

Sindhu stranded in Dubai on way to All England championship

Hyderabad: Double Olympic medallist and former world champion P V Sindhu was stranded at Dubai International Airport on Saturday, with many flights being cancelled in view of the escalating tension in the Middle East.

The champion shuttler from Hyderabad is on her way to the United Kingdom to take part in the prestigious All England Open Badminton Championships starting next week. She is accompanied by her team.

GHMC conducts food safety inspections in Secunderabad zone

Hyderabad: Officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Saturday conducted inspections at hotels and food establishments in the Secunderabad zone.

According to a press release, officials inspected Amantaran Hotel and Banquets and Samosa Karkhana premises in the Kawadiguda circle and identified violations such as negligence in sanitation management, improper record maintenance, storage of expired food items, and unauthorised use of food colours.

US, Israel attack Iran, West Asia on edge

London, Feb 28

The first wave of strikes in what the Pentagon named "Operation Epic Fury" mainly targeted areas around the offices of Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It wasn't clear whether 86-year-old Khamenei was in his office when the attack occurred. Over 200 people were killed across Iran, of them 85 at a girls school.

India has traditionally maintained a careful balance in West Asia, cultivating close defence and technology ties with Israel while preserving working relations with Iran, a longstanding energy partner and a strategic gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia. As tensions escalate between Washington, Tel Aviv and Tehran, that balancing act grows more complex.

Calling the strikes "unprovoked and illegal", Iran retaliated by firing missiles and drones towards Israel and US military bases in the region and several Arab Gulf cities, causing waves of blasts, shaking windows and sending people rushing for cover in rare and potentially far-reaching attacks on a region that prides itself on its security. US President Donald Trump called on the Iranian public to "seize control of their destiny" by rising up against the Islamic leadership that has ruled the nation since 1979. Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, all of which have a US military presence, said they had intercepted Iranian missiles. Jordan also intercepted missiles. Iran also fired missiles at Israel.

On Dubai's posh Palm Islands, a fire broke out near a hotel and huge plumes of smoke could be seen from a distance as multiple blasts echoed throughout the day. Missile trails streaked across the sky above several cities as loud blasts rang out, most likely the sound of air defences intercepting barrages of incoming missiles. Residents took cover in windowless bathrooms and closets. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian were alive "as far as her knew". The targets included members of Iran's leadership, according to a US official and another person briefed on the attacks who spoke on condition of anonymity.



to discuss an ongoing operation. There was no immediate information on whether top officials had been killed.

Tensions have soared in recent weeks as American warships moved into the region. Trump said he wanted a deal to constrain Iran's nuclear programme at a moment when the country is struggling at home with

growing dissent following nationwide protests

The immediate trigger for Saturday's strikes appears to be the unsuccessful latest round of nuclear talks. But they also reflect the dramatic changes across the region that have left Iran's leadership in its weakest position since the Islamic Revolution nearly half a century ago.

In a video announcing "major combat operations", Trump said, "When we are finished, take over your gov-

ernment. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your only chance for generations. For many years, you have asked for America's help, but you never got it." He threatened to destroy Iran's missile infrastructure and naval capacity.

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu framed the joint attacks as necessary to "remove an existential threat", arguing that without imminent action Iran would become "invulnerable". He, too, addressed the Iranian people directly, calling on them to establish "a new and free Iran", even as citizens in Israel took shelter amid retaliatory strikes. But Iran has lived through earlier cycles of external alignment and abandonment. The historical record offers a cautionary frame for reading the current moment

On December 31, 1977, President Jimmy Carter had stood in Tehran and declared: "Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world." The remark appears in the official Public Papers of the Presidents of the US. Fourteen months later, the Shah had left Iran. He never returned.

The alliance between Washington and the Iranian monarchy had deeper roots. In 1953, the CIA and British intelligence backed the overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he nationalised Iran's oil industry. For decades, Washington avoided formal acknowledgement of its role.

In 2013, the CIA released an internal history, stating: "The military coup that overthrew Mossadegh and his National Front cabinet was carried out under CIA direction as an act of US foreign policy." The restoration of the Shah's authority was not merely an Iranian political event, but an American strategic intervention.

For the next quarter century, Iran became a central pillar of US Cold War policy in the Gulf. The Shah purchased billions of dollars in American weapons and positioned himself as a bulwark against Soviet influence. The relationship appeared durable. Yet durability in geopolitics is conditional.

10 mn nationals working in warzone, India urges calm

India finds itself in uncharted territory in the wake of the US-Israel strikes against Iran, especially in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, of balancing ties between an old friend and a strategic partner.

The need to ensure the safety of 10 million Indians employed across the arc of West Asia is adding to New Delhi's immediate woes. Already, fears are being expressed about an upward spike in crude oil prices.

Hours after the joint strikes, which were followed by Iran retaliating against US bases in several Gulf countries, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "We urge all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation and prioritise the safety of civilians."

Sources said India would prefer to lie low for the moment. "Sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be respected," the statement added.

Deepika Saraswat, an associate fellow at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis and an expert on Iran's foreign policy and geopolitical developments in West Asia and Eurasia, explained, "India may not want to be seen taking sides for now. Our interest lies in a stable

West Asia".

Hours prior to India's statement, Saudi Arabia not just condemned Iranian aggression, it offered the Gulf countries "all its capabilities at their disposal in support of any measures they may undertake". It also warned of "grave consequences" resulting from continued violation of states' sovereignty. The Saudis hold some of the latest military gadgetry sourced from the US and Europe.

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, speaking at an event hosted by a news channel 'News 18', said, "We have a large diaspora. We will have to continue to maintain our strategic partnerships. The events are moving pretty fast."

The MEA, while addressing the issue of safety of Indians, said all its missions in the region were in touch with Indian nationals and had issued appropriate advisories asking them to remain vigilant, stay in contact with the missions and follow local security guidance.

"Are We Terrorists, Sir": Bhoodan Victims Break Down Before Etela in Velugumatla



Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Report February 28, (Indian Chronicle): "Velugumatla in Khammam district, once a symbol of hope for poor families striving to build their own homes, has now turned into a scene of despair. Residents who painstakingly built houses with years of savings watched helplessly as their homes were demolished, leaving them devastated. Bhoodan land victims broke down in tears before BJP national leader and Malkajgiri MP Etela Rajender, who visited the area to console the displaced families. Moved by the heartbreak-

ing scenes, he interacted with residents who narrated their ordeal. "They Came With 4,000 Police Personnel" Victims alleged that authorities arrived early in the morning with nearly 4,000 police personnel, along with municipal and revenue officials. "Why did they come like we are terrorists? Are we anti-nationals? Even when we requested two hours' time, they did not allow us to take our belongings — not even gas cylinders or our children's books," women lamented before the MP. They said pregnant women and small children have been sleeping under trees for the past four days, spending nights in fear and uncertainty. "I Spent ₹28 Lakh Building My Home" In an emotional appeal, one father said he had invested his lifetime savings into building his house. "I have two chil-



dren pursuing degree and postgraduate studies. I used ₹10 lakh of my savings, sold my wife's gold worth ₹4 lakh, and borrowed ₹14 lakh. I spent ₹28 lakh in total to build my home. Now it has been reduced to rubble. How will I repay the loans? How will I educate my children?" he asked, struggling to hold back tears. "Allegations of High Court Status Quo Violation" The victims claimed that authorities ignored legal protections. They said they had been living in the area for the past eight years, were assigned house numbers, and had been paying taxes. "We have six High Court orders directing 'status quo' to be maintained. Even then, officials and the Collector went ahead with demolitions. If High Court orders are not respected, where should we seek justice?" questioned one educated woman among the victims. "Real Estate Conspiracy Behind Demolitions" Residents alleged that the demolitions were carried out to benefit real estate interests. "This is not Bhoodan land as claimed. It is a real estate conspiracy. Influential people want to construct villas worth hundreds of crores on these 62 acres. Farmhouses of the powerful are left untouched, but our small huts built on plots bought for ₹50 per square yard are demolished," they alleged. "Etela Rajender Assures Support" MP Etela Rajender inspected the makeshift plastic shelters erected by the victims and consoled elderly persons and women. He criticized the officials for acting



"inhumanely" by not allowing residents time to retrieve essential belongings. He assured that he would stand by the victims and extend full support for a legal fight to secure justice. Several BJP leaders, including district president Nelluri Koteswara Rao, state treasurer Devaki Vasudeva Rao, Galla Satyanarayana, Sheelam Paparao, Dongala Satyanarayana, Mandadapu Subbarao, Gutta Venkateswarlu, Bandar Nareesh, and others participated in the visit.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

On the DPIIT working paper on AI and Copyright Issues

The rapid strides being made by LLMs in terms of quality, depth of information and sophistication of reasoning, are fuelled by two major factors. The first is iterative advancements in applied machine learning techniques, which continuously improve the performance of LLMs. The second is growing access to text, data and multimedia used in training these models. AI firms have argued that information on the Internet should be freely usable for such training, even if reproduction and similar acts of syndication by any non-AI entity would be subject to a licence fee and consent by the content producer. This has led to a fierce debate that pits the interests of AI hyperscalers and developers against content producers (news, entertainment and book publishing, to name a few). In this light, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade's working paper on AI and Copyright Issues' proposal is a welcome step towards a solution where content providers are remunerated, without having a system that could put India's AI ecosystem at a disadvantage.

The paper's solution boils down to a mandatory licensing framework, which would allow AI data scraping tools to limitlessly scrape public information from the Internet, but would ensure that a non-profit copyright society-like body would collect payments from AI developers on the basis of revenue accrued to them through the benefits of training their models on Indian content producers' data. The reasoning is partly driven by practical shrewdness on the drafting committee's part, which rightly reasons that opting out of data scraping, and enforcing this when AI developers ignore their wishes, is not practical for every content producer.

The other driver is a belief in data processing as a right for AI models, seeing as they do not usually reproduce content they are trained on, but synthesise fresh outputs. There are issues with how the royalty amount would be decided — small publishers who put in effort and investment in their work may chafe at receiving as much remuneration a piece as a big media house putting out hundreds of articles a day. But a system for remuneration is urgent, even if flawed. Lawsuits pitting AI firms against the publishers of the content they train models on are ongoing, and no uniform judicial thinking has materialised on the subject. The committee correctly notes that waiting for the outcome of any given litigation is unwise. The white paper — and a dissent by tech industry representatives — is a promising gesture towards a collaborative framework. The government needs to support this. A flawed system can be deliberated in the courts; the absence of one is a gift to AI firms in their ongoing disruption of the media and net landscape.

Uppal Media Club's New Committee Felicitated by Telangana Jagruthi District President Ramidi Venkat Reddy

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle): "The newly elected committee members of the Uppal Media Club (Print and Electronic Media) were felicitated on Saturday by Telangana Jagruthi Medchal-Malkajgiri District President Ramidi Venkat Reddy. The members were honored with shawls in recognition of their



appointment. "Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum Founder and Chairperson Dr. Vyasabhat Sreevani Chowdary also participated in the program. "Speaking on the occasion, Ramidi Venkat Reddy appreciated the initiative of senior journalist and newly elected President Vaddepalley Kishore for bringing together print and electronic media representatives under one platform and forming a Press Club. He stated that the committee should work in coordination to enhance the dignity and credibility of the media. "He assured his full support to the social service activities undertaken by the club. "Telangana Jagruthi leaders Rakesh Gaikwad, R. Sakoor, Harshu Asthana, Anjaneyulu, J. Saidulu, along with representatives of Uppal Media Club and others, were present at the event. "If you want, I can also format it in a slightly more formal newspaper style or headline-focused version.

Sarpanch Bendere Krishnaji Responds Promptly – Villagers Express Gratitude

"Indian Chronicle" (Jade Srinivas) "February, 28. "I am Varate Naveen from Baner Kosar village of Bambara GP. Recently, the borewell pump in our village stopped working, causing severe inconvenience to all the residents. Due to the breakdown, villagers—especially women and elderly people—faced serious difficulties in accessing drinking water. When the issue was informed to Sarpanch Bendere Krishnaji over a phone call, he responded immediately. Along with Deputy Sarpanch Jade Santosh and Ward Member Mohurle Nirmala, he visited the spot without delay and brought a borewell repair technician with them. They inspected the problem on the spot and ensured that the borewell pump was repaired at the earliest. As a result, the water supply was restored, bringing great relief to the villagers. On behalf of the entire village, we sincerely thank Sarpanch Bendere Krishnaji, Deputy Sarpanch Jade Santosh, and Ward Member Mohurle Nirmala for their swift action and dedication



in resolving our problem. We appreciate their commitment to public service and wish them continued success in serving the community.

TMREIS Boys School Launches Admission Awareness Drive in Kagaznagar



"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 28, "Special Outreach at Noorani Masjid Promotes TMREIS Admissions" Kagaznagar: A special admission awareness initiative was conducted on Friday in Kagaznagar to promote enrollments at the Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions Society (TMREIS) Boys School. The announcement was made during Friday prayers at Noorani Mosque, where representatives highlighted the school's academic standards, residential facilities, disciplined environment, and overall student development. The public was urged to enroll their children and eligible students in the institution to build a strong foundation for a bright future. "As part of the initiative, an information counter was set up outside the mosque premises to provide details regarding the admission process, required documentation, and other school-related information. "The programme was conducted under the supervision of Mr. Mohammed Sardar Ali, President of the Noorani Mosque Committee; Mr. Mohammed Sameer Ali, Imam of Masjid-e-Noorani; Mr. Asad Abdul Samad, TMREIS Counsellor; and Mr. Razi Ahmed, TMREIS Counsellor, with the support of TMREIS staff members. "The TMREIS management expressed optimism that such awareness activities would help extend quality educational opportunities to a greater number of students.

BRS Extends Support to Velugumatla Evictees MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra Oversees Food Distribution in Khammam

Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Report February 28, (Indian Chronicle): "

The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) party has been continuing relief measures for families whose huts were removed by the government from Bhoodan land in Velugumatla revenue village on the outskirts of Khammam. Under the leadership of Rajya Sabha MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra, food was distributed to the affected families at the government-run rehabilitation centres — Ambedkar Bhavan and TTDC Centre — on Saturday. The displaced residents alleged that after demolishing their huts and shifting them to rehabilitation centres, the government failed to provide even basic facilities such as drinking water and food. With no clarity on whom to approach regarding their grievances, several victims reportedly sent messages directly to BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao. Responding to his directions, MP Ravichandra, along with his staff and BRS city unit leaders, personally supervised the serving of meals to the displaced families. The victims expressed gratitude to the BRS leadership and MP Ravichandra for providing them food at a time when they were left shelterless and distressed. The residents also stated that they had no access to water for the past two days even for basic needs. Following this, BRS leaders arranged water supply through tankers. Party leaders assured that BRS would continue to stand by the Velugumatla victims until justice is ensured. Among those who participated in the relief programme were city president Pagadala Nagaraju, MP's personal assistant Syed Ismail, district Minority Cell president Tajuddin, BRTU leader SK Pasha, city publicity secretary Shakeena, and party supporters Harish, Jagadish, MD Sharu, Rajesh, and Prashanth.



Strict Measures to Curb Illegal Sand Transportation: Additional DCP (Law & Order)



Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Report February 28, (Indian Chronicle): "The Additional DCP (Law & Order) Prasad Rao has directed police officials to take stringent measures to curb illegal transportation of sand from Andhra Pradesh into Telangana. During his visit to the Madhira Rural Police Station on Saturday, the officer emphasized the need for effective and visible policing to completely eliminate illegal sand smuggling across district and interstate borders. He instructed officials to maintain constant surveillance at check posts to prevent unlawful transport. He further ordered that strict legal action be taken against those involved in illegal sand transportation or storage, including imposing fines, registering cases, and seizing vehicles involved in the offence. The Additional DCP also reviewed various aspects of police station functioning, including Dial 100 calls, petition inquiries, village history sheets, history-sheets, execution of Non-Bailable Warrants (NBWs), CCTNS operations, reception management, UI cases, and vehicles involved in different cases. He assessed sanitation and cleanliness in the police station premises, implementation of 5S practices, village visits, interstate sand check posts, patrolling systems, and the enforcement of visible policing measures. "[4:31 PM, 2/28/2026] +91 96187 88997: End

National Science Day Celebrated Grandly at Brainy Stars School



Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Report February 28, (Indian Chronicle): "National Science Day was celebrated with enthusiasm at Brainy Stars School located in Sahakara Nagar, Khammam city. On the occasion, the school organized a Science Expo showcasing innovative projects prepared by students. Radhika, Horticulture Officer of Khammam Municipal Corporation, attended the programme as the chief guest. She visited various science exhibits presented by the students and appreciated their creativity and scientific thinking. Speaking on the occasion, School Correspondent Jainul Pasha said that such events play a crucial role in developing scientific temper and research-oriented thinking among students. The Science Expo featured impressive projects focusing on environmental protection, technological advancements, and healthcare awareness. Teachers including Shailaja, Sunita, Nagamani, Neelima, Nageena, Prashanthi, and Madhavi, along with parents and guests, lauded the students for their talent and innovative ideas. The programme concluded with the school management felicitating the chief guest with a shawl as a mark of respect.

Tight Security for Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy's Visit

"Indian Chronicle Babar Tandur (Feb 28) "Vikarabad District SP Sneha Mehra has ordered tight security arrangements for the visit of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to Anantagiri, Vikarabad district on March 2. The SP con-



ducted a review meeting on security arrangements at the district police headquarters on Friday, discussing security and traffic management with officials. A powerpoint presentation was made on security measures to be taken at the heliport, convoy route, and event venue. Officials were instructed to conduct advance checks on the visit route and prepare alternate routes to avoid traffic congestion. The SP directed officers to work in coordination to ensure a smooth visit.



Admissions Open for Class IV in Government Sports School

"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 28, "Applications are invited from eligible students for admission into Class IV for the academic year 2026–27 at the Government Sports School. "Students who were born between



1st September 2017 and 31st August 2018, and who will be studying Class IV during the academic year 2026–27, are eligible to apply. "Interested and eligible students must complete their registration on or before 4th March 2026 through the official website: <http://tgss.telangana.gov.in> "For further details, applicants may contact: 8247096710 "District Youth and Sports Officer: Komaram Bheem Asifabad District

Former Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Inaugurates Science Fair at Sagar Grammar High School



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle):”Former Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy inaugurated the Science Fair organized at Sagar Grammar High School in Bharat Nagar, Uppal Division. “The Science Fair was formally launched on Saturday with Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attending as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, she appreciated the initiative and stated that such programs play a vital role in identifying and nurturing students’ talent and guiding them towards higher achievements. She emphasized that the teaching profession holds great responsibility in shaping young minds. Presenting knowledge



gained from books in the form of practical projects is not a small achievement, she said. She noted that each exhibit clearly reflected the students’ analytical ability, creativity, and observation skills. These qualities, she added, are promising signs for the bright future of the nation. Sagar Grammar School Principal Batkiri Dan Sagar, along with Swapna, Prabhakar Reddy, Shivarathri Yadagiri, Daniel, Nagaraju, Vijayender Reddy, and Sheikh Madar, participated in the event. Principals, correspondents, and teachers from various schools were also present.

Former Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao Inaugurates 115C Route Bus



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle):”In a significant step towards improving public transportation facilities for the residents of Ramanthapur Division, the newly introduced 115C route bus was inaugurated on Saturday by former Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao. “The 115C bus, operated by the Kachiguda

Depot, will run from Koti to Ramanthapur Janapriya Apartments via Ramanthapur Bodrai. It has been announced that the bus will operate 10 trips daily on this route. “Speaking on the occasion, Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao stated that the new service will greatly benefit students, employees, women, and senior citizens by making their daily commute more convenient and accessible. She expressed special gratitude to Kachiguda Depot Manager C.H. Venkateswara Rao and Assistant Depot Manager Pavani for promptly responding to the public request and approving the new route. Senior BJP leaders Burra Rajeswar, Vemula Tirupatayya, Veena, Mustaq, Suresh, Murali, Satyanarayana, Gunde Bikshapati, along with local residents, participated in the program and made the event successful. Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao reiterated her commitment to continuously work for the development of Ramanthapur Division.

Yadagirigutta Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Kalyanam was celebrated by:- State Endowment Minister Konda Surekha.. Government Whip MLA Beerla Ayiliah



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 28):- Amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras and the playing of auspicious instruments... the wedding of Yadagirigutta Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy was held with great pomp and show on Wednesday night, with the witness of three crore deities, for the welfare of the world. On behalf of the Telangana State Government, Endowment Minister Konda Surekha presented silk clothes, pearls and amulets to Sri Swamy and Sri Amma. Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar, Telangana Government Whip, Aleru MLA Beerla Ayiliah, MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Col-



lector Hanumantha Rao, District SP Akanksh Yadav, Additional Collector Bhaskara Rao, Municipal Chairman Gundla Palli Vani Bharat Goud and his wife and others were present. “The wedding ceremony began with the worship of Vishwakshena and continued with the application of cumin jaggery on the head, wearing of Mangalya Dharana and Talambalu. For the welfare of the world, Sri Swamy wore Mangalya Dharana on the neck of Sri Ammavari. Thousands of devotees participated in this Brahmotsava Kalyanam, which was a feast for the eyes. Crores of devotees watched it through live broadcasts on television.

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District New Collector Anurag Jayanthi Courtesy Call on State Roads, Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 28):- Anurag Jayanthi, who took charge as the new Collector of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District at the Minister’s Camp Office in Hyderabad on Friday morning, paid a courtesy call on State Roads, Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy. On this occasion, he advised the public to work to ensure that the government’s welfare and development schemes implemented by the public government reach the poor in a transparent manner and benefit the deserving ones. The Minister advised the new Collector Anurag Jayanthi to consider it a huge responsibility and work for the welfare of the poor.

Inter exams in the district in a peaceful atmosphere:- Additional Collector of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Local Bodies Bhaskar Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 28):- Additional Collector of Local Bodies Bhaskar Rao said that the inter exams are being held in the district in a peaceful atmosphere. On Saturday, the Additional Collector made a surprise inspection of the intermediate examination center being held at the Junior College in Yavapur Thanda, Bommalararamam and the Government Junior College in Bommalararamam. He closely observed the manner in which the students were writing the exams. On this occasion, the Additional Collector ...spoke and said that the intermediate exams in the district are being conducted in a strict and transparent manner. The facilities and the CCTV camera system set up in the examination centers were inspected. The attendance percentage of the students was checked. He wanted to ensure that the students write the exams in a peaceful atmosphere. He ordered to take strict measures to prevent malpractice. He said that strong security measures should be taken for the transportation of answer sheets. He said that officials of various departments should work in coordination until the exams are completed and ensure that no trouble arises for the students. Staff and others participated in this program.

Post-graduate students should study hard and scale higher peaks:

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Local Bodies Additional Collector Bhaskar Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 28):- Post-graduate students should study hard and scale higher peaks in life, said Additional Collector of Local Bodies Bhaskar Rao. “On Saturday, a motivational seminar was organized for SC, ST, BC Welfare students and students at Lingabasava Gardens in Rayagiri. Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector said... Students should study regularly and continuously and achieve good passing marks in the 10th class examination. He advised students to utilize the break time between one exam and another during the exams for their learning. They should

study and revise the backward subjects once or twice.” He said that the important topics related to the next exam should be reviewed and doubts should be cleared. He said that the students should be made aware without fear of the exam. He said that parents and teachers should be brought good name by achieving hundred percent pass results. Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes Development Officer Sahithi, Education Department Officer Satyanarayana, ABCDO, ASWO’s and SC, ST, BC Dormitory Welfare Officers and teachers participated in this program.

Women Must Lead in Research – Take Steps Towards Empowerment: Dr. Y. Kalyana Lakshmi



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle):”National Science Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm on Saturday at Uppal Government Degree College under the aegis of the Science Departments. “The program was coordinated by Dr. V. Srinivasa Rao and Dr. R. Chandrasagar, while In-charge Principal Dr. C.H. Satyanarayana presided over the event. The chief guests included Associate Professor of Physics from Osmania University, Dr. Y. Kalyana Lakshmi, and renowned mimicry artist Shiva Bavari. “Addressing the gathering, In-charge Principal Dr. C.H. Satyanarayana urged students to move away from superstitions and progress towards scientific thinking. He elaborated on the true spirit and nature of science. Speaking on the theme “Women in Science Expansion,” Dr. Kalyana Lakshmi emphasized that women must take the lead in research and move forward towards empowerment. She

expressed hope for greater progress of women in the field of science and encouraged them to actively pursue research and leadership roles. Mimicry artist Shiva Bavari entertained the audience by imitating the voices of several prominent personalities, demonstrating how they might have spoken at the event. “As part of the National Science Day celebrations, quiz competitions, poster presentations, and model exhibitions were conducted earlier in the week. Winners were awarded cash prizes, mementos, and certificates of appreciation by the Physics Department. During the program, women faculty members from the Science Departments — Academic Coordinator K. Geetha, Dr. Yamuna Rani, Sravanti, and Anuradha — were felicitated. NSS Coordinator J. Vishwanath Kumar, Dr. G. Tirupatayya, Dr. P. Venkateswarlu, Anusha, and others participated in the event. Students Gathri and Nandakishore captivated the audience with their musical performances.

Mudiraj Sangam felicitates Municipal Chairman Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar

“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 28):- A grand felicitation program was organized by Mudiraj Sangam for Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, who took charge as the Chairman of Bhuvanagiri Municipality, at the local municipal office in Bhuvanagiri town. On this occasion, they asked him to work for the development of Mudiraj Sangam. District Presidents Kolpula Harinath, Penta Narasimha, Kukkaduvu Somaiya, Pachala Jagan, Ittaboyina Gopal, Enaboyina Jahangir, Biscontla Satyanarayana, Udatha Bhaskar, Vijay Kumar, Dharmaraju, Nagaraju, Penta Nitish, Shyam, Penta Mallesh, Boini Balayya, Boini Ramulu, Pothuraj Ravi and others participated in this program.



mBAJA SAEINDIA 2026 – Day 3 Witnesses Static & Dynamic Events and Insightful Panel Discussions



“Feb28. indian chronicle.medak.”“The third day of mBAJA SAEINDIA 2026 at B V Raju Institute of Technology (BVRIT), Narsapur, was conducted with great enthusiasm and competitive spirit. The events continued successfully across various categories, informed Mr. Ali Sayed, Convener, and Dr. Vemula Murali Krishna, Joint Convener and Professor of Mechanical Engineering, BVRIT. “Day 3 featured intense technical scrutiny and performance-based evaluations. Students showcased their engineering expertise through Technical Inspection and Brake Test procedures, where vehicles were rigorously examined to ensure compliance with safety standards. “In the Dynamic Events, competitions such as Acceleration, Sled Pull, Maneuverability, and Specialty Events were conducted. By the end of the day, 42 vehicles successfully cleared the Technical Inspection, while 35 vehicles qualified in the Brake Test, earning eligibility for the Dynamic Rounds. These safety evaluations played a crucial role in maintaining the quality, reliability, and competitive standards of the event. All buggies are now set and ready for the Final Endurance Race scheduled for tomorrow. “Co-Convener Mrs. Lalitha Patra stated that the technical and dynamic events stand as testimony to the students’ innovation, creativity, and engineering competence. She announced that the Final Endurance Race will be held on Sunday from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the BVRIT campus, followed by the Valedictory Ceremony and Prize Distribution. “A thought-provoking Panel Dis-

ussion on the theme “Education Beyond the Classroom: Experiential Learning Approach” was also organized as part of the day’s proceedings. The session was moderated by Dr. K. C. Vora, Director, NAMTECH. “The distinguished panelists included: “ Prof. Ashok Kumar Pandey, Academic Dean, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad “ Prof. V. R. Ganeshan, Professor of Practice, Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati “ Prof. Gokarna Poudel, Kathmandu University “ Ms. Garima Jhamb, Representative, Automotive Skills Development Council “ Dr. Veer Aleksendra, Manager, MathWorks “ Mr. Parshuram Paka, Founder, Gravton Motors “ Mr. Ajay Nair, Executive Director, SAEINDIA “ Mr. Padmesh Sewda, Program Manager, TVS Motor Company “The discussion emphasized bridging the gap between academia and industry, highlighting the importance of experiential learning platforms like mBAJA SAEINDIA in equipping students with industry-relevant skills. “The event was attended by Dr. Sanjay Dubey, Principal, and Dr. Lakshmi Prasad, Director of BVRIT, along with Mr. Balaji Subramanyam, Chairman of the Organizing Committee, and Dr. K. C. Vora, Advisor, BAJA SAEINDIA. “The smooth conduct of mBAJA SAEINDIA 2026 is being ensured through the continuous efforts of the BVRIT management, Manager Mr. B. Bapiraju, and Administrative Officer Mr. T. L. N. Suresh. “The competitions continue to inspire innovation, teamwork, and technical excellence among budding engineers from across the country.

Follow Traffic Rules Strictly to Prevent Road Accidents: Malkajgiri Commissionerate Road Safety Inspector B. Man Singh

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle): “B. Man Singh, Road Safety Inspector of the Malkajgiri Commissionerate, urged the public to strictly follow traffic rules to prevent road accidents. “He was speaking at a road safety awareness program organized in Chilkanagar Division as part of a road safety campaign in the constituency. Addressing commuters and residents, he emphasized that vehicle users must take necessary precautions while traveling on roads. Inspector Man Singh advised motorists to always wear helmets, ensure their vehicles are in proper condition, and adhere to prescribed speed limits. He stated that if traffic rules are followed 100 percent, road accidents can be significantly reduced and even prevented. Chilkanagar Congress Party Division President Mulakalappalli Rajesh Mudiraj, Congress Party Division In-charge Akkiti Agam Reddy, along with Nallavalli Mahender, Manchala Raghu, Sriramulu, Amar, Kooreli Yadagiri, Kondra Ramulu, Ram Charla Balaran, Palnati Kishitaya, Marapaka Nagaiah, Palnati David, Jerripothula Chandraiah, Palnati Ramesh, Pagadam Ramnarsaiah, Janganna, Jagadish, Naroju



Radhakrishna, Shiva, Sonu, Chintu, Naresh, Kanukunta Ravi, Kanukunta Swamy, Palnati Lokaiyah, Chukka Parashuram, Kiran, Sonu, Sandeep, Congress Party workers, and local residents participated in the program.

zphs veldurthy grand celebration fare well party

“Feb28.indian chronicle.medak”“P.M. Sri Zilla Parishad High School Veldurthi class 10 farewell meeting was organized today. Addressing this meeting, Medak District Education Officer Vijaya Madam said that the education you get here and the experience you get are good guidelines for your future. Addressing the students, he said that your school will support you so that you realize your dreams and achieve many successes. The principal of the school, Sambaya Garu said “ We will all remember the progress you have brought to the school, the discipline you have shown and the achievements you have made as students of class 10. We all understand the respect you have given to our school, the talent you have shown... In this farewell meeting, school principal Sambaya and Medak district education officer Vijaya Madam, district youth and sports officer Gangala Ramesh, village sarpanch Adarsh and sub-sarpanch Shrvan, school education committee chairman Madhuri, as well as school teachers Venkataswamy, Srinivas, Narasimha Reddy, Qadeer, Amulya, Archana, Vijay Mohan, Jayasudha, Shailaja, Navaneetha, Ramu, Charles, Padmaja, Sunitha, Vanishree, Venkat Reddy, Dhanraj, Renuka, Radhika, CRP Raju, PTI Yadagiri, and print and electronic journalists and non-teaching staff participated in the programme.



Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Inaugurates Sri Akshara School Science Fair



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle): “Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy inaugurated the Science Fair organized at Sri Akshara School in Chilkanagar Division on Saturday. She attended the event as the chief guest and formally launched the Science Fair. “Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy appreciated the initiative, stating that such programs play a crucial role in nurturing students’ talent and encouraging them to achieve greater heights. She emphasized that the teaching profession holds immense importance in shaping young minds. “She remarked that presenting knowledge gained from textbooks in the form of practical projects is no small achievement. She noted that the students’ analytical skills, creativity, and innovative thinking were clearly reflected in every exhibit. She further stated that such efforts are promising signs for the bright future of the nation. “Sri Akshara High School Principal Raju, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Vijayender Reddy, Ram Reddy, Srinivas Reddy, and school teachers participated in the program.

Sub-Inspector Narasimha Rao Retires from Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate



NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 28, (Indian chronicle):

Sub-Inspector Narasimha Rao, who was serving at the TTI unit of the Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate, retired from service. A felicitation programme was held at the Commissionerate office to mark his superannuation. Malkajgiri Commissioner of Police Avinash Mohanty, IPS, stated that policing is a challenging profession that demands resilience and dedication. He said Narasimha Rao had served the department efficiently and with discipline

for many years, overcoming several challenges in the line of duty. He appreciated his commitment and contribution to the police department. The Commissioner advised him to lead a peaceful and healthy retired life and to maintain financial discipline with regard to pension and other benefits. He also directed officials to ensure that all retirement benefits due to him are processed without delay. DCP (Admin) Indira, Additional DCP (Admin) Shiva Kumar, Police Officers’ Association President C.H. Bhadra Reddy, Cooperative AO Pradeep, Cooperative Directors, and other officials attended the programme.

Clean Chit in Liquor Case... Aam Aadmi Party Cadres Celebrate Celebrations held under the leadership of AAP Ex-Convener Banjapalli Sudharani

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 28 (Indian Chronicle): “With the Special Investigation Agency granting a clean chit in the liquor case to former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, and 23 others, celebrations erupted among Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) cadres. “Party workers across the country expressed their joy and distributed sweets to mark the occasion. In Uppal and Ramanthapur, Aam Aadmi Party Ex-Convener Banjapalli Sudharani led party workers in distributing sweets and celebrating the development. “The workers raised slogans in support of the party leadership, showcasing their unity and solidarity. Speaking on the occasion, Sudharani stated that public service remains the party’s primary objective and affirmed that they would move forward with greater enthusiasm in the future. Women leaders and local party workers participated in the celebrations.



Landowners Voluntarily Come Forward for Elevated Corridor Project District Collector Manu Choudhary

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 28, (Indian chronicle): “District Collector Manu Choudhary said it was encouraging that landowners have voluntarily come forward to part with their lands required for the construction of the proposed elevated corridor from Secunderabad Jubilee Bus Station (JBS) to Shamirpet Ring Road. A DLNC meeting was held at the district collectorate on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stated that the Rajiv Rahadari expansion works are progressing at a brisk pace and that the award for Pothayipally has already been passed as part of the process. He said it was heartening that farmers and landowners of Lothukunta have come forward voluntarily to provide land for the Rajiv Rahadari widening project. During the meeting, the Collector held discussions with farmers and landowners from Lothukunta. The farmers stated that their lands were highly valuable and requested a reasonable compensation of around Rs. 1,50,000 per square yard. Responding to this, the Collector said there had been no land transactions in Lothukunta over the past three years. Therefore, the government considered the land values recorded in the Alwal Sub-Registrar’s office while determining a fair compensation rate. He assured that the government would provide the best possible rate to the affected farmers. The farmers and landowners expressed satisfaction with the Collector’s assurance and agreed to hand over their lands. The Lothukunta DLNC meeting concluded successfully. LA (Industries) Special Deputy Collector S. Malathi, HMDA officials, Alwal Tahsildar Ramulu, revenue officials and others participated in the meeting.



Study confirms cardiovascular benefits of semaglutide drug beyond weight loss



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

A new analysis of the SELECT trial, the largest and longest clinical trial to date examining the cardiovascular benefits of 'semaglutide' — a medication used to support weight loss and diabetes management — confirms it also lowers the risk of major heart problems in people who are obese and already have heart disease, even if they don't have diabetes. This heart protection happens regardless of how much weight a person loses or their baseline body weight, according to the new study, published in *The Lancet* on October 22. The SELECT trial originally studied over 17,000 adults with heart disease and a body mass index (BMI) of 27 or higher, comparing semaglutide to a placebo. This new analysis looked closely at how patients' weight and waist size changed during the trial and how those changes related to cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes.

Researchers found that while semaglutide helped people lose weight and reduce waist size, the amount of weight lost early on did not predict who would have fewer

heart problems. However, shrinking waist size — a sign of less belly fat — was linked to better heart outcomes and accounted for about one-third of semaglutide's overall benefit. Senior endocrinologist Dr Shreerang Godbole from Jehangir Hospital, Pune, explains, "We've moved past the outdated 'eat less, move more' mantra as the only solution. We now understand that for many women, obesity is a complex disease. Modern treatments like injectable semaglutide help patients regain control over their appetite and achieve sustainable weight loss." Dr Godbole adds that medication like semaglutide is a science-backed treatment that works with your body's own signals. "Your brain gets messages from different parts of your body, including powerful appetite hormones like GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1), which help regulate how much food you eat. Semaglutide works very similarly to your natural GLP-1. It helps reduce your appetite, so you naturally eat fewer calories. Enhancing the signals of fullness sent to your brain helps you feel satisfied with smaller portions."

When used along with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity, semaglutide is a powerful tool that helps people lose weight and, just as importantly, keep it off for the long term," he adds. "The clinical evidence is compelling. For instance, the landmark SELECT trial showed that semaglutide significantly reduced the risk of heart attack and stroke by 20 per cent in people with overweight or obesity and pre-existing heart disease. By addressing weight, we are proactively protecting the heart for the long term," Dr Godbole adds. Meanwhile, authors of the study say that these findings indicate that semaglutide can offer important heart benefits that go beyond weight loss, opening the door to new ways of treating and preventing serious heart problems in people with obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Tension in Aligarh after 'religious slogans found on walls of four temples'; Karni Sena stages protest

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Aligarh, Karni Sena. Soon after the news spread, members of the Karni Sena reached Bhagwanpur and created a ruckus, alleging that the act was a deliberate attempt to disturb communal harmony in the area. Religious slogans were allegedly found written on the walls of four temples in two villages of Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh on Saturday, prompting protests by locals and members of the Karni Sena who demanded immediate action. The slogans were purportedly found in Bulakgadhi and Bhagwanpur villages. Police have lodged an FIR and said an investigation is underway to verify the allegations. Circle Officer (CO) of Aligarh, Sanjeev Kumar, said the slogans were written at four different locations, and the police promptly removed them to maintain peace and prevent any disturbance to law and order. He added that the situation in the area is now under control.

Soon after the news spread, members of the Karni Sena reached Bhagwanpur and created a ruckus, alleging that the act was a deliberate attempt to disturb communal harmony in the area. Based on a complaint by Gyanendra Singh Chauhan, national vice-president of the Karni Sena, police registered the case against seven people under sections 299 (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) and 351 (criminal intimidation) of the BNS at Lodha police station in Aligarh. According to police, while one of the accused is from outside the area, the rest are residents of Bhagwanpur village. No one has been arrested so far. The complaint alleged that the accused were involved in writing religious slogans on the walls of temples in nearby villages, triggering tension in the locality.

Station House Officer (SHO) of Lodha police station, Ankit Kumar, said the complainant has named seven persons and has suspected their involvement in the incident. "We are verifying the allegations and investigating the matter from all angles," he said. According to the SHO, the police received information on Saturday morning that religious slogans had been found written on the walls of four temples in Bulakgadhi and Bhagwanpur villages. A police team immediately reached the spot. But by the time they arrived, members of the Karni Sena were already present and had started protesting. "The police pacified the crowd and removed the slogans from the temple walls," Kumar added. Chauhan claimed that it was his associate, Sachin, who first informed the police about the incident. He added that locals suspected the involvement of some persons — all of whom have been named in the FIR — in carrying out the act. Chauhan further alleged that instead of taking prompt action against the accused, the police focused on removing the slogans and allegedly detained and assaulted Sachin. He also accused the police of trying to suppress the incident. However, SHO Kumar refuted the allegations, and also said Sachin was not detained or assaulted.

Recalling his son's final attempt to recover, Mustafa said, "I took my son to a rehabilitation centre in Patiala last year. In fact, he went to the centre twice. He was there for a few weeks each time. Razia got into depression. She could not sleep. She had to be on medication. Then we got him back. We would order food for him through food-delivery apps. We spoke to the staff of the de-addiction centre every two hours. That was the situation. Then Razia insisted on bringing him back." On October 14 this year, he called up his mother and said he wanted to go to the de-addiction centre again. I was travelling with my daughter from Delhi. Razia called me saying he wanted to go back to the rehabilitation centre. I heaved a sigh of relief. I made all arrangements, called up the centre and even asked my wife to be strong this time. He had prepared his bag which we discovered after his death. We cried so much after seeing the bag. Had he gone with the bag to the de-addiction centre, he would have been alive today," Mustafa said. Aqil died on October 16. By the time we found him dead, rigor mortis had already set in. It was not unusual for him to not show up. My daughter said he had not opened the door that day. She insisted on checking. When she knocked, he did not open the door. She threatened him that if he did not open it, they would call the police. Still, there was no response. There was panic. My wife came and so did my daughter-in-law with my grandchildren. She managed to get into his room through the balcony door which was not latched," recalled Mustafa, a four-time winner of the President's Police Medal. "She insisted that we take him to the hospital. She hoped against hope. I knew, as a police officer, that he was no more. Yet, we took him to Panchkula hospital in our car. They conducted an ECG on him and declared that he was no more. I ensured that his post-mortem was also conducted," he added. "You can imagine this father's sorrow. Yet, there are people who are alleging a conspiracy. I welcomed the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the police. I welcome the formation of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) and now I also welcome that the Haryana Police wants to hand over the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The CBI will investigate it threadbare. I will come out of it clean. My grief is my son's loss. I do not care about anything else. The CBI investigation will silence all this gossip," he said. "My son never sat with me," he added quietly. "Some periods were violent, disturbing, and upsetting... Some were sober. The best period was between March 2021 and 2024. This was when we put him on buprenorphine."



Officers (BLO) to carry out SIR. Till now, the office of the West Bengal CEO has summoned at least 600 BLOs for their unwillingness to participate in SIR. On the other hand, the CEO was reportedly informed about irregularities in appointing more than 4,000 BLOs. In another development, the poll body has decided to appoint assistant BLOs to assist BLOs. "BLOs are also feeling unsafe as they will have to go to different areas accompanied by supporters of political parties. If assistant BLOs accompany them, they will feel safer. However, sufficient security arrangements will also be there for the BLOs," said a senior official. ECI has also planned to open a help desk from the district level to the block level electoral office. Each help desk will have 10-13 personnel who will be deputed to provide voters with the necessary information and suggestions. According to sources, mapping and matching work with the 2002 voter lists has been almost completed. Only in some North Bengal districts was the work stalled due to the recent floods. "Now the situation in the North Bengal districts is normal. Matching and mapping have again started. We are expecting that the work will be completed within one week," said a senior poll official.

SIR likely to commence in Bengal in November; tough task awaits Election Commission as hundreds of BLOs refuse to participate

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

In the following month, political parties will submit their proposals for deletion, modification and inclusion in the lists. In the following month, political parties will submit their proposals for deletion, modification and inclusion in the lists. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will likely commence in West Bengal in the first week of November. Sources in the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal, Saturday told *The Indian Express* that the exercise may start any day after November 1. Accordingly, they added, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has asked the West Bengal CEO to complete all preparations for SIR by October 31. According to the sources, the SIR process will continue till February in West Bengal. It will be conducted in three phases, and each phase will be completed in one month. In the first month, Booth Level Officers (BLO) will visit households, distribute the enumeration form and verify the names with the 2002 SIR list. BLOs will also help new voters to fill up the enumeration forms. In the following month, political parties will submit their proposals for deletion, modification and inclusion in the lists. In the last month, district electoral officers and other senior officers will verify all information and finalise the voter lists, which will be published in the first or second week of February. Thereafter, the ECI will give seven days to the public to approach them for any modification, after which the final voter lists will be published. A senior ECI officer said, "It is not possible to complete SIR before the Bengal assembly elections (in 2026), if the process does not begin in November. So, we have no option other than to start SIR in November." Meanwhile, the West Bengal CEO is reportedly facing difficulties in employing Booth Level Of-

Cyberabad police bust major corporate extortion racket targeting Hetero Group of Companies

Hyderabad: Cyberabad Cyber Crime Police have arrested two persons on charges of carrying out a highly sophisticated extortion and cyber-intimidation racket targeting the Hetero Group of Companies, one of India's largest pharmaceutical organisations. The arrested individuals have been identified as Yendapally Jessy Sudarshan and Gadi Manikanta. Both hailed from the same village in Andhra Pradesh. According to a Cyberabad police press release in Hyderabad on Wednesday, Hetero management received several anonymous and pseudonymous emails in August. The email sender, posing as a USFDA official, demanded a

ransom of USD 250 million, alleging that he was in possession of confidential and damaging information about the company's operations and regulatory compliance. The emails threatened that failure to pay the ransom would result in the purported data being forwarded to the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), potentially leading to regulatory complications and reputational damage. The extortionists further claimed to have contacts in the USFDA, escalating fears of imminent action. The company in its complaint maintained that the allegations were baseless and malicious, calculated to coerce the organisation into paying the ransom.

'I could face terrorists, but not my son's addiction': Punjab ex-DGP Mohd Mustafa on 18-year battle against drugs at home



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Former Punjab Director General of Police Mohammad Mustafa, who once led the state's fight against drugs as head of the Special Task Force (STF) on drugs, says his greatest battle was not in the field but within his own home. "I could deal with terrorists, but not my addict son. In the last 18 years, we lived through hell," Mustafa said, his voice heavy with grief. "I lost my mother, father, sister, but the grief of losing a son is the most tragic. It is intense." In a painfully candid conversation with *The Indian Express*, Mustafa opened up about his 18-year struggle to save his son, Aqil Akhtar, 35, from drug addiction. The fight ended in tragedy when he died earlier this month. Mustafa not only lost his son, but was also booked, along with his wife and former Congress Cabinet minister Razia Sultana in a case of alleged murder. "As I was the STF chief, fighting the state's battle against drugs, I fought a similar but personal battle against drugs at home," he said. Mustafa was appointed to the post in September 2018 during former chief minister Amarinder Singh's tenure. For him, the war against drugs turned inward, consuming his own home and family. "We lived through hell for 18 long years," said Mustafa, who was posted in Punjab during the trouble-torn days of militancy. Recalling the long struggle, he added, "I fought with the drugs at home for 18 years. I never failed in any war as a police officer but failed with the menace of drugs as a father."

"It all started in Class 9." It all started in 2007 when he was at a boys' school in Dehradun. He was in Class 9. My friend's driver told me he was climbing the walls of his school with another boy and using hookah. Soon after, he was rusticated from the school. Razia and I went to meet the principal. Upon our request, the principal gave us another chance. But after six months, he was terminated again. After that, he was terminated from various schools in Chandigarh, Panchkula and later from colleges in Chandigarh. "He was an intelligent boy. He has once cleared the entrance examination of a prestigious law college. It was in 2021 that he took admission in a law college and completed his degree. I brought him in contact with several lawyers for practice but he never continued with them on one pretext or the other."

Recalling his son's final attempt to recover, Mustafa said, "I took my son to a rehabilitation centre in Patiala last year. In fact, he went to the centre twice. He was there for a few weeks each time. Razia got into depression. She could not sleep. She had to be on medication. Then we got him back. We would order food for him through food-delivery apps. We spoke to the staff of the de-addiction centre every two hours. That was the situation. Then Razia insisted on bringing him back." On October 14 this year, he called up his mother and said he wanted to go to the de-addiction centre again. I was travelling with my daughter from Delhi. Razia called me saying he wanted to go back to the rehabilitation centre. I heaved a sigh of relief. I made all arrangements, called up the centre and even asked my wife to be strong this time. He had prepared his bag which we discovered after his death. We cried so much after seeing the bag. Had he gone with the bag to the de-addiction centre, he would have been alive today," Mustafa said. Aqil died on October 16. By the time we found him dead, rigor mortis had already set in. It was not unusual for him to not show up. My daughter said he had not opened the door that day. She insisted on checking. When she knocked, he did not open the door. She threatened him that if he did not open it, they would call the police. Still, there was no response. There was panic. My wife came and so did my daughter-in-law with my grandchildren. She managed to get into his room through the balcony door which was not latched," recalled Mustafa, a four-time winner of the President's Police Medal. "She insisted that we take him to the hospital. She hoped against hope. I knew, as a police officer, that he was no more. Yet, we took him to Panchkula hospital in our car. They conducted an ECG on him and declared that he was no more. I ensured that his post-mortem was also conducted," he added. "You can imagine this father's sorrow. Yet, there are people who are alleging a conspiracy. I welcomed the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the police. I welcome the formation of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) and now I also welcome that the Haryana Police wants to hand over the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The CBI will investigate it threadbare. I will come out of it clean. My grief is my son's loss. I do not care about anything else. The CBI investigation will silence all this gossip," he said. "My son never sat with me," he added quietly. "Some periods were violent, disturbing, and upsetting... Some were sober. The best period was between March 2021 and 2024. This was when we put him on buprenorphine."

Delhi schools to admit children to Class 1 at 6+ years from 2026-27; new 'Balvatika' structure to begin in phases

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Parents seeking Class 1 admissions for their children in Delhi schools will soon have to wait until the child turns six, with the Directorate of Education (DoE) formalising the new age rule through a circular issued on Friday. The revised policy will come into effect from the 2026-27 academic session. Starting next year, schools in the capital will have to follow the age criteria strictly, as part of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's framework for the foundational stage. Under the new structure, the existing two-year pre-primary setup, including nursery and kindergarten, will be expanded into a three-year system comprising Balvatika 1, 2 and 3. These will be followed by Class 1 at the age of six and above. According to the circular issued by the DoE to all government, aided, and recognised private schools in Delhi, the restructuring will be implemented in phases. From the 2026-27 academic session, schools will start

I was the STF chief. I saw that this was the drug being given to addicts to wean them off in Punjab. We spoke to a doctor who recommended buprenorphine. But he started taking a higher amount than was recommended. He was using his father's name to procure it. I used to call up doctors and tell them to give the recommended doses only," said the retired police officer. He added, "I failed. I could not choke the supply for 18 years despite trying my level best. When we were living in a government bungalow in Sector 39 when my wife was the MLA, peddlers used to throw packets in our backyard. This was before 2015. Then we shifted to my current residence in Panchkula. I still remember how someone from Saharanpur, my hometown, came to my house. I continued my usual business, but later I discovered that he had delivered drugs to my son." "We used to check his phone to find out the numbers of peddlers. I got hundreds of peddlers arrested by the police. Yet, could not break his chain. This was my battle for 18 years. I tried my best but could not choke the supply chain. In 10 days, they used to be out. There are so many loopholes in the system. They exploited those." "I wouldn't say my son was constantly on drugs. Sometimes he was off and sometimes he was on. I can say medical narcotics are the worst. Once, he set my room on fire. He was asking for money for drugs, I refused. He set the room ablaze with the help of a cigarette lighter. My cook, Bir Singh, was dousing it when he fainted due to the smoke. He had to be taken to a hospital. This has been our plight. We just handled this all alone. We did not want anyone to know. It was a lonely fight. When your son is an addict, you would not like the world to know about it," he said. From 2018, the 'worst phase'

"The worst phase of our life was from December 2018. Aqil had got married in November 2017, when he was in a sober phase. However, the menace later magnified. He took money from us on the pretext of shopping and bought drugs with that money. Earlier, he was only on weed. After that, he bought heroin, medical narcotics, and what not. On November 25, 2018, our granddaughter was born. She was 35 days old on December 31, 2018. I was the STF chief then. He asked his mother for money. I told her no money is to be given to him as he will buy drugs." "After I left for the office, he got violent at home. My wife shut my daughter-in-law and granddaughter in the bathroom. He was so violent that he threw a stone table top at the window. The window had a secure glass. The glass did not give way, but the stone table top was broken into small pieces. He was so powerful. I do not know from where he got so much strength. That was the day he set my room on fire. I was on my way to my office and had reached near Raj Bhavan when I got a call from home that he was violent. I returned. For two hours, I was really upset. But then, after two hours, the father in me took over... Later, he was sober for some time," Mustafa said. Recalling another terrible phase in March 2023, the former officer said, "His friend, the son of an affluent family — I do not want to name him — introduced him to a drug dealer. This boy was in touch with him for 15 years. I tried my best to snap their contact. I changed my son's phone number. But to no avail. Each time, they reconnected. He gave him ice (crystal meth). That was when his brain got damaged. He got psychosis."

"What he recorded in the video on August 27, 2025 — alleging that I had an illicit relationship with my daughter-in-law, and that my wife and daughter were running a prostitution racket — is not even one-tenth of what he used to say otherwise. He used to say that all politicians come to our house to satisfy their lust," Mustafa said. "Last year, in April-end, he tortured his wife and shot her video. He beat her up with belts and asked her to confess that she was a prostitute before she married him. You will shudder at the video in which she was being beaten up and forced to say these things. My daughter-in-law appeared to be half-dead. We got up in the morning and he came running to our room saying she had confessed everything. He even alleged that my younger brother, who was a warden at the college she studied, had a relationship with her." Describing another incident, he said that Aqil once put his arm around his wife's neck and pulled her out of his room. "When he was coming out of the lobby, my daughter and I ran towards them. In the melee, I fractured my thumb. Then I thought enough was enough. I called Shibas Kabiraj, who was Police Commissioner of Panchkula for his first term. He sent the Station House Officer (SHO) in five minutes. We handed Aqil over to him. I drafted a formal complaint, giving a 16-year history of his addiction. His mother, sister and wife cried. "However, it did not last." "I was trying to take a stand. But I also gave in. We then called the police and said we want to withdraw our complaint. A father is helpless," said Mustafa, adding, "Then we rented the first floor of our neighbour's place for our daughter-in-law and grandchildren for Rs 60,000 per month. They stayed there, having food in our house." "I could not choke the supply for 18 years," Mustafa repeated. "This was my battle. I tried my best. Still, I could not choke the supply chain." After decades in uniform and countless encounters with Punjab's narcotics networks, the officer was left broken as a father. "You can fight terrorists," he said, "but you cannot fight drugs when they take over your own child." Recalling how his son had prophesied his death, Mustafa said, "In his diary, written a few days before his death, he wrote about how he loved his children but at the same time said that he feared he might die due to an overdose." Aqil's daughter is seven years old, while his son is five. The worst is yet to come," Mustafa said. "We will have to face this tragedy as long as the government does not take any step. We have been surrounded by friends and relatives. What will happen after that, once we are left to handle our grief eventually go to college. I will have to be a father to them also."

following the revised age criteria, admitting children aged six and above to Class 1, and three years and above to Balvatika 1. Balvatika 2 (for four-year-olds) and Balvatika 3 (for five-year-olds) will be added in 2027-28 and 2028-29, respectively, completing the three-year pre-primary structure before Class 1. The DoE has said that this phased approach will help schools make the necessary infrastructural and administrative adjustments for the additional year at the pre-primary level. The move, as per DoE officials, aligns Delhi's system with the NEP 2020 and the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, both of which prescribe six years as the minimum age for entry into Grade 1. "The age criteria as detailed in the circular will be implemented in phases starting from the academic session 2026-27," the order stated. It also clarified that the new age norms will not apply to students already enrolled in Nursery to Class 1 during the 2025-26 session.

The Congress is grappling with the politics of division in Karnataka



Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara's announcement that the Special Action Force (SAF) would be deployed in Mandya district has brought renewed attention to threats to religious harmony. The SAF is already deployed in the communally volatile coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, besides Shivamogga. Formed by restructuring the Anti Naxal Force, the 280-member SAF is tasked with maintaining communal peace by cracking down on those fomenting religious hatred; gathering intelligence on communally provocative speeches; and monitoring social media for content that has potential to vitiate the atmosphere. Headed by an officer of the rank of Deputy Inspector General of Police, the SAF does not have the authority to investigate cases. It only identifies potential offences and alerts the jurisdictional police to take appropriate action. The Home Minister said he was satisfied with the SAF's performance, noting that since its launch in June 2025, the coastal districts had not seen any communal flare-ups.

His decision to deploy the SAF in Mandya comes on the back of a spate of recent communal incidents in the district. Dominated by the largely agrarian and land-owning Vokkaligas, Mandya has historically remained insulated from communal politics. In the 1970s and 1980s, the youth of Mandya gravitated towards progressive movements such as the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and the Dalit Sangharsha Samithi, and embraced poet laureate Kuvempu's philosophy of a 'Vishwa Manava' (universal human being).

But in recent years, communal tensions have repeatedly surfaced. The annual Hanuma Jayanti procession in

Srirangapatna, the erstwhile seat of power during Tipu Sultan's reign, often sparks communal tension when the Hindu Jagran Vedike march passes by the 18th century Jamia Masjid and its activists make a vain bid to enter the fortified mosque. In January 2024, there was a row in Keregodu over replacing a saffron flag with the Indian tricolour on a flagpole. In September that year in Nagamangala, there was stone throwing during the Ganesha immersion procession, which escalated into clashes; the same happened in Maddur this September. These episodes, in addition to the heckling of a hijab-clad girl by a group of boys waving saffron shawls in a college in 2022, signal a worrying communal drift. Political analysts have observed that the rise in instances of religious intolerance in Mandya has coincided with the BJP's electoral alliance with the JD(S) — a party traditionally backed by Vokkaligas and a key competitor to the ruling Congress in the region. The Congress secured six out of seven Assembly seats in Mandya district in the 2023 polls, including the Melukote seat, where it supported Darshan Puttannaiah of the Sarvodaya Karnataka Paksha party. However, it lost the Mandya Lok Sabha seat to JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy in the 2024 elections. It now blames JD(S) cadres' support for BJP's Hindutva politics for deepening religious polarisation.

For decades, the Congress and the JD(S) were directly in contest in the Old Mysore region, while the BJP struggled to gain a foothold. But the alliance between the H.D. Deve Gowda-led party with the BJP appears to have significantly altered the dynamics on the ground. The JD(S) cadre, who had previously competed with the Congress for Muslim votes to maintain a fragile communal balance, now find themselves aligned with the BJP and its affiliates. The shift was evident during the padayatra taken out to protest against the Keregodu flag controversy when even Mr. Kumaraswamy sported a saffron shawl. It was also seen during demonstrations against the stone pelting on Ganesha idols in Maddur. The public response to the call for protest against the recent stone pelting incident in Maddur was striking. Even though the local police had acted swiftly by arresting more than 20 people belonging to the Muslim community, the demonstrations remained massive. JD(S) leaders flanked BJP firebrands at demonstrations in Maddur. While the Congress grapples with the challenges of communalisation and the BJP-JD(S) combine, it hopes that the SAF will help restore stability. While the BJP, which gained votes between 2018 and 2023, is strengthened by its JD(S) alliance in the Vokkaliga heartland, the BJP's support in the Muslim community remains uncertain.

Value of water: evaluating the pricelessness of clean, potable water

Water is an essential resource with no substitute. Despite its fundamental importance, a large proportion of the global population lacks access to safe drinking water. Only 30% of people in low-income countries, and just 14% of those in rural areas, have reliable access to potable water, resulting in a significant decline in quality of life. India is no exception, with many communities facing persistent challenges in accessing safe water. Discussions on water access and quality are widespread across development research, public policy, and global health, reflecting their importance to well-being and everyday life. Although there is extensive literature on how households obtain water, and on the technologies used to make it safe, much of existing research estimates valuation indirectly — through hedonic pricing, adoption of chlorine or filters, or studies of piped-water take-up. What remains far less explored is a direct measure of how much households value clean, potable water independent of the burdens of collection time, taste, labour, or irregular access that shape earlier estimates.

This paper contributes to research on improving access to clean water and joins a broader conversation within environmental economics literature on measuring how people in low-income countries value environmental quality. It addresses this gap by delivering clean water directly to households and observing real purchasing and exchange behaviour, measuring both Willingness to Pay (WTP) and Willingness to Accept (WTA) under conditions where non-monetary burdens are removed. This approach allows the study to examine how households order water, how sensitive they are to price, and whether they prefer receiving water or equivalent cash. In addition, the study assesses associated benefits, including changes in water sources, collection time, household water treatment practices, and self-reported health. In doing so, it offers a clearer picture of how people perceive the importance of water quality. It offers insights into interventions that could expand access to safe drinking water in contexts where infrastructure remains uneven, and treatment burdens fall heavily on households. The findings provide evidence that can inform effective and equitable drinking water policies in low-income settings.

The study was conducted in Odisha, a State where access to water remains limited. As of 2021, Odisha ranked 32nd out of 37 States in piped water coverage, with 83% of households lacking connections. A 2023 survey found that 41% of villages still lacked safe drinking water. Water access has been a key local concern in the State, leading to protests and dissatisfaction among the population. Against this backdrop, the study implemented a randomised controlled trial across 160 villages, with successful execution in 99 villages where a private company already operated water treatment facilities. Households were randomly assigned to different experimental arms, allowing researchers to observe behaviour under conditions where clean water was delivered directly, removing typical burdens of collection, transport, and taste-related aversion, and capturing variations across income, water habits, and baseline access.

Households were assigned to one of three experimental arms designed to reveal distinct dimensions of valuation. In the price arm, households could purchase clean, home-delivered water at several subsidised price points. Observing the quantity ordered at each price allowed researchers to estimate willingness to pay based on revealed behaviour and identify price sensitivity. This arm also provided a comparison to prior studies that focused on demand for treatment technologies rather than clean water itself. In the free-water arm, households received potable water at zero price, serving as an unconstrained benchmark. The quantity consumed in this arm reflected genuine demand independent of financial limitations and provided a contrast with the price arm to separate preference from affordability.

The exchangeable entitlement arm offered households entitlements that could either be redeemed for water or exchanged for cash of equivalent value. Their choices revealed willingness to accept compensation to forgo clean water, which is particularly meaningful in low-income contexts with limited substitutes and where governments often provide cash transfers. Randomisation within villages ensured that differences in behaviour were attributable to treatment conditions rather than geographic or infrastructural disparities. By removing the non-monetary costs associated with traditional water access, the study captured a more accurate picture of how households value clean water. In doing so, it provides policy-relevant insights on how to structure water delivery, subsidies, and interventions in settings where infrastructure



and treatment burdens fall heavily on households.

The study's findings reveal several important patterns regarding how households perceive and value clean water. Both WTP and WTA estimates were substantially higher than those reported in earlier studies that relied on indirect measures, such as chlorine adoption or time-use patterns, suggesting that prior work underestimated the true value of potable water due to the bundled inconveniences of collection and treatment. WTA values, in particular, were strikingly high, indicating households' strong reluctance to forgo clean water even when offered cash. While demand did respond to price increases, the decline was moderate, highlighting that clean water is considered a necessity rather than a discretionary good. In the exchangeable entitlement arm, many households chose water over equivalent cash, reinforcing the preference for guaranteed access over short-term monetary gain. Access to home-delivered water also led households to shift away from less reliable sources, reducing collection time and alleviating burdens that disproportionate affect a few. Finally, although health outcomes were self-reported, households indicated improvements in physical well-being, suggesting immediate perceived benefits from reliable clean water access.

Understanding choices These findings highlight an important insight: when clean water is made easily accessible, households demonstrate a far higher valuation than previously assumed. This challenges common interpretations that low-income households do not care about water quality or are unwilling to pay for treatment. Instead, what they resist are the associated inconveniences — taste, effort, labour, and uncertainty. By isolating water quality from these burdens, the study shows that people value purity deeply, and that their choices reflect a practical understanding of its importance for health and daily functioning. The strong WTP-WTA gap also reflects a psychological dimension: households may be wary of losing access once they experience the benefits of reliable, safe water. This study, therefore, contributes a new way of thinking about water valuation, one that centres the service rather than the technology. It suggests that uptake of chlorine or filters may not reflect low valuation of cleanliness but instead reflect aversion to the method of treatment due to difficulties in adoption or financial constraints. While it would have been interesting to also examine quantifiable health improvements rather than relying solely on self-reported outcomes, the behavioural evidence remains compelling. The findings point to actionable government strategies: support decentralised, home-delivery models in areas with limited piped infrastructure; provide subsidies or pricing aligned with households' willingness to pay; and integrate entitlement-based systems for vulnerable households to ensure universal access. Such measures can act as effective interim solutions while long-term investments in infrastructure and universal water access, such as technology adoption, work to make safe water easy, reliable, and dignified, and contributes to our understanding of household preferences for water.

Thrilled about data centre capacity coming up in India, discussed investments with PM Modi: Nadella

New Delhi: Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on Wednesday said he is excited about the data centre capacity the company is setting up in India and that he has discussed the company's investment plan with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Nadella has announced an investment of USD 17.5 billion by 2030 to help build infrastructure and sovereign capabilities for the country's AI-first future, marking the third major AI-driven investment in the country in the past two months.

Goa nightclub fire: 'I am only a partner,' says detained co-owner Ajay Gupta

Ajay Gupta, one of the co-owners of Goa's 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub, said that he is "only a partner" as he was brought to Delhi's Anti Extortion and Kidnapping Cell of the Crime Branch on Wednesday (December 10, 2025) in connection with the blaze that killed 25 people. Gupta, wearing a mask and covering most of his face, made the brief remark while entering the Crime Branch office at Sunlight Colony.

"We have detained Ajay Gupta, one of the owners of the nightclub. This is the sixth person to be held in connection with the case," a Goa police spokesperson said. "Earlier, an LOC was issued against him as a police team had failed to find him at his Delhi residence when it visited it there," he said, adding that Gupta was later found in the national capital and was detained. Sources said he was questioned by Goa Police and it initiated formal procedures to apprehend him and seek a transit remand. The sources said that Gupta had been evading from investigators since the December 6 blaze in north Goa's Arpora area.

"A Look Out Circular (LOC) had been issued against him after Goa Police failed to find him in Delhi during their first search. He was later located at a private hospital in Lajpat Nagar, where he had reportedly admitted himself citing spine-related medical issues. After medical clear-



ance, he was detained and brought to the Crime Branch office for further procedures," the source added. Goa Police has already arrested five staff members of the nightclub — chief general manager Rajiv Modak, general manager Vivek Singh, bar manager Rajiv Singhania, gate manager Riyanshu Thakur and employee Bharat Kohli — in connection with the tragedy. Meanwhile, two owners of the nightclub, brothers Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra, left India shortly after the incident. An Interpol Blue Corner Notice has been issued against them. The source said that Gupta will face detailed questioning in Goa about the club's management, operational responsibilities and fire-safety compliance.

Citizenship not a given for CAA applicants: Supreme Court



Centre will grant them due privileges, including voting rights, once it verifies their claims, says court after petitioner flags the panic among refugees from neighbouring nations after SIR began

The Supreme Court on Tuesday (December 9, 2025) said conferment of rights associated with Indian citizenship to people claiming to be religious minorities who fled persecution from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh and protected under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, would be wholly dependent on whether their claims turn out to be true. The court said that even though the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, had introduced changes in favour of granting "enforceable rights" to persecuted religious minorities from these countries, every such claim would have to be enquired into and determined by the authorities. The oral observations from a Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi came on a petition filed by an NGO, Aatmadeep, through advocate Anish Roy.

The NGO submitted that religious minorities from the three neighbouring countries, especially those who had

fled Bangladesh and were living in West Bengal, were petrified that the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls would render them stateless. The petition submitted that the proviso to Section 2(1)(b) of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) exempted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2014, from being considered "illegal migrants". These communities were Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians. Section 6B of the CAA allows these persons to apply for grant of certificate of registration or certificate of naturalisation. The NGO argued that those who apply for naturalisation should not be deprived of citizens' rights and privileges.

However, the petition said the authorities have delayed the issuance of the citizenship certificates. This, coupled with the non-recognition of acknowledgment receipts during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), has created a serious constitutional crisis. "The affected persons, already recognised by Parliament as persecuted minorities of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India deserving protection and integration, are now exposed to the risk of statelessness, social exclusion and disenfranchisement," the petition alleged. But Chief Justice Kant said the conferment of Indian citizenship was not a given for these applicants. They would have to fulfil certain conditions. "You are claiming that you are entitled by virtue of these amended provisions in the CAA to become citizens of this country. But you have not been conferred citizenship so far... The amended provisions might have conferred some enforceable rights in your favour to seek citizenship, but each and every statutory requirement has to be determined, like, do you belong to any minority in that country; were you resident of the country of which minority were permitted to come to India; and in what capacity have you come to India," Chief Justice Kant explained. The CJ said if the government has made a law, there would be a following mechanism to implement the law, in this case, to determine claims of citizenship by naturalisation from refugees who had fled these three countries. The Chief Justice noted that once such a person became a naturalised citizen through due process, he or she could apply under the statutory scheme for entry into the voter list. The EC did periodic review of the electoral roll, and could include the eligible names. The court, however, issued notice to the Election Commission, the Centre, the State Election Commission of West

The mysterious death of Annamalai University student Udayakumar 54 years ago



Campus unrest is not an uncommon feature in India. Recent weeks have seen Tezpur University in Assam and VIT University in Bhopal become the latest examples of student protests. A well-known case concerning Tamil Nadu deals with the controversy triggered by Annamalai University conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters, in July 1971, upon then Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. The sad aspect of the row was the death of K.P. Udayakumar, a third-year student of B.Sc. (Maths), under circumstances that have remained a mystery to date.

A few months after he was sworn in Chief Minister for the second time, following his Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (DMK) smashing success in the Lok Sabha-Assembly elections earlier that year, Karunanidhi was chosen by the University to be conferred the degree at the institution's 40th convocation on July 23. The University was of the view that he was "a rare combination of politician and man of letters, one who dominated in the field of Tamil literature setting in many ways a new style, and moulded the thought of the youth in this part of country." At the convocation, Vice-Chancellor S.P. Adinarayana paid glowing tributes to the Chief Minister. "His dynamism, constructive idealism and courageous thinking have qualified him to meet the life's challenge," he was quoted by The Hindu (July 24, 1971) as having said. When protests erupted

In his autobiography Nenjukku Needhi (Volume 2), Karunanidhi contended the bigger issue then was whether a person, who did not have formal education in any university and possess a degree, could be given an honorary degree. However, the University's move to honour the Chief Minister had irked certain sections of students, who were, in the words of Karunanidhi, "radical youth." In Nenjukku Needhi, he identified them as those belonging to the Annamalai University Students' Congress and Indian Students' Congress, which had published pamphlets, "paving the way for a huge furore." United Nations diplomat-turned-writer, R. Kannan, in his insightful The DMK Years, captures the situation as follows: "On 22 July, a day before the award ceremony, a pamphlet purportedly issued by the state's 'Youth Congress' tastelessly described the awardee as a 'folklore writer' while another with a Marxist-Leninist bent said that only socialist societies could create jobs." When the convocation was to begin in the morning of the fateful day, the agitating students "are reported to have waved black, flags and obstructed some of the vehicles, which were proceeding to the Convocation Hall," this newspaper reported on July 24. The youth were also alleged to have pelted stones. The police then made a lathi-charge and cleared the area. The students ran to a nearby hostel building. The second spell of trouble started after the event was over. "...there was again stone throwing. The police, who were heavily guarding the area, made another lathi-charge, this time entering the post-graduate hostel," the daily's report stated. In the afternoon, over 100 students shouting vulgar abuses were stated to have again indulged in stone-throwing near the gate of the post-graduate hostel. The police rounded up most of the inmates of the Eastern Hostel, including a number of students who had received their degrees in the morning. It was alleged

that while rounding up hostel inmates, the police broke open the doors of classrooms and used force to arrest 31 students, the report added. Sensing the gravity of the situation, the DMK government had immediately decided to form a Commission of Inquiry, headed by Justice N.S. Ramaswami, Judge, Madras High Court, to go into the incident, wherein more than 70 students and 25 police personnel were injured. On July 24, Education Minister and no. 2 in the Karunanidhi's Council of Ministers, V.R. Nedunchezian, announced in the Assembly the government's move.

However, the terms of reference (ToR) of the panel came under critical scrutiny as then vice-president of the Students' Federation of India, N. Ram, approached the High Court with a writ petition and argued in person in the Court that ToR was vague. He also submitted that the University had been closed indefinitely but the best evidence would be forthcoming if the University was opened, classes resumed, and students were free to return to the campus. Praying for an interim injunction to forbear the Commission from enquiring into the incidents pending the disposal of the petition, he pointed out that from the reports appearing in the press, there was a misapprehension that the government would influence the University not to open till the enquiry was over, according to a news report of this paper on August 28, 1971. Dismissing the writ petition, Justice T. Ramaprasada Rao did not agree with the petitioner's contention that the ToR was vague. The terms of reference were wide enough as to take into fold all the incidents said to have taken place at the University. Insofar as the opening or the closure of the University was concerned, the judge pointed out that since it was an autonomous body, that could not be the subject matter of a judicial review but the Commission was seized of that question also. Initial reports of the campus unrest did not talk of the death of the university student. In fact, it was in the morning of July 24 that the body of a youth, aged 25, was found floating in a tank on the University campus. "The body, which has not been identified either by the staff or the students, is believed to be that of a former student. It has been sent to the Government Headquarters Hospital, Cuddalore, for post-mortem," reported The Hindu on July 25. Four days later, the matter was raised by H.V. Hande of the Swatantra Party, who later became Health Minister in the AIADMK regime led by M.G. Ramachandran. In his response, Karunanidhi showed leaders of the Opposition parties photographs of Udayakumar and of the dead student, and observed they did not look like pictures of the same person. Neither his government nor its officials had attempted to say that the body was not that of a student but "we, the members of this House, should be adequately careful as the wrong message should not be out that the discovered body was that of the student," he said, according to a perusal of the records of the Assembly (pages 266-277, Tamil Nadu Assembly debate for July 29, 1971). For his stand, the Chief Minister relied on the statement given by the father of the student in question and his relative when the body was found. They could not confirm that it belonged to that of the youth even though the father had said that the watch and the ring resembled those of his son. Findings of Commission Six months later, the report of the Ramaswami Commission was placed in the Assembly. The panel concluded that the body of the youth found on the campus "was in all probability" that of Udayakumar. It also stated that the student "did not die due to police excess and he should have died as a result of drowning only on the night of July 23," this newspaper reported on January 12, 1972. The Commission, which had justified the police action in dealing with the incidents, had stated that the police used only the "minimum force necessary" to push away the students, who threw missiles. On January 31, when R. Ponnappa Nadar, Leader of the Congress (Organisation) in the Assembly, sought to corner Karunanidhi on his previous statement in the House regarding the identity of the body, the latter denied that he had ever stated that the body was that of the student. He also said that the body of the student was established only to ascertain the truth. For many years, the death of Udayakumar had figured in political debates. N. Subramanian, a member of the House, continues to disturb conscientious people.

Australia begins enforcing world-first teen social media ban



Australia has become the first country to ban social media for children under 16 from Wednesday (December 10, 2025), blocking access to platforms including TikTok, Alphabet's YouTube and Meta's Instagram and Facebook. Ten of the biggest platforms were ordered to block children from midnight (1300 GMT on Tuesday) or face fines of up to A\$49.5 million (\$33 million) under the new law, which drew criticism from major technology companies and free speech advocates, but was welcomed by parents and child advocates. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called it "a proud day" for families and cast the law as proof that policymakers can curb online harms that have outpaced traditional safeguards.

"This is the day when Australian families are taking back power from these big tech companies," Mr. Albanese told ABC News. "New technology can do wonderful things but we need to make sure that humans are in control of our own destiny and that is what this is about," he said. In a video message that Sky News Australia said would be played in schools this week, Mr. Albanese will urge children to "start a new sport, new instrument, or read that book that has been sitting there for some time on your shelf," ahead of Australia's summer school break starting later this month. The rollout caps a year of debate over

whether any country could practically stop children from using platforms embedded in daily life, and begins a live test for governments worldwide frustrated that social media firms have been slow to implement harm-reduction measures. Should children be barred from social media? | The Hindu parley podcast Several countries from Denmark to New Zealand to Malaysia have signalled they may study or emulate Australia's model, making the country a test case for how far governments can push age-gating without stifling speech or innovation. 'Not our choice': X says will comply Elon Musk's X became the last of the 10 major platforms to take measures to cut off access to underage teens after publicly acknowledging on Wednesday that it would comply. "It's not our choice - it's what the Australian law requires," X said on its website. "X automatically offboards anyone who does not meet our age requirements." Australia has said the initial list of covered platforms would change as new products emerge and young users migrate. Companies have told Canberra they will deploy a mix of age inference - estimating a user's age from their behaviour - and age estimation based on a selfie, alongside checks that could include uploaded identification documents or linked bank account details. For social media businesses, the implementation marks a new era of structural stagnation as user numbers flatline and time spent on platforms shrinks, studies show. Platforms say they earn little from advertising to under-16s, but warn the ban disrupts a pipeline of future users. Just before the ban took effect, 86% of Australians aged eight to 15 used social media, the government said. Some youngsters have warned the social media ban could isolate people. "It's going to be worse for queer people and people with niche interests I guess because that's the only way they can find their community," said 14-year-old Annie Wang ahead of the ban. "Some people also use it to vent their feelings and talk to people to get help ... So I feel like it'll be fine for some people, but for some people it'll worsen their mental health."

The illusion of learning: Why toppers still aren't job-ready



Every year, millions of young Indians walk into classrooms believing they are building the foundation of a successful life. Their mark sheets proudly display distinctions, percentages, and perfect scores. Relatives offer congratulations, teachers feel reassured, and parents believe the foundation for a secure future has been laid. Yet behind these celebrations lies a quiet and persistent discomfort: we have built an education system where memorisation looks like learning, and where marks often mask, rather than measure, a student's understanding. The uncomfortable truth is this. A nation that produces so many toppers should not simultaneously struggle with an acute shortage of job-ready talent. A paradox in the labour market

India's labour market today reflects a contradiction that is difficult to ignore. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), unemployment stands at 5.2%. At the same time, industries across sectors consistently report shortages of skilled workers. The India Skills Report 2026 places youth employability at 56.35%. While this marks an improvement over previous years, it also means that nearly half of India's young population entering the workforce lacks workplace-ready capabilities. This statistical paradox points toward a deeper structural issue: our education system signals achievement, but not necessarily ability. Foundations built on rote, not reasoning

For decades, classroom success in India has been defined by accuracy in recall-based examinations. When questioning is treated as deviation and curiosity is confined to the margins, children learn early that performance matters more than comprehension. The consequences follow them into higher education. Many students arrive at colleges with limited exposure to practical problem-solving, conceptual reasoning, or hands-on application. A well-written exam answer is not the same as the ability to troubleshoot a circuit, run a basic code loop, assemble a prototype, or read a technical drawing — competencies that industries expect on day one. The result: we produce graduates with degrees but without demonstrable skills. The illusion of education holds firm, but the foundation beneath it remains fragile.

Torture in Madras 140 years ago! when a man's moustache was pulled out

At the end of September 1854, Aroonachella Moodelly (Arunchala Mudali), a weaver and cultivator hailing from Teroovumanullor village in Cuddalore Zilla (now a district) was returning home from a neighbouring village. Someone told him the peons and talliards (thaliari or village official) were already at his doorstep. They had ill-treated his brother Narrainsawmy and also the women in the family.

A case of theft When he was away, there was a robbery in the house of another inhabitant Sudr Ameen. For some reason, the suspicion had fallen on him. Aroonachella Moodelly was afraid to go home. He then went to Cuddalore and complained to Malby, the Collector, who referred him to the tahsildar Soobba Royer (Subbarayar). He headed to meet the tahsildar, whose office was about "three-quarters of a league" from Moodelly's house. The tahsildar asked him to stay there till the case of theft came up. After a day, the tahsildar sent him to his house along with the 'dayalet' (a worker). Moodelly found that the taluk peon Kistna Singh, one Narrainsawmy Naiken sent by the tahsildar, puttamonyan Moodroolinga Reddy (Muthulinga Reddy), kurnam Gungdara Pillay (Gangadara Pillai), village munsif Vencataramanian, and other puttamonyan were already at his house. "I was immediately pinioned, and then tied

to a tree, where these people struck me with their slippers, after which I was untied, and placed in the stocks, and was again struck by these men till I fainted. When I recovered, I was told to say that the gold which I had in my possession had been given to me by a thief," recalled Moodelly, more than three months later while deposing before E.F. Elliot, the Commissioner for the Investigation of alleged Cases of Torture. He was then taken to the tahsildar, where he was kept in custody for 25 days. The tahsildar questioned him about the gold, and when he asserted that it was his own property, the official quipped that he would not speak the truth. As if on cue, those around chose to immediately mete out third-degree treatment. "...handcuffs were put on me, and I was lifted up by my moustaches by a peon named Ramasawmy Naik, and one side of my moustaches were pulled out," he recounted to Elliot. His brother was then taken into custody and ill-treated so much that he "confessed" to having seen Moodelly melting something (gold). "I was then committed, with several others, and tried at Cuddalore, and we were all acquitted; and the Sudr Ameen sent the woman, named Anghee, to the Collector, to give statements respecting the ill-treatment; Anghee having had a kittie (a thumbscrew-like clamping device) applied to her breast to make her confess. We both appeared before the sub-collector, I think his name is Banbury, who heard us, and our statements were taken down, and we were told to go

Preventing strokes before they begin: tools everyone should be aware of



Brain strokes continue to remain one of the most alarming public health challenges in India. As a neurologist who sees the devastating consequences daily, it is evident to me that many strokes need never have happened. Strokes are the final event in a long, silent process—one that we now have the tools to detect, slow down, and often prevent. One of the most overlooked contributors to stroke risk lies not in the brain, but in the neck. The carotid arteries, which carry blood to the brain, can gradually narrow due to the build-up of fatty plaques. This process is often completely symptom-free. Yet when a plaque ruptures or a clot forms, blood flow to the brain can suddenly stop, leading to irreversible paralysis, loss of speech, or even death.

Recently, an important international study, the CREST-2 trial, offered new clarity on how we can better protect people at risk. The study followed more than 2,400 individuals with severe but symptom-free carotid narrowing. All participants received the best possible medical therapy—including strict control of blood pressure, cholesterol, and other vascular risks. However, the findings showed something crucial: those who also underwent carotid stenting had nearly half the risk of stroke or early death over four years compared with those treated with medicines alone. This does not mean that every individual with carotid disease requires an intervention. What it does reinforce, however, is that early identification of severe carotid narrowing provides an opportunity to offer additional protection to those who truly need it. Timely diagnosis

makes the difference between silent risk and preventable tragedy.

One of the simplest tools available to us is the carotid Doppler ultrasound. This non-invasive test uses sound waves—without any radiation—to assess plaque build-up and measure how much the artery has narrowed. It is quick, painless, widely available, and remarkably informative. While it is not recommended indiscriminately for everyone, it can be immensely useful for individuals with multiple stroke risk factors. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, elevated cholesterol levels, smoking, heart disease, peripheral artery disease, or a strong family history of vascular events. For adults above 50–55 with such risks, adding a carotid Doppler scan to an annual health check can help unearth silent but dangerous blockages long before they cause harm. Of course, no scan replaces the basics. The most effective protection against stroke continues to be disciplined control of blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes; quitting smoking; regular physical activity; and maintaining a healthy body weight. These lifestyle foundations remain our strongest defense. At the same time, we must remember the signs that need urgent medical attention. Sudden weakness, facial drooping, slurred speech, vision loss, or sudden imbalance should always be treated as a medical emergency. These brief, transient episodes—often called warning strokes—may be the first indication of significant carotid disease and represent a narrow window to prevent something far more catastrophic. As we work toward strengthening India's stroke-preparedness ecosystem,

Can Karnataka retain tag of India's top destination for space?



On June 24, 2020, as the country was still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union Cabinet approved the participation of the private sector in space activities and the creation of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) to provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure. This reform was hailed as historic in India's space journey, which started in 1962 with the establishment of the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR), an earlier avatar of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Soon, space start-ups started mushrooming across the country (currently, there are 330 active space startups in India). The Central Government followed up with further reforms with the Indian Space Policy 2023, and opening up the sector to 100% foreign investment with a new FDI policy. More importantly, this paved the way for many States, including Karnataka, to roll out their own space policies. The Karnataka government, which recently approved the Karnataka Space Technology policy 2025-30, aims to make Karnataka a global space technology destination. To sustain Karnataka as the number one destination for space technology in India and hold 50% of the national market share which is \$ 22 billion market by 203 to propel Karnataka into a global space technology destination with comprehensive capabilities across the space value chain, targeting 5% of the global market share. "The State's Space Technology Policy 2025-2030 positions Karnataka as India's premier space economy hub. Building on our unparalleled aerospace legacy and research excellence, we are charting Karnataka's trajectory in the fast-growing space sector. The five strategic pillars of the policy are skill development initiatives, investment incentives, infrastructure creation, innovation and facilitation, adoption and awareness. This policy creates a thriving ecosystem for space startups, industries and academic institutions, fostering innovation from the ground up." Priyank Kharge Minister for Electronics, IT, BT and RDP/ISRO paves the way

Space and Karnataka, in particular Bengaluru, are synonymous with the ISRO headquarters having been established in the city about five decades ago. Many of ISRO's critical establishments like the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre, ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network, Laboratory for Electro-Optics Systems and Human Space Flight Centre, are located in Bengaluru. Some of the leading start-ups in the sector are headquartered in Bengaluru which gives Karnataka a headstart when compared to its rivals like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, which have also come up with their own space policies. Heart of ecosystem

"Karnataka has long been the heart of India's space tech ecosystem, and the new space policy is a strong step toward deepening that leadership. It recognises how rapidly the sector is evolving, whether in satellite manufacturing, Earth observation, launch, or downstream analytics. It creates a framework that enables companies like ours to build globally competitive capabilities from India," says Awais Ahmed, founder and CEO, Pixxel, a Bengaluru-based startup. He added that as a company based in Bengaluru, Pixxel has consistently benefited from the State's depth in engineering, talent pool, and innovation culture. "The new policy creates opportunities for us to advance satellite manufacturing further, strengthen our research partnerships with institutions in the State, and foster closer collaboration with emerging startups and suppliers within the region," said Ahmed. He argued that the focus on high-precision manufacturing, testing infrastructure, and support for emerging technologies is particularly 'relevant to our work in hyperspectral Earth observation and planetary intelligence.' "With the right support mechanisms now coming into place, we expect this to strengthen our ability to build, test, and deliver high-impact space systems from Karnataka," Ahmed added. Infrastructure needs

Among the infrastructure which the government wants to establish through the policy are space manufacturing parks across Karnataka, new testing centres through Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode to expand upstream and downstream testing capabilities, and a Centre of Excellence in partnership with industry and academia, which

will be the nerve centre and platform connecting industry, academia, start-ups, and government to innovate and accelerate the adoption of space technologies. The policy states that its focus area will include upstream and downstream activities for commercial space, defence space, electronics and space research, including astronomy and astrophysics. The upstream (including space and ground systems) segment also aims to incorporate areas like space stations, space tourism, in-orbit services, and space manufacturing activities. "The government of Karnataka shall support enterprises engaged in the development of next-generation space capabilities, including space stations and tourism infrastructure, in-orbit manufacturing, and servicing capabilities. This also includes space situational awareness systems that ensure safe and sustainable space operations," the policy states.

According to the policy, start-ups and MSMEs will be reimbursed Provident Fund (PF) or Employee's State Insurance (ESI) of ₹1,800 per employee per month for two years subject to total reimbursement of up to ₹12 lakh. This will be applicable for all new employment created during the policy period, provided the employment is for a continuous period of only two years. Upskilling and reskilling Suyash Singh, co-founder and CEO of GalaxEye, welcoming this initiative, said that the focus on upskilling and reskilling prepares the workforce for emerging opportunities. "Space technology demands advanced, hands-on expertise that goes beyond classroom learning. It's encouraging to see the government of Karnataka recognise this as a vital element in developing human capital. Such initiatives will also encourage companies to relocate here, attracted by the presence of a highly skilled talent pool. I also see the PF and ESI reimbursement as a very practical measure," he said. "For us, it means the ability to grow our team sustainably while ensuring they get opportunities to learn, adapt, and stay aligned with the fast-moving nature of space technology. It's a thoughtful policy design that supports both innovation and people," he added. The policy further states that, during the policy period, at least 500 space sector start-ups and MSME will be supported to grow and innovate. "During the policy period, 50+ satellites with substantial indigenisation shall be designed, manufactured, assembled, integrated, tested, launched and operated by Karnataka based NewSpace enterprises for commercial, defence-space and research purposes," it states. Bengaluru-based start-ups are all game to leverage this policy. Yashas Karanam, co-founder & COO, Bellatrix Aerospace, said that being headquartered in Bengaluru gives it a natural advantage, and the new policy expands that significantly. "We plan to engage closely with the State's thrust areas: skilling, R&D collaboration, and manufacturing incentives. For example, we're evaluating expanding our subsystem manufacturing footprint within Karnataka if the proposed incentives — capex support, cluster benefits and testing infrastructure — are formalized. Propulsion development relies on high-precision facilities. Hence, access to State-supported test beds or shared qualification centers can dramatically reduce development cycles and costs," he said. His company intends to leverage Karnataka's positioning efforts — space parks, cluster branding, international outreach — to grow its international customer base while scaling manufacturing locally. Leveraging NIPUNA

The policy states that leveraging NIPUNA (an initiative aimed at equipping youth in the State with industry-specific skills and harnessing their potential) and other initiatives of the government of Karnataka, during the policy period, 50,000 professionals and students will be trained or up-skilled up to industry standards. This shall include at least 15,000 women professionals and students who will be trained or up-skilled up to industry standards. Going back to the ambitious vision the policy has set for itself, which is 'to capture 50% of India's space market by 2034 and 5% of the global share'. Is it realistic? Execution is key Karanam says that the policy's real value will depend on execution. His company Bellatrix Aerospace develops and manufactures advanced propulsion technologies. "Propulsion, in particular, requires precision manufacturing, vacuum-test infrastructure, high-fidelity qualification labs, and predictable regulatory pathways. The framework is promising, but its impact will hinge how quickly on-ground capabilities materialize. However, the State's ambition to capture 50% of the national space market is both pragmatic and achievable if the ecosystem investments are deep and sustained," Karanam says. Karnataka, given its space history, is certainly a front-runner in the space race. However, other States are catching up, and start-ups see this as a positive sign. Sign of strategic sector "It's a positive sign for the country. State-level policies show that India is recognising space as a strategic sector with economic, environmental, and technological significance. While ISRO and IN-SPACe continue to guide national-level priorities, States creating their own frameworks helps unlock regional strengths, whether that's manufacturing, innovation clusters, universities, or specialised research facilities," says Ahmed. For companies like Pixxel, it means a more distributed and resilient ecosystem to build in, he added. "As long as these policies continue to support innovation and facilitate access to capital and business, they can help us to accelerate India's emergence as a global space technology hub," he added.

answer lies not in raising prices, but ensuring an increase in supply. Prices for certain services like health, education and train travel must be kept affordable for welfare, but at the same time, there must be significant investment by the state to expand access. This is difficult to do in a neo-liberal economy, which places strict constraints on government intervention in the economy. Limits are placed on the size of the fiscal deficit, limiting government investment. A route that increases government spending while maintaining the deficit is through raising resources by wealth and income taxation of the top 1%. As shown by Thomas Piketty and his team, modest taxation of the top 1% would be enough to raise a considerable amount to strengthen the Indian welfare state. This, however, would not be acceptable to domestic and global capital. Monopolies and grounded flights The solution, as advanced by many, is deregulation, and the entry of private capital into the provision of services. The logic goes that focusing on the profit motive ensures an efficient match of demand and supply, and investment in search of profit will ensure the expansion of services to all. However, the recent crisis surrounding Indigo has shown the shortcomings of this model. The Indigo crisis is an example of a supply shock. The withdrawal of flights in the face of normal demand leads to price increases, amplified by the near-monopoly enjoyed by Indigo in Indian markets. The reduction in such a large amount of supply meant huge price increases for other flights and significant consumer loss. Supply restrictions for one firm in a market would not lead to such massive market-wide disruptions if the market was genuinely competitive. Non-competitive pricing power was highlighted as a key factor leading to the rapid increase in inflation during former U.S. President Joe Biden's term, which played a role in bringing Donald Trump to power. The massive supply disruptions brought about by lockdowns increased costs, but were translated

What did Putin's visit to India achieve? | Explained



The story so far: In terms of protocol, the government gave Russian President Vladimir Putin his warmest welcome yet. Prime Minister Narendra Modi received him on the red carpet at the New Delhi tarmac, and then travelled with him to the PM's residence for a private dinner. At the end of the 30-hour trip, President Droupadi Murmu hosted him for a banquet as well. Mr. Modi called the India-Russia relationship steady like a "pole star (dhruva tara)". However, the outcome of the Modi-Putin summit has been modest.

What are the main takeaways?

Ahead of Mr. Putin's visit, his first since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the India-Pakistan conflict this year, and the downturn in India-U.S. ties, there was considerable speculation that the two sides were working on a substantial set of agreements on defence cooperation, procurement and technology transfer deals in aircraft, air defence systems, drones and missiles. However, the meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov before Mr. Putin landed, ended without any announcements. Instead, the focus was squarely on economic cooperation, and taking forward the roadmap on the "Development of Strategic Areas of India — Russia Economic Cooperation till 2030" that was launched during Mr. Modi's visit to Moscow in 2024. To this end, they announced a "Labour Mobility Agreement" that will facilitate Indian skilled workers to work in Russia, where manpower shortages for three million jobs are expected by the end of the decade. Russian and Indian fertilizer companies also signed an MoU to build a urea plant in Russia. Apart from this, the two sides signed agreements on maritime cooperation, ports and customs. The two sides expected to smooth the path for bilateral trade, particularly via the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and International North South Transport Corridor. India and Russia agreed to continue working towards enhancing the settlement of bilateral trade in their national currencies. There were no announcements, however, on oil procurement, that made up more than \$60 billion of the \$69 billion trade last year, nor were there any concrete outcomes on space and nuclear cooperation.

Was the Ukraine war a factor?

In T.N., dengue caseload is high, but doctors see fewer complications, deaths

Last year, Tamil Nadu logged its highest dengue caseload, crossing the 20,000 mark for the first time since the previous peak in 2017. Though case numbers have risen steadily this year as well, doctors and public health experts point out that a stronger understanding of the disease, targeted surveillance strategies, greater public awareness and well-defined protocols have improved early diagnosis and helped reduce complications and mortality.

The State, in its two earlier peaks in 2012 and 2017, had recorded 13,204 cases with 66 deaths and 23,294 cases with 65 deaths, respectively. In the years that followed, both case numbers and deaths declined, until 2024, when the number of cases again surged. Though the exact number of cases and deaths this year could not be ascertained, health officials confirmed that there are about 23,000 to 24,000 cases of dengue so far but fewer deaths than last year. A. Somasundaram, Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, said that communicable diseases have both seasonal and cyclic trends. While flu is seasonal, some diseases follow a cyclic pattern. In these cycles of five to seven years, the disease builds its capacity to cause more serious infections. When this coincides with susceptible or vulnerable groups being present in large numbers, more severe disease can occur, he said.

"The public health system is geared to take preventive measures. We use a triangulation approach. We focus on areas where the larval index is high and have identified locations that are traditionally dengue hotspots. We also conduct mosquito pooling, an exercise in which mosquito samples are collected and tested for dengue viruses using RT-PCR. This approach has helped us reduce both cases and mortality," he said.

Dengue is endemic in India, a senior doctor added. "It was an exotic virus in the late 1990s. But this is no longer the case. Cases of dengue increase after rains and decrease when there are no rains. This follows the dynamics of the mosquito cycle. We can control dengue with certain checks and balances. It has a unique pattern. Dengue outbreaks tend to occur once in five years when the spread is rapid, with the classic examples being outbreaks in 2012-2013 and 2017 when mortality was high," he explained. He added that an outbreak was expected during 2021 - 2022 but did not occur owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. "In fact, dengue cases were low during that period," he said. Interestingly, the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine did a dengue serosurvey to determine the reasons for low prevalence of dengue during the pandemic due to possible viral interference. Dengue is caused by four serotypes of dengue virus (DENV 1 - 4). The survey was conducted during the middle of the pandemic in December 2021 to compare the antibody levels (seroprevalence) against DENV and SARS-CoV-2, and found that seroprevalence of dengue was very low in the community with 4.12% for DENV IgM and 6.4% for DENV IgG. Only 3.76% of female Aedes mosquito pools were positive for DENV. It said that while anti-SARS-CoV-2 IgG antibody levels remained high at 87.3%, the decline in dengue incidence and/or prevalence during the pandemic (2020-2022) appears to be attributed to possible viral interference and neutralising effect of SARS-CoV-2 IgG against DENV. "Tamil Nadu has a robust vector surveillance system implemented by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, under which detection of dengue virus in field-caught mosquito pool samples is done by RT-PCR across the State. This surveillance enables early identification of hotspots and appropriate public health measures," he said. While the dengue alarm is sounded every year, doctors say that early

Mr. Putin's visit to India, at a time the Ukraine war could head into its fourth year, was significant, as it came during intense negotiations over a U.S.-led peace proposal aimed at ending the conflict last week in Moscow. In comments to the media prior to their talks, Mr. Modi thanked Mr. Putin for "always keeping India briefed" about the conflict, and hoping for it to end. "India is not neutral, it stands on the side of peace," Mr. Modi said. Mr. Putin too said he hoped for peace, and signalled some hope for the U.S. proposal. However, the larger shadow over the talks was of Western sanctions on Russia that have exacted a high cost on India. While Mr. Putin promised "uninterrupted fuel supplies to India", and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said it would only bow to "commercial considerations" on oil purchases, it would seem European sanctions on Russian and Indian oil companies as well as the hefty 25% tariff added on to Indian goods by the U.S. have dented India's resolve. Figures show, that in 2025, the year-on-year intake of Russian oil has been cut drastically (38% y-o-y down in value in October 2025). The two sides may have also stayed away from announcements in the field of defence, space and nuclear cooperation during Mr. Putin's visit, just in case the U.S. revisits its 2018 CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) law that sanctions strategic purchases from Russia. In addition, a warning shot from three European Ambassadors (the U.K., Germany and France) in an article criticising Russia for the war in Ukraine, that appeared just days before Mr. Putin's visit, may have given the government some reason to pause, even though the MEA called the article's "public advice" to India, "unacceptable". It is also significant that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who had last year criticised Mr. Modi for embracing Mr. Putin in Moscow, remained silent on the hugs and bonhomie in Delhi, possibly due to some deft diplomacy by New Delhi, and owing to the sensitive stage the U.S.-led peace talks are at.

What can be the way forward?

For New Delhi, an end to the conflict in Ukraine will ease the tightrope walk it is currently being forced into due to the deep polarisation between Russia and Europe, and as Russia's dependency on China grows. Mr. Putin's visit came just a month before likely visits from German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and the European Union's top leadership Ursula Von Der Leyen and Antonio Costa for Republic Day. The EU-India Summit is being held after a long gap, and the EU-India Free Trade Agreement is expected to be signed. In February, New Delhi expects French President Emmanuel Macron and other Western leaders at the Artificial Intelligence Summit, and Canadian PM Mark Carney thereafter. Meanwhile, the India-U.S. free trade agreement, that hopes to see a rollback of excessive U.S. tariffs, is also in a decisive phase. In that sense, New Delhi hoped the Putin-visit, that was long delayed, would be a "win-win." It wanted the visit to be a reaffirmation of its traditional ties with Russia, while ensuring the outcomes did not raise a protest from the West. This would allow India to continue to uphold its decades-old policy of "strategic autonomy."



diagnosis and prompt referrals have improved as a result of which complications and deaths have reduced.

Janani Sankar, medical director, Kanchi Kamakoti CHILDS Trust Hospital, Chennai, said the hospital has been continuously seeing children with dengue since July, but there were no Intensive Care Unit admissions, no seriously ill cases and no deaths. "Early diagnosis has definitely improved. About 25 to 30% of children did not require hospitalisation. If they resided close by, we educated the parents on the warning symptoms and asked them to report in 24 hours to check their vital parameters. If they were from distant location, we did not want to take chances and admitted them. They were discharged in a few days," she said.

The severity of the cases has definitely come down, she said, adding: "Improved awareness levels, including on the warning signs, among the public as well as doctors has helped to a great extent. Children are also referred to the hospital earlier. The understanding of the disease is better now." She added that though case numbers usually fall by the end of the year, they now see sporadic cases throughout the year - though small in numbers - unlike before, when cases are usually reported after July. Sowmya Sridharan, consultant, infectious diseases, Kauvery Hospital, Alwarpet, Chennai, said that post-COVID, awareness on any fever has increased among the public. "The complications are not alarming and there has been no strain on the healthcare system. Proactive measures from the State government have reduced mortality due to dengue," she noted.

Dr. Sowmya further explained: "When there is early detection and close monitoring, management is better. In at-risk patients, dengue could cause complications. Monitoring helps to detect early signs of deterioration or complications. A cascade sets in when dehydration occurs in the febrile phase of dengue. If fluid management is not done appropriately, it could lead to shock and severe dengue when haematocrit levels rise and platelet count falls and organ dysfunction could occur. The blood pressure drops and bleeding manifestations may occur. Any organ such as the brain, heart, lung and kidney could be affected." S. Chandrasekar, professor and head, department of medicine, Government Stanley Medical College Hospital, Chennai, said in dengue, sudden abrupt onset of fever, myalgia and pain behind the eyes is typically seen in patients. "Nearly 95% of dengue cases are self-limiting. We can assess its severity by certain parameters - drop in white blood cell count followed by fall in platelet count and rise in haematocrit levels. We should monitor these three changes. While these manifestations could change every season, what has been observed in the last six months is people coming in with shock syndrome, low BP, low platelet count, and liver dysfunction markers, Dr. Chandrasekar said. Elaborating on how the hospital focused its treatment strategy, he said, "Patients required prolonged hospital stay and intensive care. So, we decided to monitor these parameters for all patients with

Lessons from recent transport crises

In the past couple of months, India has witnessed its transport infrastructure come under massive strain. In October and November, trains to Bihar experienced immense rush, owing to migrants travelling home for Chhath Pujas and the Bihar elections. Travellers were forced to travel in cramped and inhospitable conditions in unreserved compartments due to the paucity of trains. In December, the mass cancellation of Indigo flights owing to regulatory non-compliance led to stranded passengers and inflated prices. Both events can be used to explain the reaction of prices and the responses of government and private players to demand and supply shocks. But the divergent behaviour of prices — and its effects — in these cases indicate the constraints imposed on welfare in a neo-liberal economy. Low prices of government services do not increase welfare unless accompanied by significant government investment, while deregulated prices only reduce welfare in the presence of monopolies. Demand shock and Indian Railways The sudden increase in demand for Bihar-bound trains in October is a classic indication of a demand shock. In the face of a given supply, such an increase in demand would lead to higher prices. If prices remain fixed due to government intervention, it would lead to an increase in the number of travellers far beyond the capacity of the trains. This led to overcrowded trains and hazardous travelling conditions. Standard economic theory would state that prices need to rise such that demand and supply are in equilibrium. While this would lead to the inability to travel for many, economic efficiency would be achieved. Critics point to this as the fundamental issue with government services, where keeping prices low due to social compulsions leads to excess demand of services and rampant inefficiency. But this criticism misses a fundamental problem. It is true that low prices lead to overcrowding, but the

China seeks to project power far beyond its coast with new Fujian aircraft carrier



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Bangkok: China has commissioned its latest aircraft carrier after extensive sea trials, state media reported Friday, adding a ship that experts say will help what is already the world's largest navy expand its power farther beyond its own waters. Fujian had been commissioned Wednesday at a naval base on southern China's Hainan island in a ceremony attended by top leader Xi Jinping. The Fujian is China's third carrier and the first that it both designed and built itself. It is perhaps the most visible example so far of Xi's massive military overhaul and expansion that aims to have a modernised force by 2035 and one that is "world class" by mid century — which most take to mean capable of going toe-to-toe with the United States. With it, Beijing takes another step toward closing the gap with the US Navy and its carrier fleet and network of bases that allow it to maintain a presence around the world.

"Carriers are key to Chinese leadership's vision of China as a great power with a blue-water navy," or one that can project power far from its coastal waters, said Greg Poling, director of the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. China wants to contest waters as far as Guam

For China's navy, one goal is to dominate the near waters of the South China Sea, East China Sea and Yellow Sea around the so-called First Island Chain, which runs south through Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines. But deeper into the Pacific, it also wants to be able to contest control of the Second Island Chain, where the US has important military facilities on Guam and elsewhere, Poling said.

"A carrier doesn't really help you in the First Island Chain, but it's key to that contest, if you want one, with the Americans in the wider Indo-Pacific," Poling said. China's "increasingly capable military" and ability to "project power globally" is one of the reasons the Pentagon in its latest report to Congress continued to call it "the only competitor to the United States with the intent and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order." At the same time, it is Beijing's right to "transform its navy into a blue-water strategic navy commensurate with China's national strength," said Song Zhongping, a Hong Kong-based military affairs expert.

"China's carriers cannot just operate near home, they must operate in the distant oceans and far seas to carry out various training and support missions," Song said. "China is a great power and our overseas interests span the globe; we need to be globally present." The Fujian is a step in that direction. One possibility that raises concerns in foreign capitals is a possible blockade or invasion of the democratically self-governed island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory and which leader Xi Jinping has not ruled out taking by force. Though the island sits right off of China's coast, if China had the ability to position an aircraft carrier group or groups around the Second Island Chain — between Taiwan and the US Pacific Fleet headquarters in Hawaii — that could delay possible American military assistance in the event of a Chinese attack.

"They want those aircraft carriers to play a part in kind of extending the strategic perimeter farther out from China, and one of the important things that an aircraft carrier can do is extend the range of China's domain awareness to keep an eye on activities in the air, on the sea, and below the sea," said Brian Hart, deputy director of CSIS's China Power Project. With Fujian, China's war-

planes can deploy far from its shores. China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, was Soviet made and its second, the Shandong, was built in China but based on the Soviet model. Both use older-style ski-jump type systems to help planes take flight.

The Fujian skips past the steam catapult technology used on most American carriers to employ an electromagnetic launch system found only on the latest US Navy Ford-class carriers. The system causes less stress to the aircraft and the ship, allows for more precise control over speed and can launch a wider range of aircraft than the steam system. Compared to the ski-jump system, it gives China the ability to launch heavier aircraft, with full fuel loads, like the KJ-600 early warning and control plane, which it successfully tested during its sea trials.

Its latest J-35 stealth fighter and J-15T heavy fighter were also launched from the Fujian, giving the new carrier "full-deck operation capability" according to the Chinese navy. The ability to carry its own reconnaissance aircraft means unlike its first two carriers, it won't be operating blind when out of the range of land-based support, giving it the ability to operate its most advanced aircraft far afield including the Second Island Chain. "The Fujian carrier is a big leapfrog for China in terms of the capabilities of its aircraft carriers compared to the first two," Hart said. China's carriers aren't nuclear powered

Still, Hart noted, China's navy lags behind the US in several significant ways. Numerically it only has three carriers compared to the US Navy's 11, and while China's carriers are all conventionally powered, the US's are all nuclear powered which means they can operate almost indefinitely without being refuelled — dramatically increasing their range. The Ford-class carrier, of which only one is currently in service but more are being built, is also larger, can carry more aircraft on its flight deck, and has a third elevator that means it can move more aircraft from lower deck hangars in less time. China also lags behind the US in guided missile cruisers and destroyers, which are critical in providing air and submarine defence and support for larger naval groups, as well as nuclear-powered submarines. The US is also ahead in vertical launching system cells — basically the systems for holding and launching missiles from ships — which is a measure of how much firepower vessels can carry, though China is increasing that capacity, Hart said. Beyond just equipment, China lacks the network of overseas bases that the US has, which are critical for resupplying carriers and also providing alternative runways should aircraft not be able to return safely to the carrier. China is working on expanding its foreign bases, however, and has a nuclear propulsion system for a carrier in development.

There's also evidence that China is already building another carrier. Chinese shipyards have the capabilities to build more than one at once and have also been churning out other new vessels at a pace the US can't currently come close to matching. "Really across the board, China's closing the gap," Hart said. "They're fielding and building more aircraft carriers, they're fielding more nuclear-powered subs, they are fielding more, larger destroyers and other vessels that carry a larger number of missiles. So they're really catching up." Fujian is just one of China's latest military assets. China has happily shown off its new military assets, releasing video of the KJ-600, J-35 and J-15T test flights from the Fujian. A World War II Victory Day parade at the start of September showcased all three aircraft along with hypersonic glide vehicles — whose high-speed, manoeuvrability and other attributes make them more difficult to intercept than traditional ballistic missiles — aerial and underwater drones and electronic warfare systems. Sophisticated new equipment does not necessarily translate to military readiness, however, said Singapore-based analyst Tang Meng Kit, who noted that China hasn't fought a war since 1979 and that the carefully choreographed parade was good at "amplifying perceptions of strength." "It is possible that China's capabilities are overstated, as real-world operational readiness lags behind its showcased arsenal," he told the AP. He also cautioned in a recent analysis for the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore that it would be a mistake to see China's military modernisation as simply geared toward a possible Taiwan invasion, which he said is only one part of a "larger mosaic." The parade "signalled China's broader strategic intent to project its military power, and to expand its regional and global influence, and to reinforce its domestic legitimacy," he said.



Typhoon Kalmaegi battered central Vietnam after devastating the Philippines, killing at least five people and leaving massive destruction in Dak Lak, Gia Lai, and Quang Ngai. The storm damaged thousands of homes, cut power to millions, and followed weeks of severe regional flooding

surged to record heights overnight. Shopkeepers dragged out waterlogged goods to dry in the sun, while families swept mud from their doorsteps and patched together missing roof tiles. Kalmaegi struck Vietnam as the country's central region was still reeling from floods caused by record-breaking rains. Authorities said more than 537,000 people were evacuated, many by boat, as floodwaters rose and landslides loomed. The storm was forecast to dump up to 24 inches of rain in some areas before moving into Laos and northeast Thailand later Friday. Three fishermen were reported missing Thursday after their boat was swept away by strong waves near Ly Son Island off Quang Ngai province. Search efforts were later suspended due to worsening weather, state media said. The Philippines experiences about 20 typhoons and storms each year and is among the world's most disaster-prone countries. Vietnam, which is hit by around a dozen storms annually, has endured a relentless series this year. Typhoon Ragasa dumped torrential rain in late September, followed by Typhoon Bualoi and Typhoon Matmo, which together left more than 85 people dead or missing and caused an estimated \$1.36 billion in damage. Scientists warn that a warming climate is intensifying storms and rainfall across Southeast Asia, making floods and typhoons increasingly destructive and fre-

US President Trump says he could travel to India next year



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

New York/Washington: US President Donald Trump said he could travel to India next year, emphasising that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi "wants" him to visit while calling him a "great man" and a friend. "He's (PM Modi) a friend of mine, and we speak... He wants me to go there. We'll figure that out. I'll go. I will have a great trip there with Prime Minister Modi, he's a great man. And I'll be going," Trump said at the Oval Office on Thursday in response to a question. When asked if he is planning to go to India next year, Trump said, "It could be, yeah." India will host leaders from Australia, Japan, and the United States for the Quad summit in New Delhi after the 2024 summit was held in Wilmington, Delaware.

However, the dates for the summit in India are yet to be announced. Meanwhile, President Trump once again claimed that India has stopped buying from Russia. "It's great, going good. He (PM Modi) stopped... Largely he stopped buying oil from Russia," Trump said in response

to a question on how talks with Modi and trade discussions with India are progressing. Trump imposed 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs on India and an additional 25 per cent levies for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, bringing the total duties imposed on India to 50 per cent. India had described the US action as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable" while maintaining that its energy policy is guided by its own national interest. In his remarks before the press, Trump also reiterated his claim that he stopped the war between India and Pakistan in May using trade. "Of the eight wars I ended, I would say five or six were ended because of tariffs. I'll give you an example. If you take a look at India and Pakistan, they started to fight, they are two nuclear nations... They were shooting each other. Eight planes were shot down. It was seven. Now it is eight, because the one that was sort of shot down is now abandoned. Eight planes were shot down." And I said, "Listen, if you guys are going to fight, I'm gonna put tariffs on you". And they both went, you know, they were not happy about that. And within 24 hours, I settled the war. If I didn't have tariffs, I wouldn't have been able to settle that war," Trump said. The president also termed tariffs a "great national defence".

Since May 10, when Trump announced on social media that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate ceasefire" after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington, he has repeated his claim over 60 times that he "helped settle" the tensions between the two neighbouring countries. India has consistently denied any third-party intervention. India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

Multiple explosions shake mosque in Indonesian high school, injure 54



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Multiple explosions shook a mosque at a high school during Friday prayers in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, injuring at least 54 people, mostly students, police said. Witnesses told local television stations that they heard at least two loud blasts around midday, just as the sermon had started at the SMA 27, a state high school within a navy compound in Jakarta's northern Kelapa Gading neighbourhood. Students and others ran

out in panic as gray smoke filled the mosque.

Most of the victims suffered minor to severe injuries from glass shards. The cause of the blasts was not immediately known but they came from near the mosque's loudspeaker, according to Jakarta Police Chief Asep Edi Suheri. Indonesian military Combat Engineering Detachment (Denzipur) personnel carrying explosive detection equipment arrive after an explosion occurred at a school complex in Jakarta, Indonesia, on November 7, 2025. Indonesian military Combat Engineering Detachment (Denzipur) personnel carrying explosive detection equipment arrive after an explosion occurred at a school complex in Jakarta, Indonesia, on November 7, 2025. | Photo Credit: Reuters. People were rushed to nearby hospitals. Some were soon sent home but 20 students remain in hospital care, three of them with serious injuries, the police chief said. Mr. Suheri said an anti-bomb squad that was deployed at the scene found toy rifles and a toy gun near the mosque. "Police are still investigating the scene to determine the cause of the blasts," Mr. Suheri said, and urged against speculation that the incident was an attack before police investigation is completed. "Let the authorities work first," Mr. Suheri said. "We will convey whatever the results are to the public."

Typhoon Kalmaegi brings rain and destruction to Vietnam as death toll nears 200 in Philippines



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

At least five people died in Vietnam after typhoon Kalmaegi pummelled coastal regions with destructive winds and heavy rain, officials said on Friday. The storm's deadly passage through the Philippines, where it killed at least 188 people. The storm made landfall in central Vietnam late on Thursday (November 6, 2025), uprooting trees, damaging homes, and triggering power outages, before weakening as it moved inland. Authorities warned of continuing heavy rainfall of up to 200 millimetres (8 inches) in central provinces from Thanh Hoa to Quang Tri, and said rising river levels from Hue to Dak Lak could trigger flooding and landslides.

In the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

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

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

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.

Typhoon Kalmaegi kills 5 people in Vietnam as Philippines prepares for new storm

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Dak Lak: Typhoon Kalmaegi brought fierce winds and torrential rains to Vietnam on Friday, killing at least five people and leaving widespread damage across the country's central provinces, days after the powerful storm battered the Philippines and left scores dead or missing. As floodwaters receded, recovery work began in battered towns and industrial zones, with local authorities and residents clearing debris and repairing roofs to millions affected across the central Vietnam.

Five people were killed — three in Dak Lak and two in Gia Lai provinces — while three others remained missing in Quang Ngai, according to state media. Six people were injured. Fifty-two houses collapsed and nearly 2,600 others were damaged or had their roofs blown off, including more than 2,400 in Gia Lai alone. Power outages affected more than 1.6 million households. In the Philippines, where Kalmaegi made landfall earlier this week, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr declared a state of national emergency on Thursday as the country braced for another potentially powerful storm, Typhoon Fung-wong, known locally as Uwan.

The weather bureau said Fung-wong could expand to an estimated 1,400 km in diameter before making landfall late Sunday or early Monday in northern Aurora province, potentially affecting the densely populated capital region of Manila. Kalmaegi left at least 188 people dead and 135 missing in the Philippines, according to the Office of Civil Defence, displacing more than half a million people. Nearly 450,000 were evacuated to shelters, and over 318,000 remained there as of Thursday. Many areas in Vietnam reported uprooted trees, damaged power lines and flattened buildings as Kalmaegi weakened into a tropical storm and moved into Cambodia on Friday. Factories lost their roofs and equipment was damaged because of flooding in Binh Dinh province. In hard-hit Quy Nhon, residents woke up to find corrugated metal roofs and household items scattered along the streets. As the skies cleared and sunlight broke through on Friday morning, residents in Dak Lak province stepped out to assess the wreckage left behind. Streets were littered with fallen branches and twisted sheets of metal, and muddy water still pooled in low-lying areas where the river had

In 'historic first' deal, India to source 10% LPG imports from US in 2026



As India looks to increase its energy trade with the US amid trade pact negotiations, Indian public sector refiners have signed a one-year deal for American liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports, marking the first structured contract of US LPG for the domestic market. The term deal, which Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri called a "historic first", is for imports of around 2.2 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of LPG, close to 10% of India's annual imports.

It comes at a time when India is looking to shrink its trade surplus with the US — one of the issues flagged by President Donald Trump when he slapped the 50 per cent tariff on incoming Indian goods. Government data released Monday showed that India's trade surplus with the US had halved to \$1.45 billion between April and October. Trump had also brought up India's heavy imports of Russian crude oil while imposing the tariffs, which took effect in August. The past few months have seen Indian refiners increasing oil imports from the US. Sources in the Indian government have indicated that India could step up US energy imports to finalise the trade agreement to reduce the tariffs.

On Monday, Puri posted on X: "One of the largest and the world's fastest growing LPG market opens up to the United States. In our endeavour to provide secure affordable supplies of LPG to the people of India, we have been diversifying our LPG sourcing. In a significant devel-

opment, Indian PSU oil companies have successfully concluded a 1 year deal for imports of around 2.2 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) LPG, close to 10% of our annual imports—for the contract year 2026, to be sourced from the US Gulf Coast—the first structured contract of US LPG for the Indian market."

According to industry sources, the three public sector refiners — Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd — have awarded their joint tender for US LPG imports in the coming year to Chevron, Phillips 66 and TotalEnergies Trading. The deal's commercial details were not available. LPG is predominantly used as a cooking fuel, with much of India's requirement being imported from countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait. This deal is expected to reduce India's dependence for LPG on these traditional West Asian suppliers as the country looks to diversify import sources in search of better prices.

A significant chunk of LPG sales to households in India is subsidised by the government. Over the past few years, the government has made concerted efforts to increase LPG penetration by bringing poor and rural households under the LPG net in a bid to cut the use of traditional and polluting cooking fuels. In February, the US President Trump had said during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit that they had agreed to take steps towards making Washington "a leading supplier of oil and gas to India", which could help bridge the trade deficit. Trump had added that the US will "hopefully" be India's top oil and gas supplier. In September, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had said the US would play an important role in India's energy security going forward. India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil with an import dependency of around 88 per cent. The country is also among the biggest importers of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with around half of its natural gas demand being met through imports. For the past few years, the US has been the fifth-largest supplier of crude oil to India. It has also been the second-largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India. As for LPG, over 60 per cent of the petroleum fuel's requirement in India is met through imports. Trump said last week that the US will bring down

'I get worried when I don't have the instinct...': When Katrina Kaif shared her trick to stop overthinking small decisions; expert on why it works



Decision-making can be straightforward for some and a source of constant second-guessing for others. Katrina Kaif recently shared that she's a "fast decision maker" who tends to trust her instincts. During an interview with Yuvaa, where she sat down with actor Vijay Sethupathi and director Sriram Raghavan, she said, "I think I'm normally a pretty fast decision maker. I get worried when I don't have the instinct about a decision. That's when I can get stuck. Luckily, for me, that doesn't happen very often. Do I want to do this? Yes. Do I want to go here? No. Am I going to do this or that movie? Yes or no. I'm quite clear, but small things I can get stuck on, and then I'm stuck," she said.

When indecision strikes, she uses a simple but effective tool: making a list of pros and cons. "Those are the decisions I worry the most about because I fear that I can't feel my instinct." She said that she came up with another solution, which helped her with some of her decisions. This involves changing the way she frames the problem, telling herself, "Maybe you don't know because it doesn't matter what you do in this particular scenario." This reframing helped her break the cycle of overthinking. But why do we sometimes have a strong instinct about certain decisions but feel completely stuck with others? Existential analyst Gurleen Baruah tells indianexpress.com, "Instinct often comes from experience,

self-awareness, and clarity about our values. When a decision aligns with who we are and what matters to us, our brain quickly recognises the pattern and sends a 'go' signal. On the other hand, she notes that we get stuck when the stakes feel unclear, when we lack information, or when the decision sits in a grey zone — where neither option feels clearly better. Sometimes it's simply because the choice isn't deeply meaningful to us, so our brain doesn't prioritise it.

How effective is the 'pros and cons' method for making decisions?

According to Baruah, the pros-and-cons list can be "useful and a logical" way to decide something. It forces you to put vague thoughts into concrete words. But it's not foolproof. Once our mind leans toward a choice, she says that we tend to tilt the list in its favour without realising it. "This is confirmation bias at work: we highlight the 'pros' for what we already want and downplay the 'cons' or vice versa. To use it well, you need self-awareness. Make your list, step away, and revisit it later with fresh eyes. The tool works best when you use it to clarify, not to convince yourself," explains the expert.

Can reframing a decision as 'it doesn't matter what you do' actually reduce anxiety, or could it lead to poor choices?

Baruah mentions that it depends on the type of decision. For small, low-stakes choices like what to order at a restaurant or which route to take to work, she says that reminding yourself that either option is fine can reduce overthinking and free up mental space for more important matters. However, Baruah stresses that with significant decisions such as career moves, relationships, or financial commitments, this mindset can sometimes be avoidance in disguise. "When we downplay the importance of a meaningful choice, it can create emotional or cognitive dissonance later: you wanted one thing but acted in another direction. The key is to check in with yourself — are you genuinely easing anxiety over a minor choice, or are you minimising something that matters because it feels uncomfortable to face?"

From Kerala to the Arctic: How a PhD scholar's dream to witness the Aurora Borealis came true

In 2020, a chance encounter with photographs of the Aurora Borealis sparked a dream in Silpa Mathew. She wished to witness the phenomenon in person. Three years later, that dream took her to the East Siberian Sea, where she experienced not only the Aurora Borealis, but also saw the vast Arctic Ocean and majestic polar bears. Now 29, Silpa has completed her third expedition as part of her PhD programme at Sejong University in Seoul, South Korea. This year's expedition marked her sixth time witnessing the Aurora Borealis. "All I wanted to see was the Aurora Borealis. During the interview, my professor told me the work is based on the polar region and that expeditions will be part of it. I was delighted. I could see Aurora!" she recalls.

Silpa was the only Indian participant in the Korean-led Arctic expedition. Currently, she is researching the molecular diversity, sources, and environmental reactivity of dissolved organic matter (DOM) in Arctic marine environments. The team monitors conditions in the Arctic, with each group focusing on fields ranging from oceanography to paleoclimate. Silpa's expeditions have taken her from the East Siberian Sea to the central Arctic Ocean and, most recently, the Beaufort Sea. Each journey starts in Alaska, where she and her team set sail in September for a voyage lasting three to four weeks. They disembark at Dutch Harbor before flying home. Life at sea, however, is far from easy. "It was seasickness that really got to me," she says. "I couldn't eat for days and survived on medicines. There's no fixed timing for sample collection; it depends on the sea and the ship's direction. Even when I was sick and couldn't move, I had to get up at night to collect samples." Despite the hectic schedule, Silpa managed to take time out to capture her experiences during the journey — from sunsets over icy waters to polar wildlife and barbecue parties and games. "Out of sheer desire to witness everything, I used to sit for long hours on the deck of the ship, basking in the beauty of the polar region. The temperatures are freezing, but I could not resist missing out on anything," she says. Although she has posted videos and photos from her previous expeditions, too, her latest content resonated deeply, especially on Instagram, where she now has 58,000 followers. "My earlier videos didn't gain much traction, but this time, I really wanted to



show how things work inside a ship and the beauty of the polar scenes. People text me saying they are proud of my endeavour." In one of the videos, she films a sunset at 10 pm from the ship's deck. Another video shows the vessel halted overnight amid thick ice during a storm alert.

"To reach the spot where we board the ship, we need to take three flights, and we travel through remote areas. First, we head to Seattle, then we go to Anchorage, and from there, we head to Barrow, the northernmost part of America. From there, we take a chopper to board the ship. We go through remote, uncharted territories, so it's a bit challenging," she says. On being asked how she managed to endure such extreme cold, Silpa said the ship's regulated temperatures kept her comfortable. Internet access, however, was rare. During her first voyage, her family was very worried, she says. "But now they know I'm safe. It has become a normal trip for them."

For Silpa, who spent the first 26 years of her life in Kerala, the polar landscape was otherworldly. "During my first voyage, I was excited to watch the thick ice and how the ship trembled as it cut through it. It was a bit unsettling at first, but now I've gotten used to it," she says. Her world extends beyond the Arctic, too. Her followers enjoy her glimpses into Korean life — from K-pop music to fire festivals, cherry blossoms, and an array of delicacies like octopus and frog. Proud of her cultural roots, Silpa celebrates Onam and Kerala Piravi in traditional attire with the Malayali community in Korea. As she works toward completing her PhD, Silpa plans to continue her research and hopes to return to Kerala someday.

This is what happens to the body when you have 5 cups of coffee vs tea every day for a month

Coffee and tea play a key role in our daily routines. It's hard to say which is better since both can give you an energy boost. But what actually happens if you drink five cups of each every day? Is one healthier than the other?

To find out, we asked Dr Amit Saraf, Director of Internal Medicine at Jupiter Hospital in Thane, who explained that coffee has more caffeine and gives you a quick energy boost. Tea has less caffeine and also contains L-theanine, which helps calm your mind. So, what happens to your body if you drink five cups of coffee or tea each day?

Dr Saraf told indianexpress.com that if you drink five cups a day, your body can become accustomed to the caffeine, so you may need more to feel the same effect. Excessive coffee consumption can also increase stress hormones, cause restlessness, and disrupt sleep. Some people find their sleep is lighter or they wake up feeling tired. He added that tea has less caffeine and contains L-theanine, which helps calm the mind. "Due to this, even several cups of tea a day usually provide steady energy without causing anxiety or sleep problems like coffee sometimes does."

How much is too much?

Drinking excessive amounts of coffee or tea can also affect how your body absorbs certain nutrients, elaborated Dr Saraf. "Coffee can make it harder to absorb calcium and, if you drink it after a meal, it may reduce iron absorption. Tea, especially black tea, contains tannins that can bind to iron from plant-based foods, making it harder for your body to utilise. Both drinks have mild diuretic effects, but they will not dehydrate you if you also drink enough water."



The key is to enjoy these drinks in moderation. Dr Saraf reiterated that the most important thing is to enjoy coffee and tea in moderation and drink plenty of water during the day to balance out the effects of caffeine. "Most adults can safely consume up to 300 to 400 mg of caffeine per day, which is equivalent to about 3 to 4 cups of coffee or 6 to 8 cups of tea."

Here's what can happen if you drink more than you need. Drinking more than required can temporarily raise your blood pressure, cause your heart to beat faster, or leave you feeling jittery and stressed, according to Dr Saraf. "To avoid these problems, try to spread out your drinks throughout the day, skip caffeine at night, or opt for herbal or decaf options. Pay attention to how your body feels. If you have trouble sleeping, racing thoughts, or an upset stomach, it might be time to cut back." Secondly, advised Dr Saraf, "Try spacing your cups through the day, avoiding it at night, and switching to herbal or decaf options. Your body provides good feedback for a balanced energy level with no side effects, such as sleep

Trump tariffs drag down India's US exports by 9% in October

India's goods exports to the US fell nine per cent year-on-year in October, on top of a 12 per cent y-o-y decline the previous month, owing to US President Donald Trump's steep 50 per cent tariffs that took effect in August. Exports from labour-intensive sectors, such as engineering goods and textiles, slowed sharply in October as the US tariffs, the highest globally, left Indian goods uncompetitive compared to key competitors — particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and China.

Official data released Monday showed that India's goods exports to the US slipped 8.6 per cent to \$6.3 billion in October compared to \$6.9 billion in the same month last year. This had an effect on overall goods exports which plunged 11.8 per cent to \$34.38 billion. A commensurate jump in imports to a record \$76.06 billion, partly driven by gold and silver imports, resulted in a record high trade deficit of \$41.68 billion. India's trade surplus with the US, meanwhile, shrank 54 per cent from \$3.17 billion in April to \$1.45 billion in October. Experts said exports of labour-intensive goods would have taken the biggest hit owing to weak margins. Shipments of exempted items, such as pharmaceutical and electronics goods, may have held on to their share in the US market, they said. Product-wise data of exports to the US is yet to be released. Overall exports of engineering goods in October plunged 16.71 per cent. Also seeing a decline were exports of textile and apparel (8.34 per cent), and gems and jewellery (25 per cent). Overall electronics exports, however, jumped 25 per cent.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said Indian exporters have managed to hold on to the US market and that exports would improve in November as the Export Promotion Mission and measures to boost manufacturing take effect. Despite the trade-related headwinds, Agarwal said India's total goods and services exports are up four per cent in the first 7 months of the financial year. On the trade agreement being negotiated by India and the US, an official said: "One part of the negotiations will take time. The other part is a package that can address reciprocal tariffs. We are working on both aspects. The package that can address reciprocal tariffs is more or less near closure, and we should get it soon." The 50 per cent tariffs imposed by Trump include a 25 per cent penalty for buying Russian oil and a 25 per cent universal tariff. The trade deal will be announced on a mutually agreed date by both countries, the official said. On India's state-run oil companies signing a one-year deal to im-



port LPG from the US in 2026, the official said: "It was something in the works for long. This is in the overall context of keeping the trade with the US. It is not part of any negotiations package per se, but definitely as part of our endeavour to balance trade with the US."

In the face of the steep US tariffs, which kicked in on August 27, the Union Cabinet had last week cleared the Export Promotion Mission, announced in the Budget, with an outlay of Rs 25,060 crore to help sustain export orders. The government also extended additional credit facilities of up to Rs 20,000 crore to exporters. Looking to ease debt repayment pressures on certain exporters hit by US tariffs, the Reserve Bank of India announced a four-month moratorium on loans and interest payments from September 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. The RBI last week also extended export credit tenors to 450 days and relaxed asset classification norms, which would ease the payment burden.

Several ministries have also begun revoking quality control orders that have been hurting Medium and Small Enterprises in particular. In just the last week, 14 QCOs on chemical intermediaries that play a crucial role in the textile value chain were rolled back, and 7 QCOs on key industrial input items such as copper and aluminium were also revoked. Government officials have said that India has sent its final proposal to the US and is awaiting Washington's response. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had earlier this year said that the US will play an important role in India's energy security going forward. US President Donald Trump last week said that the US will bring down tariffs on India, and that Washington and New Delhi are close to signing a trade deal. The deal with India is in focus as the US has already signed an agreement with China, lowering tariffs to 47 per cent. "Right now, the tariffs are very high on India because of the Russian oil, and they have stopped doing the Russian oil... It's being reduced very substantially. We will bring the tariffs down at some point," Goyal said during a White House press briefing.

Sundar Pichai warns users not to blindly trust AI models

London: Google boss Sundar Pichai has cautioned users not to "blindly trust" everything artificial intelligence (AI) tells them, even as he struck a warning note for companies to watch out for an AI investment bubble burst that no one would be immune to. In an interview with the BBC, the Indian-American CEO of Alphabet — the parent company of Google — pointed out that AI models are "prone to errors" and urged users to balance them alongside other tools.

Pichai said this highlighted the importance of having a rich information ecosystem, rather than solely relying on AI technology. "This is why people also use Google search, and we have other products that are more grounded in providing accurate information," Pichai told the BBC. He said that while AI tools were helpful "if you want to creatively write something", people have to learn to use these tools for what they're good at, and not blindly trust everything they say. In May, Google introduced an "AI Mode" into its search using its Gemini chatbot, aimed at an experience of talking to an expert. "We take pride in the amount of work we put in to give us as accurate information as possible, but the current state-of-the-art AI technology is prone to some errors," he said. The world's leading tech expert went on to reflect that while the growth of AI investment had been an "extraordinary moment", there was some "irrationality" in the current AI boom. Asked whether Google would be immune to the impact of the AI bubble bursting,



Pichai said the tech giant could weather that potential storm. "I think no company is going to be immune, including us," he said during a wide-ranging interview at Google's Silicon Valley headquarters in California. "We can look back at the internet right now. There was clearly a lot of excess investment, but none of us would question whether the internet was profound. I expect AI to be the same. So I think it's both rational and there are elements of irrationality through a moment like this," he said. Pichai said Google's unique model of owning its own "full stack" of technologies — from chips to YouTube data, to models and frontier science — meant it was in a better position to ride out any AI market turbulence.

Comeback man Hardik Pandya's heroics propel India to 101-run thrashing of South Africa in first T20I in Cuttack



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

The road to the 2026 T20 World Cup began on a resounding note for India. On what was not an easy pitch to bat on at the Barabati Stadium, when Hardik Pandya's unbeaten 59 carried India to 175/6, there was intrigue as to how the surface would play in the second innings. Pandya's knock, where he went to 210.71, seemed like an aberration. Yet with dew settling in, one couldn't be sure if batting was going to get easier on a strip that was two-paced from the word go due to the dampness. The answers arrived very soon as India's attack showed 175 was too big a total to overhaul, as South Africa were skittled out for 74 in reply – their lowest ever T20I score – thus giving the hosts an emphatic 101 run victory. On the match eve, the re-laid square at the Barabati Stadium had caused interest in both camps. A venue where black soil pitches were the norm, after the ODI against England earlier this year, the square was re-laid with red soil pitches. When it was mentioned to India captain Suryakumar Yadav at the pre-match press conference, he seemed surprised, but he thought it would be a "good thing" in reflection. The reasons were simple. Apart from providing bounce, the ball tends to come fast at the batters, helping them with bat swing. Two-paced pitch. However, it was anything but that. From the first ball, when a short delivery from Lungi Ngidi climbed two-paced and caught Abhishek Sharma off-guard, it was evident that this track was to offer this Indian team a good challenge. All of their home wins under Suryakumar and coach Gautam Gambhir have come on batting-friendly pitches. But come the T20 World Cup, which is scheduled during the season end in February-March, the pitches may not completely favour the batters. So the track on Tuesday proved to be a good test to check how this batting line-up could cope when given such conditions.

And barring Pandya, and a couple of handy cameos

England is suffering from 'Psychological phenomenon known as the Dunning-Kruger effect,' says Greg Chappell and calls Bazball a dubbed reckless approach

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

The Dunning-Kruger effect is a phenomenon where people with lower abilities in a particular area tend to overestimate their skills, and those with higher abilities underestimate themselves. Former Australian cricketer Greg Chappell has said the current iteration of the England team, with their Bazball approach, is going through the same. "Their catastrophic failure, an echo of past collapses, can be neatly framed by the psychological phenomenon known as the Dunning-Kruger effect," Chappell wrote in his The Sydney Morning Herald column. Unlike the previous English sides which have come to Down Under and taken a pasting (since 2010/11, which is when they last won a series), there was cautious optimism among fans that the side would compete better; however, after two Tests, Ben Stokes' side is 2-0 down.

"In the context of English cricket's game plan – the aggressive, often reckless approach dubbed 'Bazball' – the effect manifests as an overly positive spin on achievements and an unwillingness to accept that a method successful on flat English pitches and small grounds is fundamentally unsuited to the demanding conditions and quality opposition found in Australia," Chappell wrote. "The failure that has ensued across the first two Tests is a whole-of-system one, a catastrophic breakdown of both the game plan and its execution. While the players have been the immediate culprits, the off-field leaders – Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes – are equally responsible for not recognising the different challenges presented by Test cricket in Australia," Chappell added.

Although the bowling did look good in the first innings on a spicy Perth wicket, once the surface got a bit flatter in the second innings, the England bowlers were blasted out of the attack by Travis Head in the chase and in Brisbane, the Australian batters were offered freebies on a platter in the first innings which helped them take a

from Shivam Dube and Jitesh Sharma, the rest clearly struggled. The trick to excelling on such surfaces lies in how quickly you read the conditions. With regards to India's top five, each of them appeared surprised. The hard length, in particular, proved to be their biggest undoing, particularly when they tried to hit in front of square. Playing straight is also fraught with risk, especially if the ball stops off the surface. But between the two, it seemed the safest option, or if you intended to play the horizontal shots, you had to use it against the raw pace of Anrich Nortje or to deliveries that were absolutely short, which Pandya did to perfection. Early trouble for India was Lungi Ngidi who exposed the Indian batters chinks on this surface. In the first over, after being hit for a boundary to a wide delivery by Shubman Gill, he immediately pulled the length back. The surface did the rest as the opener was through the short early, and Gill lobbed an easy offering for the mid-on fielder. Suryakumar arrived and hit a boundary and a dismissive six – the pick-up flick, but like Gill was undone by the one that held off the surface. That the usually free-flowing Abhishek struggled for rhythm said as much about the surface as Ngidi and March Jansen ensured India had only 40 to show in the powerplay as the two seamers bowled three overs each to tighten the start. As Pandya showed during his unbeaten 59 off 28, it wasn't impossible to increase the tempo.

The secret lay in picking the deliveries and shots and the pockets he picked – front in the V and behind square. It was something the rest failed at. With the ball, India were not as generous as South Africa. With the dew not causing much of an impact on how it behaved, Arshdee Singh struck early. His spells with the new-ball, especially if he finds movement, are hard to get past without damage, and here he removed Quinton de Kock off the second ball and Tristan Stubbs in his second over. Axar came in and had castled Aiden Markram with one that skidded on with the angle, and when Pandya struck off his first delivery, getting David Miller nicked to the wicketkeeper, India were all over the Proteas. Then it was the turn of Varun Chakaravathy to leave a mark. Having come into the series on the back of some below-par performances in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s, he started the night by conceding 12 runs in the first over he delivered in the powerplay, with Dewald Brevis taking him for a boundary and a six. But with a new set of batters in, he landed two successive blows, first removing Donovan Ferreira and then sending Jansen back with a googly. With two of their power-hitters gone, and Brevis too departed, becoming Jasprit Bumrah's 100th T20I victim. Dube then ended South Africa's suffering with 45 deliveries to spare.



significant first innings lead. "England's collective failure stems from their apparent inability, or refusal, to recognise and compete for this sacred piece of turf. Apart from Jofra Archer – and to a lesser extent Mark Wood – in the first innings in Perth, the England bowlers have been atrocious, bowling consistently too short and too wide," Chappell wrote. "The bad news is that England's attack is set to become even more exposed, as Archer is unlikely to be able to back up for all three remaining Tests and Wood has been ruled out for the rest of the series. Unless Matthew Potts or Josh Tongue can bring some leadership and sense to the bowling unit before the third Test, I have concerns for their ability to change the narrative, which is in danger of becoming the modern equivalent of a long-playing record," Chappell observed. "The better news, however, is they have three Tests; a window, albeit a shrinking one, in which to abandon the illusion of certainty and confront reality. This group has the chance to salvage the reputations and careers of many of the players and coaches involved. The remaining matches will determine if they can adapt and prove themselves competent, or if they will continue to suffer from the tragic illusion of the Dunning-Kruger effect, blinded by overconfidence until the series is lost," he concluded.

spells. So we feel as though he'll be as best prepared as he can be. "He was well ahead of where we thought he'd be at. And it did create a real live conversation for Brisbane, the skill readiness, the loads, how he was pulling up. It was debated a lot leading into that Test match. So with that in mind, us seeing him further advanced, we feel it'd be really well placed for the challenges of Adelaide, albeit off a long way off. We feel as though the simulation in the nets have got him skill ready," McDonald said. While Cummins was out of the team due to injury, Lyon's omission from Australia's team for its eight-wicket win at the Gabba raised eyebrows. However, Cricket Australia officials have reportedly confirmed he will return to the side in Adelaide. The next week will be crucial for Usman Khawaja after the 38-year-old sustained a back injury which puts doubts over his ability to play in Adelaide. Meanwhile, Josh Hazlewood's Ashes 2025-26 is done after he suffered an Achilles issue, right after his hamstring strain. "Unfortunately, Josh won't be a part of the Ashes," Australia coach McDonald confirmed. "Really, really flat for him. A couple of setbacks that we didn't see coming, and we thought he would play a huge part in the series. It's a totally separate injury. It's somewhere lower in the calf to Achilles region. His preparation will then shift towards the World Cup, which is an incredibly

Aakash Chopra decodes Shubman Gill's dismissal: 'He is feeling slightly obliged... Samson used to score runs at a strike rate of 175'



GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Indian T20I vice-captain on Tuesday fell after scoring a boundary. He showed attacking intent against Lungi Ngidi by charging down the wicket, but could not get the shot right. It is not how Gill historically has approached his T20 innings, be it for Gujarat Titans or India. He tends to take his time and accelerate as the innings progress. Decoding this new Gill approach, former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra said, because the player who opened before him, which was Sanju Samson, was playing an ultra-aggressive brand of cricket, Gill is trying to emulate

that method.

"What is Shubman Gill trying to do? I ask this question because it seems like he doesn't play like this, but is trying to play like that. Why would he be doing that? It seems like he is too hasty to hit. The way he got out in Cuttack, he hit a four off the first ball, and then he jumped out and hit the next ball," Chopra said on his YouTube channel. "What could be the reasons behind that? He is feeling slightly obliged. Sanju Samson was the player who was opening before him. Sanju Samson used to score runs at a strike rate of 175. He scored three centuries as well. Of course, he got out early as well, but has three centuries to his name and a strike rate of 175. You can't take that away from Sanju Samson," he added. Additionally, in recent years, India has been looking to post massive totals around 250-275, which Chopra thinks are adding to the pressure on Gill. "India was also running close to 250-275. He is feeling the pressure of two things. Firstly, because Sanju Samson plays like that, he too should play like that because he has come in his place, and that is always spoken about," he said. "Social media must be on fire today as well, although you have to cut him some slack because he was playing his first competitive game since the neck sprain he had at the Eden Gardens. So you can be slightly undercooked. However, social media won't agree with that," Chopra observed.

Jitesh Sharma on dynamic with Sanju Samson: 'He is like an elder brother to me'

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

Jitesh Sharma has been brought into the Indian side in place of Sanju Samson to play the role of the finisher, who was pushed down the order after Shubman Gill returned at the top of the order. However, Samson's returns in the middle order have been minimal, and Jitesh, who is a specialist finisher, has looked at home in the role. On Tuesday, after India's win against South Africa, when asked about the dynamic between him and Samson, Jitesh responded by saying Samson was like an "elder brother" to him. "I am very grateful that he is in the team and I am under him. He is like an elder brother to me," Jitesh said. "Because of healthy competition, your talent comes out. It's good for the team. Sanju bhai is out, and I am playing. He is a great player—one of the great players. If I have to compete with him and play shoulder to shoulder, I have to bring my A-game," he said.

"Because of healthy competition, your talent comes out. It's good for the team. Sanju bhai is like an elder brother to me." Samson and Abhishek Sharma had formed an incredibly potent opening combination for India in the immediate months after the 2024 T20 World Cup. However, the return of Shubman Gill to the squad has resulted in Samson being displaced from the opening slot and having to often adjust anywhere in the top order to the lower middle order, if he is picked. India captain Suryakumar Yadav acknowledged that Samson did ex-



tremely well at the top of the order but Gill was always first choice. "In terms of Sanju, yes, when he came into the circuit, he batted higher up the order. Now, the thing is, other than the openers, I feel everyone has to be very flexible," Suryakumar told reporters on the eve of India's first T20I against South Africa. He reiterated the point made a number of times by head coach Gautam Gambhir about every batsman needing to be prepared to play anywhere, aside from the openers. "He (Sanju) did really well before when he played, when he opened the innings. But Shubman had played before him in the Sri Lanka series. So, he deserved to take that spot. But we gave Sanju opportunities. He was ready to bat at any number from 3 to 6. That is one thing which I have told all the batters — other than openers, everyone has to be very flexible."

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Ashes: Australia captain Pat Cummins returns for third Test at Adelaide; Hazlewood out of series

GNS News Agency, Feb 28

With a 2-0 lead in the Ashes after two games of the five-match series, Australia already have a firm hand on the urn. At the third Test in Adelaide they only need to draw the game to retain the Ashes. But the hosts will be looking to go for the kill having named captain Pat Cummins in the squad for the third Test at Adelaide. Australia named a 15-man squad for the third Test that will start on the December 17 with Cummins and Nathan Lyon expected to return to the XI.

Cummins has not played since Australia's 3-0 sweep of West Indies in July, where he first experienced the back soreness that ruled him out of the start of the Ashes. "His (Cummins') body is ready to go and barring anything else happening in the next week, I'd be expecting Pat to be tossing the coin and putting the blazer on," Australia coach Andrew McDonald said.

"There won't be any match opportunities for Pat, and this is something we've done with Pat before, off long layoffs, where we've put some time and effort into rebuilding his body. He was out at Allan Border Field, whilst everyone was out at the Gabba. So he simulated pretty much what a match will look like out there with multiple

FIH Junior World Cup: Goalkeeper Nidhi steps up in shootout to save wasteful India, to play Spain for 9th place

India did have the better of the attacking stats in the opening quarter but it ended with neither side breaking the deadlock. (Photo Credit: Hockey India) India did have the better of the attacking stats in the opening quarter but it ended with neither side breaking the deadlock. (Photo Credit: Hockey India)

With 17.1 seconds to go in the match, the ball was deep in Uruguay's defence. India had a 1-0 lead to protect, but it should have much more significant for how much possession they enjoyed during the match. But in the blink of an eye, Uruguay broke forward and won a Penalty Stroke with two seconds left on the clock, to stun India and force a shootout. Eventually though, goalkeeper Nidhi stepped up in the tiebreaker to hand India a win that asked more questions than provided answers at the Estadio Nacional, Santiago. With the win, India entered the final classification match for the 9th-10th place, where they will take on Spain on Thursday

"It was a tough game, we will analyse our mistakes. There was pressure in the shootout but we managed to come through, we are happy for that," Ishika, player of the match, told the broadcasters. India got a reprieve in the

fifth minute after a stray ball from Jyoti Singh gave Uruguay a chance to drive forward and win a Penalty Corner. Lalhantluangi then made life harder for India's defence, carelessly earning a green card for not being ready on the post on time. Uruguay tried a variation and nearly created a clean opening at the far post, but somehow over-elaborated the move and wasted the chance to take the lead. India did have the better of the attacking stats in the opening quarter but it ended with neither side breaking the deadlock. A flowing passing move from defence to offence helped India win their first Penalty Corner in the 3rd minute of Q2, they attempted a variation too, trying to set up the injector Sakshi Rana down the left byline, but the shot on goal was well saved. India eventually took the lead in the 19th minute when Manisha completed a patient passing move, with a powerful shot to the near post from the right channel at the edge of the circle. At this point, India had taken complete control of possession. But as has been the case in the tournament, the attacking gameplay lacked cohesion in the final third, as India's territorial advantage wasn't reflected on the scoreboard at halftime. India had 57% possession and 11 circle entries compared to Uruguay's five. Ishika made a bright start to the third quarter down both flanks,

‘Mohanlal and Mammootty are puppets in master manipulator Dileep’s hands,’ Malayalam director Vinayan once alleged

Even after his acquittal in the 2017 case related to the abduction and sexual assault of a Malayalam woman actor in a moving vehicle in Kochi, actor Dileep has not managed to turn public sentiment in his favour. If anything, his first reaction following the verdict on Monday (December 8), in which he took potshots at his former wife, Manju Warrier, has only resulted in blowback, with many feeling it simply revealed his true colours. While some sections of people expressed that “truth has won,” many others suspected foul play throughout the episode, particularly since several witnesses who had initially testified against Dileep turned hostile during the trial. Thus, although the district sessions court in Ernakulam acquitted him, the outcome appears to be a pyrrhic victory for him. Amid all this, an old interview of renowned Malayalam filmmaker Vinayan, in which he levelled serious allegations against Dileep and even claimed that the actor was the unofficial kingpin of Malayalam cinema, has grabbed the attention of many. Days after Dileep was arrested by the police on July 10, 2017, in connection with the actor abduction and assault case, Vinayan told Times of India, “From my personal experience, I know that Dileep is a master manipulator and Mammootty and Mohanlal have just been puppets in his hands.” Only in SCREEN | Dileep’s downfall: How the 2017 actor abduction and assault case accused dug his own grave in cinema and real life. Maintaining that Dileep wielded significant power in the industry, Vinayan also claimed that he was even calling the shots regarding the trajectory of Malayalam cinema. The director further stated that the actor’s enmity towards him started when he, as the then head of the Malayalam Cine Technicians Association (MACTA), took the actor to task for allegedly refusing to work in a movie after taking an advance from the producer.

Opening up about the incident, Vinayan once told a television channel that his hesitation to take a pro-Dileep stance cost him about 10 years in the industry, during which he apparently struggled to make movies. He claimed that Dileep’s stubborn insistence here was that anyone who tried to “teach him a lesson” should not be in Malayalam cinema. Revealing that Dileep backed out of a film that was supposed to be helmed by Thulasidas after taking Rs 40 lakh as an advance from the producer, Vinayan said he intervened in the matter as the head of MACTA. Vinayan once told a television channel that his hesitation to take a pro-Dileep stance cost him about 10



years in the industry. Malayalam actor Dileep leaves the Ernakulam district court on December 8. (Credit: PTI) During an organisational meeting, it became clear that Dileep was in the wrong. So, MACTA urged the actor to settle the matter immediately. However, Dileep apparently did not like this, which led to an indirect tiff between the two. It is worth mentioning here that Vinayan was among the first directors to offer Dileep lead roles in films. They worked together in movies like Kalyana Sougandhikam, Ullasapoongattu, Anuragakottaram, Pranaya Nilavu, and Rakshasa Rajavu. Speaking to Manorama News following Dileep’s arrest, Vinayan described the case as a wound inflicted on the heart of Malayalam cinema. “Dileep is an expert in exacting revenge,” he said. “The fact that a film star was behind such a heinous act is a disgrace to Malayalam cinema in front of the world,” Vinayan added, while urging the authorities to ensure that the survivor gets justice. Following Dileep’s acquittal, Vinayan told the media that the government is responsible for proving whether there was a conspiracy in the case. He stated that court proceedings should continue and noted that, given the many allegations, involvement of a higher court would lend greater credibility to everything. Although there is no legal problem with readmitting Dileep into film organisations, he warned that if the outfits showed overenthusiasm, their “true intentions” would be exposed to the public. “Dileep was asked to prove the truth, and he did it. Nonetheless, I stand with the survivor,” Vinayan added.

Ahmed Khan says not having Anil Kapoor, Nana Patekar in Welcome 3 isn’t a problem: ‘I didn’t direct Baaghi 4, someone else did’

Ahmed Khan has rounded up a huge ensemble cast for his upcoming adventure comedy Welcome to the Jungle, perhaps the biggest in recent memory. However, two actors who have been a crucial part of the first two instalments of the Welcome franchise — Anil Kapoor aka Majnu and Nana Patekar aka Uday — aren’t a part of the sequel.

“Why is that a problem? I didn’t make Baaghi 4, someone else (A Harsha) did. I’m making Welcome 3, and Anees Bazmee (director of Welcome and Welcome Back) made Bhooh Bhulaiyaa 2 and 3. The first one was directed by Priyadarshan,” says Ahmed on the inaugural edition of SCREEN Spotlight. He feels that the change in cast and director only brings freshness to the franchise. “Akshay (Kumar) was in Welcome (2007). John (Abraham) was in Welcome Back (2015). Akshay was in Bhooh Bhulaiyaa; now, Kartik (Aaryan) is in Bhooh Bhulaiyaa 2 and 3. Siddharth Anand made War (2019), Ayan Mukerji made War 2,” added Ahmed.

“You can only stretch something to an extent. After that, it snaps. Every film has its limits, but a franchise doesn’t. There were so many Khiladi movies that came out, but no Khiladi had to do anything with the other Khiladis. Similarly, in Welcome, John replaced Akshay in the sequel so the link in the story was cut right there. Now, Akshay is back again. So, it’s Welcome, but with an even bigger cast,” Ahmed Khan argued. Having been a choreographer on the first instalment, Ahmed has also attempted to reinvent the aesthetic of the Welcome franchise with a threequel that’s designed as an adventure comedy. “Welcome had black suits, buildings, and girls in shimmery clothes. What we’ve done is get them into army



fatigues. We’ve completely changed the terrain and concept into army style. Otherwise, they’d keep singing the same tune in the same suits. So, we’ve to give the audience something new,” added Ahmed. He also claims that Welcome to the Jungle is not slapstick comedy. “If you mute the film, you’ll see they’re talking very seriously, with guns in their hands. But if you dial up the volume, you’ll think, ‘What are these idiots doing?’ They’re talking rubbish to each other, but with poker faces. So, that’s what this Welcome is about,” said Ahmed. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN earlier this year, Anees Bazmee had opened up on Anil Kapoor and Nana Patekar walking out of Welcome to the Jungle. “It’s very, very fortunate that Anil and Nana aren’t there in Welcome 3. Without them, it’s a tough, tough task. I wouldn’t have made a Welcome without them. But I have a different equation with them. If I was directing it, I would’ve made sure they’re a part of the film, by hook or by crook,” he said.

Dharmendra was extremely smart throughout his career, says Rakesh Bedi: ‘He kept his arms open for everybody’



Veteran actor Dharmendra may have left the world, but his legacy continues to shine brightly. The actor, who passed away on November 24 just days before turning 90, was a living legend—someone about whom everyone had only warm and affectionate things to say. Despite the immense fame he earned in the industry, he remained grounded and was known as “the man of the soil.” However, when he breathed his last, his family chose to cremate him privately, giving no opportunity for

fans to pay their final respects. This left many admirers deeply disappointed, as they expressed their hurt and anger toward the family. Such reactions only reflected how profoundly he was loved. Through his active work, he continued to remain relevant and cherished, even by the younger generations. Now, his Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya co-star Rakesh Bedi has shared why Dharmendra continues to receive such overwhelming love.

He further explained, “He worked with filmmakers like Hrishikesh Mukherji and Bimal Roy. He made sure to collaborate with the best directors. He did films like Satyakam and Anupama. But when he eventually transitioned into commercial cinema, he gained the image of a He-Man.” While his choice of films made him the star he became, it was his warmth that kept him alive in people’s hearts even after his passing. Rakesh Bedi added, “While this is mostly about his professional life, Dharmendra was a very kind-hearted man with a big heart. He kept his arms open for anybody and everybody who came to him. He greeted people with a hug, sat with them, spoke to them. That is what won people over.” Rakesh Bedi is currently seen in Dhurandhar, which has crossed the Rs 150 crore mark in India.

Salman Khan is more arrogant than Ravan, says Abhinav Kashyap: ‘Shah Rukh Khan isn’t a superstar...’



When Dabangg completed 15 years this year, the film’s director Abhinav Kashyap told SCREEN that working on his debut film with the Khan brothers had been “the most unpleasant experience” of his career. He not only described it as “a bad experience” but also alleged that Salman Khan is a “goon” and “extremely ill-mannered.” His statements quickly placed him back in the public eye, with several podcasters and media outlets inviting him for interviews, in which he firmly stood by his claims without softening or retracting anything. In a recent conversation, Abhinav went a step further, claiming that neither Shah Rukh Khan nor Salman Khan are “superstars,” but rather “two actors who managed to earn some money by selling paan masalas and dancing at weddings.” Speaking to Bollywood Thikana, Abhinav Kashyap said: “I am not comfortable with the word ‘superstar.’ The only star I know is the one in the sky. I don’t believe Shah Rukh is a superstar. This is all wordplay to misguide the media. As an actor, yes, Shah Rukh Khan has done some good work. He has also had flops. But he is not the first actor.” Abhinav criticised Shah Rukh Khan’s repeated claims that he is “the last of the superstars,” adding: “There have been several actors before him and there will be several actors after him. This will continue—actors will come and go, the art will never die.” He further explained: “One’s bank balance can’t decide one’s stardom. These are all fabricated terms created by the media. I don’t respect a person because of his status; I respect them for their behaviour and character. I have several friends who treat me well, and they are my true superstars.” For Abhinav Kashyap, true superstars are those who create real social impact through their work. “People who have brought genuine change to society are superstars—not people like Shah Rukh Khan or Salman Khan. They are just normal actors who have made some money. And to earn that money, they sold paan masala and danced at weddings.” In the same interview, he also claimed that Salman Khan has more haters

than fans in India. “All my interviews against him are getting popular because he has many haters in this country. A lot of people don’t like him. So how does that make him a superstar? Declaring yourself a superstar doesn’t make you one. Shah Rukh Khan calling himself the ‘last superstar’ is more like being obsessed with oneself.” He added: “People believed me when I said, ‘Salman Ravan se bhi zyada ghamandi hai’ (Salman is more arrogant than Ravan). Salman has been appreciating himself for the past 33 years.” Previously, in his interview with SCREEN, Abhinav Kashyap alleged that the Khan family attempted to take undue credit for Dabangg: “Salman is never involved. He is not even interested in acting, and he hasn’t been since the last 25 years. He does a favour by turning up to work. He is more into the power of being a celebrity, but he is not interested in acting. He is a gunda (goon). I was not aware of this before Dabangg. Salman badtameez hai, ganda insaan hai (Salman is ill-mannered, he is a bad person).” He added: “They have claimed credits for things they haven’t done. It’s a landmark film in their career, and they felt the need to take the entire credit—so it’s a compliment to me. Success has many fathers; failure has none. After Dabangg, I was pushed out, the credit wasn’t shared. I think it was a deliberate attempt by the Khan family to set up Arbaaz.”

Farah Khan says Shah Rukh Khan is training Suhana Khan in action for King: ‘Suhana is so hardworking’

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Shah Rukh Khan recently visited Dubai to launch a commercial tower named after him. At an event to mark that occasion, over 6,000 fans gathered at the Dubai Exhibition Centre in Expo City to catch a glimpse of the star. “It feels like a concert out here,” said Shah Rukh, as he entered the venue to loud cheers and a thundering applause. Several videos of Shah Rukh interacting with his fans on the stage from the event have gone viral on social media. One of them shows him entering the venue as Anirudh Ravichander’s title track of Atlee’s 2023 blockbuster action thriller Jawan plays in the background. Shah Rukh greeted his fans with adabs as he entered the stage.

Shah Rukh Khan also recited his popular dialogue from Farah Khan’s 2007 blockbuster reincarnation saga Om Shanti Om: “Itni shiddat se maine tumhe pane ki koshish ki hai, ki har zarre ne tumse milane ki sazish ki hai.” The audience cheered for him loudly. Shah Rukh also acknowledged that Farah was also present on the stage alongside him, since she was hosting the real estate event. Farah Khan was all praise for Shah Rukh Khan’s kids Aryan Khan and Suhana Khan at the event. “Shah Rukh’s son Aryan has made the most kick-a** web series, The Ba***ds of Bollywood. Suhana is so hardworking. She is now going to be in King. I know that you are training her in action,” Farah said as Shah Rukh nodded. Shah Rukh also shook a leg at the event as he danced to “Jhoomo Jo Pathaan,” the title track of his 2023 blockbuster spy thriller Pathaan, directed by Siddharth Anand. Interestingly, Shah Rukh is all set to reunite with Siddharth for his next action thriller, King, which is slated to release in cinemas next year. King also stars Deepika Padukone, Shah Rukh Khan’s daughter Suhana Khan, Abhay Verma, Arshad Warsi, Jaideep Ahlawat, and Raghav Juyal, among others. While Abhishek Bachchan plays the chief antagonist, Shah Rukh will be seen in a more age-appropriate role in the film. Produced by his and wife Gauri Khan’s banner Red Chillies Entertainment, it’s written by Sujoy



Ghosh. The first look teaser of King was unveiled on the occasion of Shah Rukh’s 60th birthday last month. Meanwhile, Shah Rukh also dropped some signature pearls of wisdom at the Dubai event. “If you want to change something in life, whether it’s monetary, emotional, happiness, you have to work hard for it. Give it the best you’ve got,” he addressed his fans on the stage. “I’m a big believer in God just a free being in Allah. And I feel free. I want everyone who prays for me to pray well — not because I want it, but because this journey has been pure hard work. That’s the real theme of my life: hard work,” he added. The real estate giant is all set to invest around Rs 3,500 crore to develop SHAHRUKHZ, a premium commercial tower named after Shah Rukh Khan. It comprises 1 million square feet area, primarily office space with a little bit of retail space. The 55-storey commercial tower, to be constructed on Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai, will be completed by 2029.

‘People wanted to see Shah Rukh Khan fall’: Anubhav Sinha says it was fashionable to hate Ra.One, ‘being an SRK fan worked against me’

As the years pass, admiration for Anubhav Sinha’s Ra.One only grows stronger, particularly for its pioneering use of visual effects, which remain a benchmark even today. The film’s ambition, its high-concept storytelling, and the sheer scale of mounting such a project with a megastar like Shah Rukh Khan continue to command respect. And while the film has its flaws, it undeniably holds several entertaining elements. Yet, because it didn’t dominate the box office, much of its merit was overlooked. In an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, Anubhav Sinha reflected on the atmosphere surrounding the film’s release, recalling how quickly it became a trend to dismiss Ra.One, and Shah Rukh along with it.

Anubhav said, “It had become fashionable to run Ra.One down. Also, Shah Rukh had had a massive, uninterrupted run as the undisputed star and king. He actually is. And we like ruins, no? You know, when we go to Rajasthan, to those forts and castles, we like to see the ruins. There’s a vicarious pleasure in that, knowing that, oh, there used to be a king who used to reside here, but he doesn’t exist anymore. So, you know, similarly, they wanted to see Shah Rukh fall. And it sort of temporarily happened with Ra.One.” Anubhav Sinha admitted that his own admiration for Shah Rukh Khan may have inadvertently worked against him: “I was making the biggest film



in the country with a star that I was a fan of, which actually worked against me in the film. Because I was a fan, and I still am. So maybe a lot of things sounded right just because he was saying it.” Reflecting on Ra.One’s commercial performance, he recalled the emotional and professional reckoning he faced: