won't spin, so it's way easier. Genuinely, one of the most difficult things to deal with as a bowler," he wrote. The legendary fast bowler's words followed what former India opener Wasim Jaffer had questioned, after India's defeat, saying that he could not understand why teams opted to bowl first after winning the toss. "Why are teams so obsessed with bowling first in T20s? SA won the toss and fielded in the first game, lost. India did the same yesterday, lost. Both sides that batted first won comfortably. On good pitches, is 'fielding first' becoming an overrated T20 myth?" Jaffer had written on X (formerly Twitter) on Friday.

## After losing to streamer, Levon Aronian goes on unbeaten streak to claim South Africa leg of Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour

Levon Aronian started his trip to South Africa's Grootbos losing to a streamer, but ended up winning the South Africa leg of Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour with an undefeated run to the title. Aronian's victory over world no 1 Magnus Carlsen in the final in South Africa wrapped up the first season of the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour. Carlsen had already wrapped up the overall Tour title at the South Africa event a few days before he made it to the final at Grootbos. Before the tournament started, Aronian was playing against a streamer who goes by the handle "Witty Alien" on YouTube where the opponent tried a Martian Gambit versus Aronian. There he beat Aronian in an exhibition event which led to the veteran American grandmaster having some self doubts.

"I came here without real expectations because I played at the FIDE World Cup earlier where some games were good but I wasn't so sure that I'm in a good shape. And here (in Grootbos, South Africa) it started with some simuls. I was playing terrible there and started to wonder about everything. Then I lost against one of the streamers," Aronian told ChessBase India in an interview. "Somehow I couldn't get about those shows (exhibition games), you know? Back in the day, I used to be like more concerned with my image: not losing against streamers or in a simuls somehow. Now I don't care. "But when the actual event started, the American grandmaster went on a tear, claiming the title without a single defeat for four days of competition. "With age you start differentiating what's im-



portant and what's not. Then when the tournament started I felt that I actually am in good shape," the American grandmaster added. The title wraps up what has been a great year for the legendary Armenian-turned-American player. Aronian won the first game against Carlsen and held on to a draw in the second to seal the title. Behind Aronian and Carlsen, Germany's Vincent Keymer claimed third place after defeating Javokhir Sindarov, who will end fourth fresh on the heels of winning the FIDE World Cup in Goa. Fabiano Caruana secured fifth place with a 1.5-0.5 victory over Arjun Erigaisi. In the match for seventh place, Hans Niemann completed a comeback by beating Parham Maghsoodloo in the tiebreaks.

## 'I got death threats': Wayne Rooney opens up about his transfer to Manchester United from Everton in 2004

Rooney played for United from 2004 to 2017, winning five Premier League titles and the Champions League in 2008. (Reuters) Rooney played for United from 2004 to 2017, winning five Premier League titles and the Champions League in 2008. (Reuters) Former Manchester United captain Wayne Rooney has said that he received death threats after he left and joined the 20-time English champions from Everton in 2004. The 40-year-old, who ended his career as the club's leading goal scorer, said that he needed to have immense mental strength to deal with such actions and was clear about what he wanted in his career. Rooney played for United from 2004 to 2017, winning five Premier League titles and the Champions League in 2008. "I got death threats. My parents' house was getting spray painted and smashed up. My girlfriend at the time, wife now, her house was getting

spray painted. I think that's where you have to be mentally strong. The people around you have to help. "Leaving was difficult because I went to Manchester United, and Liverpool and Manchester was a big rivalry so that made it a lot more difficult. But I was always of a mindset of 'I don't care'. I knew what I wanted and I knew how to get there. "I had to stay tough in my mind. This was people from my city so it was tough but I thought 'I don't care', you have to be selfish and make these decisions," Rooney said on BBC's "The Wayne Rooney Show". The 40-year-old also opened up about social media's role in today's times, admitting that his 16-year-old son Kai, who is currently part of Manchester United's youth team, had to deal with a lot more eyeballs than he had when he was a youngster.

## Dilip Kumar's sisters created 'hostile environment' for wife Saira Banu leading to her hospitalisation; 'orchestrated' his second marriage to drive her away



Dilip Kumar, one of the first superstars of Hindi cinema, was known to be a charming, handsome actor who had the looks to kill. That, combined with his stellar acting talent, and his extraordinary success, made him one of the most eligible men in the Hindi film industry in the 1950s. Much like today's superstars, the rumours of his relationships dominated the tabloids and so, when he actually decided to tie the knot with Saira Banu in 1966, there was joy in the air. At the time, Dilip was 44, and Saira was only 22. Dilip was old enough that he had gotten accustomed to his ways, and Saira was at an age where she believed that she could make adjustments for him, until the "hostile atmosphere" at Dilip's house started taking a toll on her health, and she ended up at a treatment facility in London. In fact, it has also been suggested that it was because of his sisters that he married Asma Rehman, his second wife, in the 1980s, but promptly divorced her after Saira got to know about the situation.

Before meeting Saira, Dilip had famously been in a relationship with Madhubala, but the two had broken up during the filming of Mughal-E-Azam in 1957. Just three years after that, Madhubala had gotten married to Kishore Kumar, but Dilip chose to stay single. Dilip had lost his parents by then, and had become the patriarch of his family as he was the one taking care of his 11 siblings and their families. They had also gotten used to him, and felt a certain sense of ownership over him. So when Dilip fell in love with Saira in 1966, he knew that his family would have a hard time accepting anyone in his life. Thus, he came up with a plan. He decided that after getting married, him and Saira, who was also a movie star, would live separately, until he found alternative accommodation for his family members.

Dilip Kumar asked Saira Banu to 'live separately' after marriage

In his memoir, Dilip Kumar: The Substance and the Shadow, the veteran actor was quite honest about his domestic situation as he recalled that his family was "very accustomed to being in charge of me." He told her that it would be "difficult, if not impossible, for them to easily reconcile to a new person in my life, as also for her to live together with the family without any problems arising between them." In no uncertain terms, Dilip told her that his family would be a challenge for her, and he wanted her to be prepared before she took them on.

Dilip made it clear that it wasn't about her per se, as they would have a hard time getting along with anyone whom he might have married, as by now, they had gotten used to him being in their service, without any distractions. "I went on to tell her that it was inevitable that 'Main saathe aasmaan ki hoor bhi laaonga, toh usey accept nahin kar payegi meri family' (Even if I bring a celestial angel from the seventh heaven, my family will not be able to accept her). They were so used to my being a loner and were not used to sharing me with anyone," he shared, and thus concluded that, given the circumstances, they must live separately after getting married. "In such circumstances, I told her that to give our marriage the right beginning and environment, we would have to live separately, on our own," he shared and added that he would find "suitable alternative accommodation" for his sisters who were living with him, and also for the relatives who often came to stay with him.

While Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu did not live separately after getting married, they quickly realised that they would not find peace in his huge bungalow. As Dilip had a large family, he often found himself in a quiet little outhouse

attached to his bungalow. This was a place where he stayed for some peace of mind in a bustling household, and after his marriage to Saira, he asked her to stay with him here itself. In fact, he found it "awkward" to tell her that he wanted them to stay in this "segregated" part of the bungalow, but she said yes without asking many questions. "This one quality to happily fall in line with what I said was the essence of the success of our marriage," he believed. In later years, Dilip credited Saira for being as mature as she could when it came to dealing with his siblings. "When I married Saira she was young, even younger than my sisters. I wondered how she would cope with establishing the right vibes with my brothers and sisters, especially since she belonged to a small family. We siblings, were a dozen. But she not only respected and loved them as a devoted sister-in-law, but also kept me close to all of them," he told Hindustan Times. Dilip famously fell out with his sister Akhtar, who married director K Asif while Dilip was against their union. Years after K Asif's death, Saira brought the siblings back together. After Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu's marriage, there were two stars in the house, and his family was not prepared for the changes that came with her. He had anticipated that his sisters would find it "difficult" to share him, but he was shocked to see their "resentment" towards Saira as she too, was a star in her own right. Dilip's family was "ruled by" his older sister, Sakina, and his other sisters, and brothers-in-law would also frequently visit the house. Saira soon found herself in another world, as it was getting obvious that Dilip's sisters were consciously making life difficult for her. Little things like occupying the shower when Saira had to use it were getting quite frequent. In such circumstances, Saira would often walk across the road, to her parents' home to get ready for she had work commitments where she was required to report on time. Dilip knew that this was "not the ideal situation" but didn't know how he could help her. "I was silent and quietly observed the happenings till a given time, always being supportive of my sisters, so that they would not feel that I was letting them down," he said and added that Saira, who was younger than her sisters, showed immense maturity and tried to preserve these relationships, but the stress of the domestic life was starting to take a toll on her body.

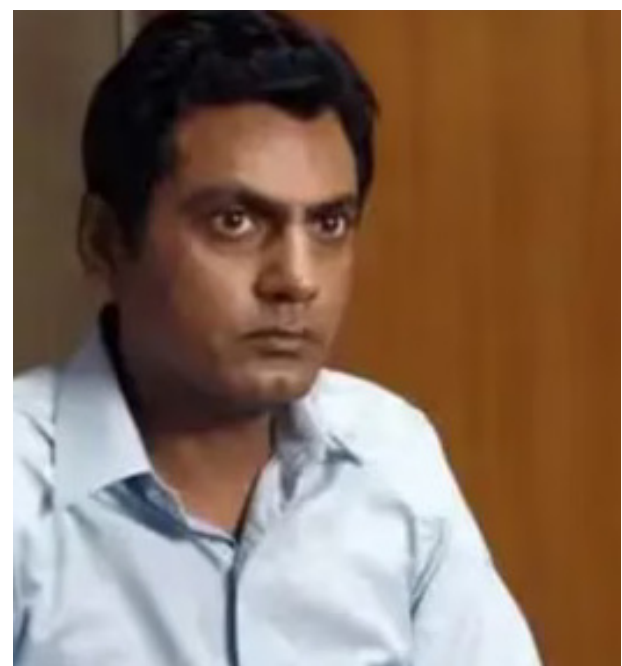
Saira became ill with "ulcerative colitis", which was the result of the "emotional stress that had been building up within her in the hostile atmosphere that she was living in and the unfriendliness she was suddenly exposed to after leading a happy, secure and sheltered life in her own home." Such were the circumstances that Saira's mother took it upon herself to send her all the meals from her home, so she could be well taken care of.

Dilip Kumar moved into Saira Banu's home after an extensive treatment that took Saira Banu and Dilip to London, Dilip decided to move into Saira's home, so she wouldn't be exposed to domestic disputes in his house. He knew that at his home, "tempers ran high," as this was the primary reason why he spent most of his time at his outhouse. Even something as simple as guests coming over would turn into a major issue in the house, and Saira would be subjected to unnecessary jibes. Dilip recalled that once when Manoj Kumar and his wife Shashi visited their home, his sister took a shot at Saira who was just entertaining the guests, and told her to be quiet in a rather rude way. Saira had no option but to listen to her timidly. After a long time of enduring such incidents on the domestic front, Dilip decided to shift to a hotel, or ask his brother to move into his empty flat but here, once again, Saira asked him to look at the bigger picture. She "pleaded with me that all these were meaningless incidents and she requested me to let things be," he said. Saira Banu and Dilip Kumar were married until his passing in 2021. Dilip Kumar's sisters introduced him to second wife Asma Rehman in his memoir, Dilip Kumar shared that in 1982, he married a woman named Asma Rehman but he said that he "became a victim of a situation that was set to precipitate a deep crisis in my marriage with Saira." He also suggested that he met Asma through his sisters and found it odd when he found her to be present in many gatherings, as per his itinerary.

said, "That was just the news. I don't think everything reported in the news is the truth." He then added, "Our film couldn't afford this. We were making the film in a very tight budget so we couldn't spend time on such useless things."

Nawazuddin shared that Irrfan was his senior at National School of Drama and the two shared a very "long association." "I think I did the maximum number of films with him. We did some 7-8 films with each other, and out of that, 3-4 films didn't even release," he said and shared that he first started working with Irrfan in 2002, and stuck with him when he was preparing for his Hollywood films. "Even when he was preparing for his Hollywood films, I would be with him all the time. Like for instance, I would play his co-actor to give him cues. So he has always had a big role. His aashirvaad (blessing) has always been there. I saw him as an older brother," he said.

In an earlier interview with ETimes, Nawazuddin's brother Shamas Siddiqui said that the two actors did not see eye to eye on the set of The Lunchbox. "Both, Nawaz and Irrfan, used to say that they would walk into the set if and only if the other one was present," he said and added, "I think such a thing happens in movies when both the actors are of such high stature." He implied that neither of the two was willing to wait for the other one on the shoot. Nawazuddin and Irrfan famously worked together in The Lunchbox, which also starred Nimrat Kaur. The two also worked together in New York, Paan Singh Tomar but in these films, Irrfan had a much bigger part than Nawazuddin.



Irrfan Khan's death in 2020 came as a shock to his fans and peers. Many of his colleagues, who had worked with him for decades across many films, continue to remember the late actor. In a recent interview, when actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui was asked about his relationship with the late actor, and if they had a tiff during the making of The Lunchbox, the actor laughed it off. He recalled that he saw Irrfan as an older brother, and had worked with him in around 7-8 films. In a chat with Hindi Rush, Nawazuddin was asked about the "rumours of a tiff" between them and the actor

## Malayalam cinema's most iconic tragedy was written in 3 days, shot in 25 days at a cost of Rs 23.5 lakh; Mohanlal charged just Rs 4 lakh



Legendary screenwriter AK Lohithadas wrote Malayalam cinema's most iconic tragedy in just three days, without even getting up to take a shower or eat. Mohanlal won his first National Film Award for his performance in this Sibi Malayil directorial, penned by AK Lohithadas.

While Malayalam cinema is known for its hard-hitting, raw dramas, its tragedies hit even harder, making it almost impossible to watch them a second time. Among the many classic tragedies the industry has created over the decades, director Sibi Malayil's Kireedam (1989) is considered by a large section of Malayalam audiences to be the finest ever. Starring Mohanlal, Thilakan, Parvathy Jayaram, and Mohan Raj in the lead roles, the film was penned by legendary screenwriter-director AK Lohithadas. The film not only earned Mohanlal his first National Film Award (Special Mention), but his and Thilakan's performances, along with their spell-binding on-screen chemistry, are considered among the best of all time.

The movie revolves around a young man, Sethumadhavan (Mohanlal), whose dream of following in his father Achuthan Nair's (Thilakan) footsteps and becoming a police officer is shattered when he becomes embroiled in a physical altercation with a hardcore criminal, Keerikadan Jose (Mohan Raj). After he beats Jose to a pulp for assaulting his father, Sethumadhavan is crowned the local don, effectively ending his police aspirations and even his chance

at a peaceful life. Kireedam's climax, in particular, is still considered a masterclass in screenwriting, direction, and film acting, with Thilakan's "Ninte achanaada parayunne, kathi thaazhe ideda" becoming one of the most iconic lines in the history of Malayalam cinema. Although many, even after three decades, consider Kireedam a benchmark for excellent screenwriting, did you know that Lohithadas crafted its script in just three days? Yes, you heard that right. In fact, he wrote it in one sitting, without even getting up to take a shower or have some food. The late screenwriter himself revealed this in a past interview. During an appearance on Amrita TV's Sangeetha Samagamam chat show, Lohithadas said, "The script for Kireedam was the quickest I've ever written in my life. I finished the entire script in about three days. I wrote the whole thing in one sitting, without bathing or eating. I was writing day and night. First of all, for me, I don't need to 'write'... Because of the emotional intensity of the story... I just need to touch the pen to the paper, and it will keep writing itself. That's how it was finished."

Interestingly, Lohithadas finished the script in just three days because he was worried he wouldn't be able to attend Sibi Malayil's wedding on the fourth day. He added, "The second half of the movie took me about a day and a half to write. However, while writing, I never know what the characters' arcs will be, how their journeys will progress, or how they will end up. Sibi would often ask, 'What will be the climax?' I'd say, 'I don't know. The climax will turn out just as it should.' We don't plan and fix a climax beforehand. I simply follow these characters and capture their journey."

During the same conversation, Sibi Malayil revealed that the title Kireedam was initially given by Lohithadas to another script he had written. However, since its director and producer weren't keen on that title, Sibi suggested using it for their Mohanlal-starrer because he felt it best fit their narrative. The project that was initially titled Kireedam eventually became Mukthi. Helmed by IV Sasi, it featured Mammootty, Urvasi, Shobhana, Seema, and Thilakan in key roles. According to Manorama Online, the filming of Kireedam was completed in 25 days at a cost of Rs 23.5 lakh. Mohanlal, whose remuneration during that period was Rs 4.5 lakh, worked in the film for Rs 4 lakh due to his friendship with its producer N Krishnakumar alias Unni. Kireedam was not only a critical success but also a commercial hit. It was later remade in multiple languages, including Tamil, with Ajith Kumar reprising Mohanlal's character.

## Chinmayi Sripada got morphed nude image; kids received death threats after husband's mangalsutra remark



Singer-dubbing artiste Chinmayi Sripada has taken to Instagram to allege online abuse by trolls. She claimed that she received a morphed nude image of herself from an anonymous account. She even blurred and posted the photo and also shared a video addressing the issue. Chinmayi shared that she has been receiving a lot of hate online, and she received the morphed image shortly after her husband, actor and filmmaker Rahul Ravindran, shared his views on the mangalsutra tradition.

She wrote in the caption, "I got a morphed image from

a page today and tagged the cops - whether legal action happen will happen or not is not the issue But I made this video for girls and their families to safeguard against the 'Lanja Munda' spewing people here who have been paid to do this for the past 8-10 weeks to harass our family.' In the video, Chinmayi said, "My husband happen to make a comment on mangalsutra and ever since then I have been abused, my children have been given death threats, I have filed a police complaint against a few on the Twitter Spaces who said that the kind of women they don't like shouldn't ever have children, and if they do, their children must die. There were men applauding and laughing at this." For the unversed, Chinmayi has been very vocal during the #MeToo movement. She had accused lyricist Vairamuthu of sexual harassment. In the video, she also spoke about how she is often the target of trolls after she opened up about facing sexual harassment. She said, "A lot of people have abused me; they have been paid for by political groups. There are IT cells who do that. There was a particular Tweet today that shared a morphed photo of me in the nude, I also tagged the police as I shared it." She added, "I am sharing so women know these kinds of things happen, men do this on social media to harass women and push us out of public spaces by making this space unsafe." Recently, Rahul, who is promoting his directorial movie The Girlfriend, reportedly shared his perspective on how cultural symbols like the mangalsutra should be a matter of personal choice and that there is no such symbol for men in society. The Girlfriend stars Rashmika Mandanna in lead role, which shows her taking a stand against her misogynist and toxic boyfriend.

## Abhishek Bachchan on why he responded to troll who accused him of buying award: 'If I had to... would have done it 25 years ago'

In October this year, Abhishek Bachchan was in the news after he won his first major acting award, a Filmfare Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for the 2024. While the award was a significant milestone in the actor's career as he got one after 25 years of being in the industry, he also faced trolling. Abhishek being himself, gave a befitting reply to some major accusations. In his recent interview, the actor was again asked about the incident. Speaking to PeepingMoon, the actor said, "If you read my response, what I said was: anyone can have an opinion, and today we all have a platform to express it - that's fine. My job as an actor is to listen to the audience and if something needs improvement, you bring that improvement through your work. But if you are a journalist and you are accusing me of buying an award or doing active PR, then that is wrong." Abhishek went on to add, "You are a journalist, and you have certain responsibilities toward the audiences who read you."

People also forget that I am known for my grandfather, who was an eminent poet. I have another grandfather who was also very prominent - both were journalists. So I come from a family of journalists. I have seen journalism closely from my mother's side. "Through you, I understand the ethics and the responsibilities. That's exactly why I responded," added Abhishek. Just to set the record straight. Never has any award been bought or aggressive PR been done by me. Just hard work, blood, sweat and tears. But, doubt you'll believe anything I say or write. So.... Best way to shut you



up is by working even harder so that you don't ever doubt any... "Many people ask, 'Why are you even replying?' I am replying because you are a journalist, and I believe you should have enough responsibility to not make accusations that are not based on truth - that are fabricated. You may have an opinion, that's fine, but you cannot accuse somebody and tarnish their name by writing something so strong without knowing the truth," added the actor. "Secondly, if awards can be bought - I don't know what others do. But if I could buy an award, I would have bought it 25 years ago. Truly. As you said, I have been nominated 3-4 times - I could have bought it then. If active PR could win awards, I would have done that 25 years ago."