

Huge response to Bindass Women Run

Hyderabad: The serene surroundings of Jalavihar Water Park transformed into a vibrant celebration of strength, unity, and empowerment as the Bindass Women Run 2026 commenced with enthusiasm and spirit.

The walkathon began from Jalavihar Park and witnessed participation from women of all age groups — students, professionals, homemakers, entrepreneurs, and fitness enthusiasts — all united with one purpose: to promote women's welfare, health awareness, and social empowerment.

Sridhar Babu says lack of clarity caused Sharada Peetham land issue

Hyderabad: A day after withdrawing the controversial land allotment order to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB), the Congress government on Sunday said lack of clarity had led to confusion over the lands belonging to Sharada Peetham.Geographic Reference

Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu visited Sri Sharada Peetham at Kokapet and said, "Confusion surrounding land belonging to the institution arose due to lack of clarity in information," while maintaining that there was no dispute over its ownership.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dead, new supreme leader in 'day or two'

New Delhi, March 1

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader for nearly four decades and the most consequential architect of the Islamic Republic after its founding generation, was killed on February 28 in a joint US-Israeli airstrike on Tehran, bringing a dramatic end to one of the longest and most ideologically rigid leadership eras in modern West Asian politics.

Iranian state media confirmed his death and announced 40-day national mourning. He was 86. Apart from Khamenei, reports indicated that former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was also among those killed in the US-Israeli strikes.

Iranian Labour News Agency and several international outlets reported that Ahmadinejad was killed after his residence in Tehran's Narmak district was hit during the February 28 air raids, along with members of his security detail.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the new Supreme Leader would be chosen in "one or two days". He was speaking to the Al Jazeera network on Sunday.

Khamenei was killed when precision strikes targeted senior Iranian leadership compounds in Tehran as part of a large-scale US-Israeli military campaign aimed at Iran's nuclear and command infrastructure.

Western and Israeli officials said the attack formed part of coordinated operations — codenamed Operation Epic Fury by Washington and Operation Roaring Lion by Israel — intended to neutralise what they described as an imminent strategic threat.

Iran termed the strike an "act of aggression" and vowed retaliation, with President Masoud Pezeshkian declaring that avenging Khamenei's death was a "legitimate duty" of the Iranian nation.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the killing of Khamenei and members of his family was "cynical" murder that violated all norms of human morality and international law. "Please accept my deep condolences in connection with the murder of Supreme Leader Khamenei and members of his family, committed in cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law," Putin said in a note to Iranian counterpart Pezeshkian.

According to Iranian and western reports, the strike hit a secured command complex linked to the Supreme Leader's office late Saturday night. Satellite imagery later showed extensive destruction at the site, while Israeli officials claimed Khamenei's body was recovered from the rubble hours after the attack.

Several senior military and security officials were also reportedly killed, dealing what analysts described as an unprecedented blow to Iran's clerical-military leadership structure.

US President Donald Trump confirmed the killing shortly after the strikes, stating that military operations against Iranian targets would continue until regional security objectives were achieved. He also urged Iranians to "take over your government", though analysts note that the Iranian establishment has historically demonstrated strong institutional control during crises.

Within hours of the assassination, Iran launched retaliatory missile and drone strikes targeting Israel as well as US military assets across the Gulf region, including bases in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar.

Several Gulf states activated air defence systems and intercepted incoming projectiles. Casualties and infrastructure damage were reported in parts of the region.

Airspace closures, disrupted commercial flights and heightened military alert levels across West Asia underscored fears of a wider regional conflict.

Global energy markets reacted sharply amid reports that Tehran had moved to restrict shipping through the Strait of Hormuz — a critical artery for global oil supplies through which nearly one-third of seaborne crude trade passes.

Khamenei's death has triggered the most serious leadership transition in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The authorities have activated Article 111 of Iran's Constitution, initiating an emergency succession mechanism under which a three-member council temporarily assumes the Supreme Leader's powers.

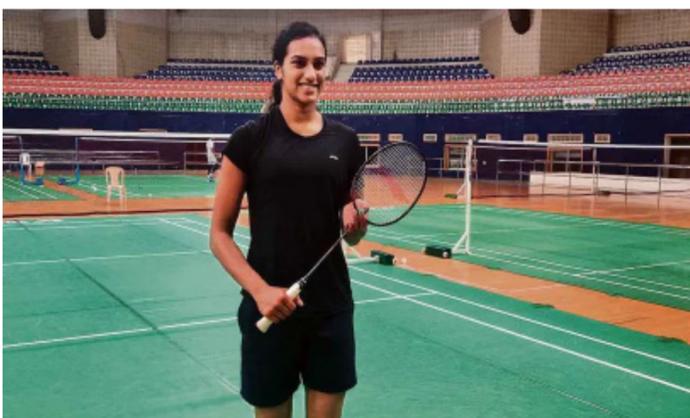
Senior cleric Ayatollah Alireza Arafai has been appointed the jurist member of the interim leadership arrangement, completing the council tasked with exercising supreme authority until the Assembly of Experts selects a permanent successor.

The United Nations has called for immediate de-escalation, warning that continued hostilities risk pushing the region towards an uncontrollable war.

For Iran and the wider West Asia, the assassination marks not merely the death of a leader but the abrupt closing of the post-Khomeini political order — and the opening of an uncertain and potentially volatile new chapter.



Sindhu says it is terrifying, but grateful to Indian and Dubai authorities



PV Sindhu said she is safe after being stranded in Dubai while travelling to the United Kingdom for the All England Championships. In a video message, she described the situation as frightening and thanked authorities and supporters for their help

Hyderabad: "It's hard to process what's unfolding right now. Hearing the interceptions overhead and seeing how quickly everything has escalated is honestly terrifying," said PV Sindhu, double Olympic medallist and former World champion.

Responding to thousands of calls enquiring about her safety after being stranded in Dubai, en route to the UK to take part in the All England championship starting

later this week, Sindhu, in a video message on Monday, said: "So many disturbing videos are coming to light, and this is sadly the reality of what is happening. Dubai is a city I deeply love, a place that has always felt safe and full of life, which makes this moment even harder to comprehend."

"To everyone who has been messaging and checking in, thank you. It truly means a lot. I am safe right now, stuck here in Dubai with my team, and we are doing okay as the situation around the war with Iran continues to evolve," Sindhu said.

"The Airport is chaotic, with many families stranded and waiting, all of us just hoping we get past this soon," she said.

"Moments like these remind you how fragile normal life really is. Praying for safety and peace for everyone affected," Sindhu said.

Sindhu said that she was safe right now in Dubai with her team despite the situation around the war with Iran continuing to evolve.

"I am deeply grateful to the Dubai, Indian authorities and the airport staff for being so supportive in these testing times. I am grateful to the Indian High Commission in Dubai for its extraordinary support," Sindhu said.

Ponguleti walks out of press meet over questions on house sites for evicted Velugumatla families

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy walked out of a press conference in Khammam after failing to give clear answers on rehabilitation of families evicted from Velugumatla. He accused opposition parties of instigating protests and promised action against false claims

Khammam: Unable to provide a clear answer on whether families evicted from Velugumatla would be given house sites at the same location, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy walked out of a press conference midway, accusing opposition parties of instigating the affected families to abuse ministers and the Chief Minister.

The Minister, who appeared before the media along



with a few of the affected families here on Sunday, initially claimed that the State government would provide house sites and Rs 5 lakh under the Indiramma housing scheme to the "genuinely poor" families by March 15. However,

when the media sought clarity on the location where they would be rehabilitated or whether the affected families would be given house sites at the same place, the Minister had no clear response. Fumbling for an answer, he said a suitable site would be identified within a couple of days, but lost his cool when asked why restrictions were imposed on the media during the demolition of the houses. Visibly irritated, he left the press conference abruptly along

with District Collector Anudeep Durishetty and Commissioner of Police Sunil Dutt.

Earlier, the Minister said a detailed survey of 720 families who had houses at Velugumatla was carried out. Some of them were government employees, while some had already received Indiramma houses. Some belonged to Khammam and surrounding villages, while others were from different parts of the State, he said.

Srinivas Reddy also alleged that leaders of certain organisations had collected huge amounts of money from families, promising to provide house sites. He said steps would be taken to recover the money and return it to the families concerned. He further alleged that opposition parties were making false claims and instigating families to abuse district ministers and the Chief Minister. No minister was holding any land at Velugumatla, he said, while accusing the media of distorting his remarks on the issue.

Govt's response 'betrays' India's values: Congress

New Delhi, March 1

The Congress on Sunday criticised the Centre's response to the ongoing conflict involving Iran, calling it a "betrayal" of India's values, principles and national interests. The party has flagged concerns over the "targeted assassination of the leadership of a sovereign nation" and the safety of Indians stranded in West Asia. The party said the country was paying a "heavy price" for both the substance and style of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy, pointing to recent geopolitical developments and India's diplomatic positioning.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra condemned what she described as the "targeted assassination of the leadership of a sovereign nation" and the killing of civilians amid the ongoing conflict.

In a strongly worded message, Priyanka said the actions of "so-called leaders of the democratic world" were "despicable" and warranted condemnation regardless of the justification offered. She further said that it was "tragic" that multiple nations had been drawn into the conflict, stressing that the world required peace rather than "unnecessary wars". Invoking Mahatma Gandhi, she reiterated that "an

eye for an eye makes the whole world blind".

She also called on the Centre to ensure the safe evacuation of Indian citizens from affected regions, expressing hope that the government would make "every effort" to bring them back. Referring to engagements with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, she said the government must prioritise the safety of Indians caught in the conflict zone. Meanwhile, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said India's foreign policy under what he described as the "self-styled Vishwaguru" stands "brutally exposed", alleging that the government's claims of global leadership are not matched by outcomes on the ground. He linked the criticism to India's response to the reported US-Israeli military actions against Iran and said the government had failed to uphold consistent strategic and moral positions. Congress leaders' comments come against the backdrop of escalating tensions in West Asia, including the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei in a coordinated strike attributed to Israel and the United States.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Landmark deal in tough times

Away from the cacophony of media headlines focused on tensions over tariffs and visas, a quiet event in Kuala Lumpur, where India and the United States signed a landmark defence agreement, showcased the strategic depth of the bilateral relationship. The ten-year framework agreement, signed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his American counterpart Pete Hegseth, demonstrated that the ties between the world's two largest democracies are strong enough to withstand any challenges and look beyond temporary irritants in the interest of their long-term strategic partnership. The provisions of the pact have a far-reaching impact, providing policy direction to the entire spectrum of the defence relationship. The signing of the agreement comes at a time when the two countries are engaged in hectic negotiations to finalise a trade deal. It showcases a renewed strategic convergence, outlining how they can jointly design and manufacture state-of-the-art weapons systems, carry out training exercises together, and deepen intelligence sharing. At a time when US President Donald Trump has singled out India for imposing highest import tariffs, attempted to arm-twist New Delhi to stop buying Russian oil, mocked the Indian economy and repeatedly embarrassed the country by claiming that he brokered peace between India and Pakistan after their conflict in May, it is heartening to see that the two sides are committed to deepen their defence partnership. The comprehensive policy roadmap provides a 10-year strategic blueprint, covering joint operations, research and development and military coordination to real-time intelligence sharing, and joint exercises.

The agreement is a big step towards a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific and will serve as a bulwark against China's aggression. The implications are huge. It could give Trump a compelling reason to rethink tariffs. India's projected USD 50 billion US defence purchases create a defence trade parity and open gates for India to export Akash missiles to US allies like the Philippines and Vietnam. India could emerge as a manufacturing hub for the US arsenal. This will bypass China's supply chains and turn India into a USD 100 billion-plus export hub by 2035. India will be able to access US satellite intel and airborne warning and control systems for real-time monitoring. More importantly, it signals India's long-term commitment to bilateral friendship. However, there are attendant challenges too. For instance, India's reliance on Russian defence products and its own aspirations to expand indigenous military production need to be balanced with its commitment to the US. But by keeping the broader foundations of the relationship intact and strong, India can rebuild an important partnership with more willing friends. The deal is considered a cornerstone for regional stability and strengthens India's position as a key partner of the US in the Indo-Pacific. It seeks to strengthen the strategic partnership by focusing on deeper defence industrial collaboration, enhanced technological cooperation, increased information sharing and improved coordination between military forces.

Discipline and confidence are key to achieving goals

—“PRTU district leaders Anand Rao and Amarnath Reddy

“ Jagtial staff Report, March 1 (Indian Chronicle):“The Maanasa School of Excellence bid farewell to its SSC students in a grand ceremony at Reddy Function



Hall, Dharmaram. Leaders emphasized that SSC exams are just a milestone, and students should aim for greater heights. Principal Rajitha Rao urged students to recognize their talents and become useful members of society. The event featured cultural performances and emotional moments as students bid farewell to their school.

Uppal Congress In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy Inaugurates Fogging Vehicle in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division

Fogging Machine Arranged at Personal Expense by Aakarapu Arun Patel



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 1 (Indian Chronicle):“To address the growing mosquito menace troubling residents of Venkat Reddy Nagar Division in the Uppal constituency, Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Aakarapu Arun Patel has taken an initiative to provide relief to the public. He arranged a fogging machine at his own expense to help control the mosquito population in the area. The fogging vehicle was inaugurated on Saturday night by Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-Charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that residents of Venkat Reddy Nagar Division have been facing severe inconvenience due to the increasing mosquito problem. He urged that fogging operations be carried out in every basti and colony of the division to effectively control the issue. He also encouraged Congress leaders to take up more service-oriented programs for the benefit of the public and appreciated Arun Patel for organizing such a vol-



untary initiative. “Several leaders and party workers participated in the program, including Jaleel Pasha, Uppender Reddy, Srinivas Chary, Mallaiah, Balayya, Sandeep, Kasim Goud, Golusula Swami, Kishore, Bhaskar, Bottu Yadagiri, Sriramulu, Arun Sai, Satish, Jangaiah, Ranjith Reddy, Devaiah, Krishna, Veeresh, Lokesh, Matta Anjaiah, Gangaputra Pradeep, Tillu, Jangir, Mustafa, Siddulu, Bhanu, Ashok, Chichcha Prabhakar, Harish, Naga Chary, Damodar, Thota Srinu, Srisailam, Rakesh, Kunda Nagaraju, Suresh, Raghu Patel, Nagamallaiah, Ramachander, Balaji, Neeraj, Ajay, Yadagiri, Naveen, Dinesh, Lingam, Basha, Ali, Shiva, Rajesh, Sai, Shravan, Praveen, Somaraju, Women Congress leaders Lakshmi, Dhanalakshmi, Sandhya, Yadamma, Anitha, and other Venkat Reddy Nagar Division leaders.

Rajya Sabha Opportunity Should Be Given to Senior Congress Leader V. Hanumantha Rao – Gurra Raghavender, Greater Hyderabad BC Welfare Association Secretary

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 1 (Indian Chronicle):“Gurra Raghavender, Secretary of the Greater Hyderabad BC Welfare Association, has urged the Congress party high command to provide a Rajya Sabha opportunity to senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao, who has been continuously working for the party irrespective of his age. Speaking to the media on Sunday, he stated that injustice has been done to Hanumantha Rao within the party for the past ten years. He recalled that despite not being given any official post, Hanumantha Rao has remained committed and continued to work for the party. Raghavender mentioned that during the time when the party was in the opposition, Hanumantha Rao fought relentlessly on public issues without any compromise. He suggested that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and PCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud should recognize his dedication and ensure justice is done. He also recalled that Hanumantha Rao was previously denied an opportunity to contest from the Khammam Lok Sabha constituency despite seeking it. Expressing hope, he said the party leadership would consider his fighting spirit and dedication and grant him the opportunity this time. Raghavender further stated that during the ten-year rule of BRS, more cases were filed against Hanumantha Rao than against many others. Despite this, he never feared and continued to work as a loyal soldier of the Congress party and as a devoted supporter of the Gandhi family.



AIDWA Uppal Circle Committee Conducts Membership Drive

Under the leadership of District General Secretary M. Vinoda and Uppal Committee President R. Urmila



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 1 (Indian Chronicle):“The Uppal Circle Committee of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) organized a membership enrollment program on Sunday.



The drive was conducted under the leadership of Medchal District General Secretary M. Vinoda and Uppal Circle Committee President R. Urmila. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders stated that a statewide membership campaign was carried out across Telangana, including Medchal-Malkajgiri district, as part of a one-day initiative. They emphasized that both the Central and State governments must stand firmly in support of women, who constitute nearly half of the country's population, and ensure their safety and security. They alleged that the spread of alcohol and narcotic substances has become rampant, with even schools and colleges reportedly affected by the circulation of drugs such as ganja. They accused both governments of failing to curb these issues and demanded immediate action to control the menace. During the membership drive, several local issues were brought to their attention. They highlighted the persistent drainage problems in Vivek Nagar, stating that despite repeated representations to the authorities, the issue remains unresolved. They urged officials to address the problem without further delay. The leaders also expressed concern that pensions for single women, widows, and the elderly are not being disbursed properly. They said many beneficiaries have been making repeated visits to government offices without any resolution. They demanded that new pensions be sanctioned immediately and that the enhanced pension amounts promised by the Chief Minister be released without delay. Further, they called upon the government to provide double-bedroom houses to all eligible beneficiaries and to allot the remaining pending houses at the earliest. Among those who participated in the program were Lakshmi Bai, Shakeera Begum, P. Lakshmi, Ayesha Fatima, Sujatha, Keerthana, Indira, Lakshamma, Rama, and others.

Open Gym Works at Sri Nagar Colony Park Should Be Started Immediately

Senior Congress Leader M.A. Jaleel Pasha Urges Officials

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 1 (Indian Chronicle):“In the Ramantapur Division, residents of Sri Nagar Colony have expressed concern over the delay in the commencement of the Open Gym works at Sri Nagar Colony Park, despite the project having already been sanctioned. Senior Congress leader M.A. Jaleel Pasha from the Uppal constituency, along with colony residents, has urged the authorities to begin the work without further delay. The residents have also requested that the vacant land adjacent to the park be utilized for the installation of a new electricity transformer. Currently, the people of Sri Nagar Colony are facing severe low-voltage issues, causing significant inconvenience in their daily lives. They



emphasized that installing a new transformer is essential for a permanent solution to the voltage problem and appealed to the Electricity Department officials to take immediate action. On Sunday, senior Congress leader M.A. Jaleel Pasha visited the colony and interacted with local residents to understand their grievances. Azmath, Janagaiah, Chenchulu, Narsimha, Adavayya, Buchaiah, Ashok Reddy, Rabhani Bhai, Ramesh Babu Rao, Aleem Bhai, Nagaraju, and others were also present during the visit. The leaders assured the residents that they would take up the matter with the concerned authorities to ensure that the Open Gym works commence at the earliest and that a new electricity transformer is installed to permanently resolve the low-voltage issue, prioritizing the welfare of the colony residents.

Street children should reach higher levels in life with courage

“Secunderabad Cantonment

March. 1 (Indian Chronicle):“Cantonment MLA Sri Ganesh said that street children should reach higher levels in life without losing courage. Under the auspices of Rainbow Homes Program Network, sports competitions were organized at the Secunderabad Gymkhana Ground on Sunday for street children and children deprived of parental care who are under the care of various voluntary organizations. Cantonment MLA Sri Ganesh attended the



program as the chief guest and inaugurated the competitions. Later, the MLA said that children should reach higher levels in life without losing courage and work hard. He said that he wholeheartedly congratulated the voluntary organizations that are supporting street children and children deprived of parental care. The MLA said that he would personally provide his best support for the progress of children. Later, the Child Marriage Free India Chariot was flagged off and it was said that child marriages are a crime under the law and no one should encourage them. Program coordinators Anuradha, Sriatha, Kranti Kiran Congress Party leader Murali Mudiraj, and others participated in this program.

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Atma Malayali Seva Sangam Free Medical Camp



Secunderabad Cantonment. March. 1 (Indian Chronicle): "Free medical services are very useful for the poor and everyone should take advantage of them and protect their health, said Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, former vice-president of the Cantonment Board. A free medical camp was organized on Sunday at the Netaji Nagar Yadava Sangam Community Hall in Bowenpally Ward 1 under the auspices of Atma Malayali Seva Sangam and Nova Care Hospital. Former Cantonment Board Vice President Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy inaugurated the Medical Camp as the chief guest. On this

occasion, he also underwent various medical tests. Speaking on the occasion, he said that through this free medical camp, health check-ups and basic medical facilities will be provided to the people. For better treatment, Nova Care Hospital is ready to provide medical services at low cost. He said that people should take care of their health and consult doctors at all times to maintain their health. Later, free medicines were distributed to the patients. Chandramohan Kamalaksha Kurup, Ajeya Kumar, Krishnaveni and others participated in the program. Aveni and others participated in the program.

Marri Ram Reddy Colony to be transformed into an ideal colony

Secunderabad Cantonment. March. 1 (Indian Chronicle): "Cantonment Board Civilian Nominated Member



Banuka Narmada stated that plans are being made with special funds to transform Marri Ram Reddy Colony, located in the sixth ward under the jurisdiction of the Cantonment Board, into an ideal colony. The new committee of Marri Ram Reddy Colony Welfare Association in Bowenpally sixth ward was elected. As part of this process, an oath-taking ceremony was organized in the colony on Sunday. Cantonment Board Civilian Nominated Member Banuka Narmada was present as the chief guest for the program, while Cantonment Board Former Vice President Jampana Pratap, Former Member Pandu Yadav, and BJP leader Banuka Mallikarjun were the guests of honor. In this context, the newly elected President of Marri Ram Reddy Colony Welfare Association Madhusudhan Reddy, Vice President Krishna Reddy, General Secretary Malayadri, Joint Secretary Venkateswar Reddy, Treasurer Narasimha Rao, along with the new committee members, were felicitated by Banuka Narmada and Mallikarjun with shawls. After the felicitation, Banuka Narmada spoke. She said that the cantonment area is progressing with a fund of 15 crores in the last ten months. She said that with the special initiative of local MP Etala Rajender, a lot of development work has been done like never before. She said that more development work has been started in the coming days. Mainly, as per the promise given to the people of Marri Ram Reddy Colony, all the problems will be resolved in a phased manner and in the coming days, this colony will be made an example for all the cantonment areas in the country. She said that steps are being taken towards developing the cantonment area as a problem-free area. For this, she said that she is constantly among the people and is finding out about the problems and solving them without any problems. Venkateswar Reddy, Eshwara Charan, Krishna Yadav, Ravi Kiran, Narasimha, Ramesh, Sandeep Patel, Sai Kumar Harish Reddy, and others participated in the program.

Students Must Excel in All Fields MP Etala Rajender, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 1 (Indian Chronicle): "A 'Champion League' program organized by St. John's Group of Schools, Hyderabad was held at the Ramanthapur Polytechnic Ground. Etala Rajender, Member of Parliament from Malkajgiri, and Bandari Lakshma Reddy, MLA of Uppal, attended the event as chief guests. "Speaking on the occasion, they emphasized that educational development is the foundation of societal progress. They advised

students to move forward with discipline and determination, striving to excel in all fields. They also stated that such programs play a crucial role in boosting students' confidence and encouraging holistic development. "The organizers expressed their gratitude to the public representatives and assured that more educational and social initiatives would be conducted in the future. "Leaders and party workers from BRS and BJP, along with several BJP leaders and others, participated in the program.



National Science Day Celebrated at Sri Chaitanya School Tungaturthi Ravi Appreciates Students' Innovative Projects



NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 1, (Indian Chronicle): "National Science Day was celebrated with enthusiasm at Sri Chaitanya Group of Schools in the limits of Peerzadiguda Municipal Corporation on Sunday. Peerzadiguda Municipal Corporation Congress Party President and RV Foundation Chairman Tungaturthi Ravi attended the event as chief guest. Former 5th Division Corporator Bodge Swathi was also present. Students displayed a wide range of science models focusing on environmental protection, solar energy and space research. Tungaturthi Ravi examined the exhibits with keen interest and appreciated the students for clearly explaining their projects and demonstrating strong scientific understanding. Addressing the gathering, Tungaturthi Ravi said that in today's competitive world, Sri Chaitanya institutions are not limiting students to textbook knowledge but are encouraging creativity and innovation. He stated that the institution is providing quality education with international standards and shaping students into responsible future citizens. He noted that the special focus given by the management and teaching staff towards practical



knowledge in science and technology is clearly visible. He added that such encouragement would help students compete and excel at the global level. Drawing inspiration from Sir C. V. Raman, he expressed hope that every student would aspire to become a great scientist and contribute to the nation's development. Managing Director Shambhoju Ramesh Babu, Chairperson Shambhoju Srilatha, Academic In-charge Vishal, Assistant Professor Dr. Rishi, Child Welfare Committee Telangana member K. Udaya Rani and Professor Dr. T. Vijayabhaskar Reddy were among those present at the event.

Paddle Tales Sports Academy Inaugurated in Boduppall; Tungaturthi Ravi Attends

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 1, (Indian Chronicle): "A new sports facility, Paddle Tales Sports Academy, was inaugurated on Sunday at Bheem Reddy Nagar, Fish Building Grounds, under Boduppall limits. The academy has introduced facilities for pickleball, table tennis and cricket nets, providing local players with access to modern training infrastructure. Tungaturthi Ravi, Congress Party President of Peerzadiguda Municipal Corporation, attended the inaugural ceremony as chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, he said that sports play a vital role in ensuring mental well-being and physical fitness in today's fast-paced life. He encouraged youth from Boduppall and surrounding areas to make the best use of the new facility. Praveen Reddy, Prakash Reddy, Rajesh, Rohan Reddy, academy representatives, local leaders and a large number of sportspersons participated in the event.



Dr. V. Sreevani Chowdary to Receive Women's Excellence Award – 2026

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 1 (Indian Chronicle): "Dr. V. Sreevani Chowdary, Founder Chairperson of Telangana Human Rights Justice Forum, has been selected for the prestigious 'Women's Excellence Award – 2026' (Mahila Keerthi Ratna) in recognition of her outstanding contributions to social service and women empowerment. The award will be presented jointly by Savyasachi Groups of India and Sri Sri Kala Vedita, organizations known for conducting cultural, literary, and social service activities. The organizers stated that Dr. Sreevani Chowdary was chosen for this honor in appreciation of her continuous efforts toward the upliftment of women and her active involvement in various service initiatives. "The award ceremony will be held on March 3, 2026, at Sarvothama Grandhalayam, Benz Circle, Vijayawada, in the presence of distinguished guests. On this occasion, several well-wishers and dignitaries have congratulated her and praised her dedicated services. The event is being organized as part of the celebrations ahead of International Women's Day and is expected to be conducted in a grand manner.



Singireddy Padma Reddy Attends Inauguration of PADDLE TALES Sports Arena



NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 1, (Indian Chronicle): "Former Boduppall Municipal Corporation Corporator Singireddy Padma Reddy attended the inauguration of the newly established PADDLE TALES Sports Arena at Bhim Reddy Nagar, near Fish Building in Boduppall limits. The sports facility includes Pickleball courts, Table Tennis, Cricket nets and other recreational sports sections. He participated as the chief guest at the invitation of the organizers and formally inaugurated the arena. Speaking on the occasion, Padma Reddy expressed his keen interest in sports and encouraged the youth to make effective use of the facility. He said that sports help in building mental strength, physical fitness and self-confidence, and play a vital role in shaping a disciplined and strong personality. He congratulated the organizers for establishing the sports arena and promoting sporting culture in the locality. Colony residents and youth participated in the inauguration programme.

Single women trained in sewing machines will be assured..

Sewing machines will be distributed under the auspices of Mother Foundation:

Mother Foundation Chairman Bojja Sandhya Reddy



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 28):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bhuvanagiri Town SV Convention Hall. Single women assured under the auspices of Mother Foundation Chairman Bojja Sandhya Reddy with the support of Manam TV. A meeting with single women was held at SV Convention Hall on Sunday at 11:30 am under the auspices of Mother Foundation Chairman Bojja Sandhya Reddy. Each of the problems were explained to Manam TV's Manoj. Also, every single woman who has taken sewing machine training should be given sewing machines, Manam TV has requested them, and a woman in the Mother Foundation has given a sewing machine to her three children and a disabled husband. Also, on behalf of the single women who came, we said that we will give each of them a sewing machine to brighten

their lives. Also, he said that single women suffer from their problems and that money is a problem when it comes to educating their children. Some educated people ask for answers. Some are suffering from financial problems or problems, and each and every problem is very painful, and our leader Manam Sandhyakka, who is supportive of all of them and gives them courage, has requested that the MLA or MP of this area should shed light on their lives on behalf of the government. 110 single women participated, saying that they will do justice to them in some way on behalf of the Mother Foundation. State Coordinators Pavani Sirisha Jyoti Vasantha Sairam Savitri participated. State Seva Dal Secretary Pittala Balaraj MD Karim Putta Shiva Manohar Hira Kar Srinivas and others participated in this program.

Everyone should work for the development of Mother Dairy.. I will always provide my help and support: Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy

“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 1):- Along with National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) Chairman Dr. Meenesh C. Shah, Telangana Government Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Youth Services Minister Vakiti Srihari, Government Vippu, Aleru MLA Beerla Ilaiah, Telangana State Dairy Development Corporation Chairman Gutha Amith Reddy, Mother Dairy Chairman G. Madhusudhan Reddy, Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy held a review meeting on the financial and administrative issues related to the Normal Dairy in Hyderabad. MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy was the chief guest for this program. The meeting reviewed the current financial situation of the Dairy Union. The NDDDB was requested to provide necessary support to take the Dairy Union back to a healthy and sustainable path of operations. The NDDDB Chairman responded positively and assured full support. Issues like clearing dues to banks, clearing pending payments to farmers, reviving dairy operations and strengthening the governance of the organization were discussed extensively. The NDDDB representatives suggested some strategic proposals for



the stabilization and revival of the dairy. They said that they are committed to working jointly on these proposals in the coming weeks to stabilize Normal Dairy in the long term and strengthen the Telangana cooperative dairy sector while protecting the interests of milk producers.

Madiga Martyrs' Reform Day Observed with Grandeur

Padma Shri Mandakrishna Madiga Pays Tribute to Martyrs



“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, March 1: “Madiga martyrs who laid down their lives in the struggle for SC reservation categorization were remembered and honored at a solemn ceremony held at the national office of Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) in Parsigutta.“Mandakrishna Madiga, Founder President of MRPS and Padma Shri awardee, attended the event as the chief guest and paid floral tributes to the martyrs.“Addressing the gathering, Mandakrishna Madiga stated that while various movements in the country—be they social, revolutionary, or regional—have achieved certain outcomes, the MRPS movement for SC reservation categorization stands distinct for achieving its goal with comparatively minimal loss of lives.“He emphasized that this success was the result of the sacrifices made by the martyrs and the unwavering commitment of

MRPS leaders and activists. He further noted that the MRPS movement has contributed significantly to broader social welfare measures, including the Aarogyasri health scheme, pensions for the elderly and widows, increased ration rice supply, and other social justice initiatives. He described the movement as having achieved a “100 percent success rate.“The program was presided over by Dappu Mallikarjuna Madiga, Hyderabad District Official Spokesperson of MRPS. Among those present were Dr. Govind Naresh Madiga, TV Narasimha Madiga (Hyderabad District President, MSP), Dr. Chippalapalli Somashekar Madiga (National President, MSF), Dr. Kommu Shekhar Madiga (MSF Spokesperson), along with several MRPS affiliated leaders and activists, who participated in large numbers and paid rich tributes to the Madiga martyrs.

Will provide his best to solve the problems of Arekatikas:- Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairman Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar

““Arekatika Sangam felicitates Municipal Chairman Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar ““(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 1):- A felicitation program was organized in Bhuvanagiri town under the auspices of Sri Renuka Yellamma Arekatika Sangam President Heere Kar Srinu. Speaking on the occasion, he asked to give special priority to the development and welfare programs of Arekatika Sangam. He appealed to the Chairman to focus on the development of Malika Vasathupa. He asked to cooperate in the development of our association. Speaking on the occasion, Municipal Chairman Tangallapalli Srivani Ravi Kumar said that she will always provide her best help to solve the problems of Arekatika. Arekatika Sangam leaders Heere Kar Shekhar Gatkari Srikanth Illu Gouli Kar Narsing Manthur Kar Ramu Jaya Krishna Bablu Rajeshwar Saikiran Amit and others participated in the program.



Councilor Jaligam Vignesh fills up large potholes at Nalgonda Crossroads in Ward 22 of Bhuvanagiri Town



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 1):- The potholes that had become dangerous in the New Ramnagar area of Nalgonda Crossroads in Ward 22 of Bhuvanagiri Town Municipal Corporation were filled up on Sunday by Councilor Jaligam Vignesh of Ward 22, in consultation with the Roads and Buildings Department officials, with the help of Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbh Anil Kumar Reddy. On this occasion, Councilor Jaligam Vignesh said that many people have been in accidents due to the pothole on the national highway, which has become dangerous and a

nuisance for the people for more than a year. As soon as the people of the ward came to know about this, the legislator Kumbha Anil Kumar Reddy brought it to the notice of the R&B officials, who coordinated with them to fill the pothole on a war footing today. He said that if all the people of the ward bring your problems to their attention from time to time, they will solve them immediately. Senior leaders Pothamsetty Venkateswarlu, 8th Ward Councilor Tahera Majar Pasha, Battu Mahender, Varun, Sadik, Sai Ratnakar Sivateja, Roads and Buildings Department staff and others participated in this program.

Mushirabad Runners Association Launched

“ Indian chronicle, Secunderabad, February 28: “Retired Additional DGP K. Baburao stated that guiding youth in the right direction and encouraging them in the field of sports is essential for the progress of society.“He attended the inauguration of the Mushirabad Runners Association as the chief guest and unveiled the association's logo. Speaking on the occasion, he expressed concern that despite India having the largest youth population in the world, lack of proper guidance is leading some youngsters toward drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products. He warned that if not properly guided, there is a risk of them turning into anti-social elements.“He emphasized that along with education, children must also focus on physical fitness and good health, and that adequate encouragement should be given to running and other sports activities.“Dr. M. Abhishek, Founder President of the Association, said that they are committed to promoting youth in all aspects of sports. He noted that many youngsters today are not engaging in regular exercise, which is leading to stress and anxiety. He also warned that substance abuse not only destroys health but also ruins financial stability and future prospects. Increased mobile phone usage has also led to rising digital addiction, he added.“He stated that the Runners Association was formed to instill discipline, patriotism, and self-confidence among youth. The association aims to improve physical and mental health, encourage talented athletes, provide training for police and army recruitment, and keep youth away from harmful substances.“On the occasion, several young athletes were felicitated and congratulated.“Association Secretary K. Yashwanth Kumar, Treasurer Vamsi Krishna, Advisors Dr. M. Ashok and journalist Dr. P. Suresh, along with others, were present at the event.



DSP Waheeduddin Calls for Strict Adherence to Timings During Ramadan

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan) March 1,“On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, an awareness meeting was conducted on Sunday at the DSP Office in Kagaznagar town under the directions of District Superintendent of Police Ms. Neethika Pant.“DSP Waheeduddin held discussions with Muslim traders and hotel owners regarding observance guidelines during the festive period.“Addressing the gathering, the DSP stated that shops must remain open only during the permitted hours and that government-prescribed timings should be strictly followed. He also advised that any suspicious individuals should be immediately reported to the police.“He appealed to the community to observe the sacred month of Ramadan with discipline and in a peaceful atmosphere. He assured that the police department will remain available at all times to ensure public safety.“Rural CI Kumaraswamy, SI Sudhakar, and Muslim traders participated in the program.



Turkiye signs deal to buy 20 Eurofighters from Britain for £8 billion



GNS News Agency, March 1

Turkiye agreed to buy 20 new Eurofighter Typhoons from Britain for £8 billion (\$10.7 billion) on Monday (October 27, 2025), deepening the NATO allies' ties and bolstering Turkish air defences, as Ankara said it was also seeking 24 more jets from Gulf states. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, on his first visit to Turkiye since taking office last year, signed the deal with President Tayyip Erdogan and called it a "landmark moment". Erdogan said joint defence industry projects could follow. The deal, which some analysts called expensive, comes as Turkiye seeks to leverage the advanced warplanes to make up ground with regional rivals such as Israel, which has unleashed strikes across the Middle East this year. Europe meanwhile has increasingly turned to Turkiye, NATO's second-largest military and a major exporter of armed drones, to reinforce its eastern flank and potentially backstop any future post-war stabilisation force in Ukraine. Plans for 24 more from Oman, Qatar separately, the defence ministry said Turkiye plans

to buy 12 more Typhoons each from Oman and Qatar.

Last week, citing a person familiar with the matter, Reuters reported that Turkiye was nearing a deal in which it would promptly receive 12 Typhoons, albeit lightly used, from Oman and Qatar to meet its immediate needs, with more new jets coming from Britain in future years. London said Ankara would receive the first of the batch of 20 Typhoons in 2030. Starmer said the deal, for which talks began in 2023, included an option to buy more. Istanbul-based security and defence analyst Burak Yildirim called the 8-billion-pound price tag "outrageously high" and "unprecedented", even if it includes options, ammunition, spare parts and training. "They're selling planes at frigate prices," Yildirim said. "This agreement is outright fraud. You can't have a combat jet for 400 million pounds; they're selling one plane for the price of four." The sides did not give details on what, beyond the planes, was included in the deal. In July, Turkiye and Britain had signed a preliminary purchase deal for up to 40 Typhoons approved by Eurofighter consortium members including Germany, Italy and Spain, represented by Airbus, BAE Systems and Leonardo. Last week, Erdogan visited Qatar and Oman in part to discuss the plan. Turkiye, enjoying its warmest ties with the West in years, has sought to procure the Eurofighters and also potentially U.S.-made F-35s to backstop its ageing fleet of mostly F-16s. It wants to fill a gap before its own KAAN fighters are ready in coming years, and last year it secured a \$7-billion deal with Washington for 40 F-16s that have faced delays. Air attacks by Israel - the region's most advanced military power with hundreds of U.S.-supplied F-15, F-16 and F-35 fighters - on Turkiye's neighbours Iran and Syria, as well as on Lebanon and Qatar, have unnerved Ankara over the past year and persuaded it to revamp its defences, officials said.

Muhammad Yunus sparks controversy with controversial map on book presented to Pakistan military general



GNS News Agency, March 1

Chief Adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh Prof. Mohammed Yunus met a high-level Pakistani military visitor during the weekend and gifted him a book that depicted parts of northeast India as part of Bangladesh. The map in question was printed on the cover of a book that was presented to Chairman of Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza on Saturday (October 25) at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka. India has not made an official response on the map so far though the

Ministry of External Affairs had lodged a strong protest last December when a similar map was used by a student adviser online. Following the meeting, Mr Yunus's office announced that the two sides discussed "bilateral trade, investment, and defence cooperation." The visit by General Mirza took place after the August 23-24 visit to Bangladesh by Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar who asked Bangladesh to "clean hearts" and move on from the painful memories of 1971 genocide by Pakistani military forces. "Emphasising the shared historical, cultural and people-to-people ties between the two countries, General Mirza expressed Pakistan's desire to strengthen cooperation in multiple sectors. He noted the vast potential for expanding trade, connectivity, and investment between Bangladesh and Pakistan," said the Chief Adviser's office in a press note. India is yet to officially respond to the use of the map on the book or about the visit of the high level military figure from Pakistan. But in December 2024, the Ministry of External Affairs had lodged a strong protest after a student adviser - Mahfuz Alam - had made a social media post showing the expanded map of Bangladesh that included parts of north-eastern India. Mr. Alam had taken down the social media post and Bangladeshi sources had described the map as a 'graffiti' and not a proper map.

Trump announces 10% increase in tariffs on Canada for not pulling down ad sooner

GNS News Agency, March 1

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday he was increasing tariffs on Canada by an additional 10% "above what they're paying now," just two days after ending trade talks with Ottawa over what Mr. Trump said was a misleading advertisement. Mr. Trump announced the higher tariffs in a Truth Social post on Saturday, referencing an ad aired by the government of the Canadian province of Ontario, featuring a video of late President Ronald Reagan, a Republican icon, saying that tariffs cause trade wars and economic disaster. Ontario's Premier Doug Ford said he would pull the ad after the weekend, and it ran Friday night during the first game of the World Series. "Their Advertisement was to be taken down, IMMEDIATELY, but they let it run last night during the World Series, knowing that it was a FRAUD," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform as he flew aboard Air Force One to Malaysia. "Because of their serious misrepresentation of the facts, and hostile act, I am increasing the Tariff on Canada



by 10% over and above what they are paying now." Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Friday that Canada stood ready to resume trade talks with the United States. The U.S. Commerce Department, the White House and Carney's office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Election Commission modifies some SIR rules after Bihar

EMS News Agency, Nov 11

As the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the next 12 States and Union Territories is set to be carried out according to the June 24 order issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI), certain modifications have been made to the process based on the learnings from the just concluded process in Bihar. In a notice issued to the Chief Electoral Officers of all 12 States, the ECI said no documents were to be collected from electors during the Enumeration Phase. This was being done as it had been found in Bihar that a majority of people could be traced to the electoral rolls of previous SIR. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said. The notice further said that for electors whose Enumeration Forms had not returned, the Booth Level Officer (BLO) may identify a probable cause, including death or duplication, based on an inquiry from nearby electors, and noting this down.

Since the Draft Electoral Rolls would only include the names of those who had submitted Enumeration Forms, booth-wise lists of electors whose names are thus not included in the Draft Roll shall be then displayed on the Notice Board of respective the Panchayat Bhavan/urban local body office, and the Offices of the Block Development Officers to enable the general public to have access to the aforesaid voters' lists, along with the probable reasons for the non-inclusion of their names. Aadhaar has been added as the 12th document as directed by the Supreme Court, but only as proof of identity and not of citizenship. The ECI has also modified the Enumeration Form and Declaration Forms. Both include a column for details on whether the name of the elector and that of his parents or guardians



were present in the electoral rolls when the previous SIR of a particular State was prepared. This would mean that a majority of the voters did not have to submit any documents as those whose names or their parents' names were present in voter lists after the previous SIR need not do so, ECI officials said. The Electoral Registration officers will issue notice only after the publication of draft Electoral Rolls to those electors who could not be linked with the previous SIR of Electoral Rolls in order to ascertain their eligibility. Also, unlike Bihar, the Voter Rolls of all States would be available for the mapping of the names of voters, and their parents or guardians. In another modification to the process, fresh voter registrations would be carried out simultaneously during House to House Enumeration. The BLO will carry at least 30 blank Form 6s along with blank Declaration Forms to provide to anyone who sought to enrol as a new elector.

Indian-origin woman raped in 'racially aggravated' attack in U.K., man arrested



GNS News Agency, March 1

A 20-year-old woman, identified as being of Indian heritage, was allegedly raped in what police believe was a "racially aggravated" attack in the West Midlands region of England over the weekend. The police said a 32-year-old man was arrested on Monday morning after a manhunt was launched in the wake of the attack on Saturday evening. The West Midlands Police said they were called to Walsall following concerns for the welfare of a woman in distress in the street. Detective Superintendent (DS) Ronan Tyrer, who is overseeing the investigation for the force, described the arrest as a "significant development". "Our investigation will progress today, and, as always, our priority is the woman who was the subject of this attack," said DS Tyrer.

"She has been updated this morning and will continue to receive full support from specially trained officers," he said. On Sunday, the force released CCTV footage of the suspect, a white male in his 30s, as part of an urgent public appeal for information related to the crime they are investigating as a "racially aggravated attack". "This was an absolutely appalling attack on a young woman, and we are doing absolutely everything we can to arrest the person responsible," DS Tyrer said at the time. "We have teams of officers recovering evidence and building a profile of the attacker so that he can be brought into custody as soon as possible. While we are following multiple lines of enquiry right now, it's vital that we get to hear from anyone who saw a man acting suspiciously in the area at the time," he said. "It may be that you were driving through the area and have dashcam footage, or you have CCTV that we have not yet recovered. Your information could be the vital breakthrough that we need," he said. The attacker was described as white, in his 30s, with short hair and wearing dark clothing at the time of the attack. While the police are yet to confirm further details, local community groups have claimed that the vic-

tim is a Punjabi woman and expressed concerns as the latest attack comes weeks after the "racially aggravated rape" of a British Sikh woman in the nearby Oldbury area. "At this stage, we are not linking this attack to any other offences," DS Tyrer said in his statement. Specialist officers from the force's Public Protection Unit, local policing officers, and forensic officers are said to be working to recover CCTV, speaking to witnesses, and identifying the suspect. Chief Superintendent Phil Dolby of Walsall Police said his team's focus is on supporting the investigators in identifying and arresting the attacker. "Walsall is a diverse area, and we know the fear and concern that this awful attack will cause in our communities," said Mr. Dolby. We have been speaking to people in the community today to listen to and understand their concerns, and there will be an increased policing presence in the coming days," he said.

Sikh Federation U.K. quoted local sources to say that the "young woman who was subject to a racially aggravated rape in Walsall is a Punjabi woman". "The attacker apparently broke down the door of the house where she was living... West Midlands Police have now had two racially aggravated rapes of young women in their 20s in the last two months and urgently need to find those responsible," the organisation said. The force has made a few arrests before releasing the suspects on bail in their investigation into the racially aggravated rape of a British Sikh woman in Oldbury last month. British Sikh MPs, Preet Kaur Gill and Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, took to social media to express their shock and condemnation at a feared "repeated pattern" of violent attacks on women in the region. "Deeply shocked and saddened that we are hearing of yet another racially aggravated rape, this time in Walsall. West Midlands Police have reported a rape and assault of a young woman in her 20s in the Park Hall area, described as racially aggravated," said Ms. Gill. "This follows the horrifying reports of a racially aggravated rape of a Sikh girl in Oldbury, and a rape of a woman in Halesowen. The repeated pattern of violence against women in our region, compounded by hate and racial overtones, is deeply disturbing," she said. The Labour MP for Birmingham Edgbaston in the West Midlands said her thoughts are with the victims and their families as she appealed for the public to come forward with any information that could lead to the arrest of the suspect. After the shocking racially aggravated rape in Oldbury that the Sikh community is still reeling from, yet another in Walsall. We're thinking of the victim and need to help the police at a time when more people are feeling unsafe. Spreading of hate has real consequences," said Mr. Dhesi, Labour MP for Slough.

ChatGPT Go free for Indian users for a year as OpenAI launches promotion ahead of DevDay Exchange

ChatGPT Go, the budget ₹399/month plan, will be free for users in India for a limited time starting November 4 for users signing up then, OpenAI announced on Tuesday (October 28, 2025) morning. The company is offering this plan to coincide with its DevDay Exchange event in Bengaluru that day. "Ahead of our first DevDay Exchange event in India, we're making ChatGPT Go freely available for a year to help more people across India easily access and benefit from advanced AI," Nick Turley, VP and head of ChatGPT at OpenAI, said in a statement. OpenAI has been gradually expanding its on-ground presence in India, starting with a new office in Delhi, its first in the country, and the hiring of a seasoned ed-tech executive, to lead its education vertical in the country. The firm has also been hiring for sales roles in India, and putting out ads for its service on billboards and online. "This promotion is a continuation of OpenAI's 'India-first' commitment and supports the IndiaAI Mission, reinforcing the growing momentum around AI in India as the country prepares to host the AI Impact Summit next year," the company said in a statement. Existing Go subscribers will also get 12 months for free, the company said, with redemption details to be shared later. While ChatGPT Go doesn't contain the full feature set that Plus and Pro plans (priced at ₹1,999 and ₹19,990 per month respectively), it



does allow for higher messaging limits and "expanded access" to the firm's latest model, GPT-5, with "limited" access to a number of deep research tasks. "In the first month since its launch, the number of paid ChatGPT subscribers in India more than doubled," the company said about the Go plan, launched in August following demand for lower-priced GPT access. "On the back of this strong demand, OpenAI has since expanded ChatGPT Go to close to 90 markets worldwide."

Pressure builds on Congress to end shutdown, but quick breakthrough appears unlikely

GNS News Agency, March 1

Washington: The pressure to end the second-longest federal government shutdown is gaining new urgency this week as millions of Americans face the prospect of losing food assistance, more federal workers miss their first full paycheck and recurring delays at airports snarl travel plans.

The building strain on lawmakers to end the impasse was magnified by the nation's largest federal employee union, which called on Congress to immediately pass a funding bill and ensure workers receive full pay. Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, said the two political parties have made their point.

"It's time to pass a clean continuing resolution and end this shutdown today. No half measures, and no gamesmanship," said Kelley, whose union carries considerable political weight with Democratic lawmakers. Still, Democratic senators, including those representing states with many federal workers, did not appear ready to back down. Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine said he was insisting on commitments from the White House to prevent the administration from mass firing more workers. Democrats also want Congress to extend subsidies for health plans under the Affordable Care Act. "We've got to get a deal with Donald Trump," Kaine said. But shutdowns grow more painful the longer they go. Soon, with closures lasting a fourth full week as of Tuesday, millions of Americans are likely to experience the difficulties firsthand.

The nation's 1.3 million active-duty service members are at risk of missing a paycheck on Friday. Earlier this month, the Trump administration ensured they were paid by shifting US\$ 8 billion from military research and development funds to make payroll. But it is unclear if the Trump administration will be willing — or able — to shift money again. Larger still, the Trump administration says funding will run out Friday for the food assistance programme that is relied upon by 42 million Americans to supplement their grocery bills. The administration has rejected the use of more

than US\$ 5 billion in contingency funds to keep benefits flowing into November. And it says states won't be reimbursed if they temporarily cover the cost of benefits next month. The Department of Agriculture says the contingency fund is intended to help respond to emergencies such as natural disasters. Democrats say the decision concerning the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme, known as SNAP, goes against the department's previous guidance concerning its operations during a shutdown. "The administration is making an intentional choice not to fund SNAP this weekend," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York. "The emergency funding is there. The administration is just choosing not to use it."

Will lawmakers find a solution?

At the Capitol, congressional leaders mostly highlighted the challenges many Americans are facing as a result of the shutdown. But there was no movement toward negotiations as they attempted to lay blame on the other side of the political aisle. "Now government workers and every other American affected by this shutdown have become nothing more than pawns in the Democrats' political games," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D. The House passed a short-term continuing resolution on September 19 to keep federal agencies funded. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has kept the House out of legislative session ever since, saying the solution is for Democrats to simply accept that bill. But the Senate has consistently fallen short of the 60 votes needed to advance that spending measure. Democrats insist that any bill to fund the government also address health care costs, namely the soaring health insurance premiums that millions of Americans will face next year under plans offered through the Affordable Care Act marketplace. The window for enrolling in ACA health plans begins Saturday. In past years, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has allowed Americans to preview their health coverage options about a week ahead of open enrollment. As of Monday, Healthcare.gov appeared to show 2025 health insurance plans and estimated prices, instead of next year's options.

A start for North-South carbon market cooperation



On September 17, 2025, the European Union (EU) and India set out a new comprehensive strategic agenda in their joint communication. Called the New Strategic EU-India Agenda, it primarily addresses five pillars on which their partnership will be enhanced: prosperity and sustainability; technology and innovation; security and defence; connectivity and global issues, and enablers across pillars. Buried in the section on clean transition is a critical line that the EU will link the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) with the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). In plain terms, carbon prices paid in India will be deducted from CBAM levies at the EU border. This is a breakthrough. It could prevent Indian exporters from being penalised twice and reward early decarbonisation. However, major barriers still plague its operationalisation. Unless addressed, they will stall this integration before it delivers real gains.

India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), commonly referred to as ICM, is still an evolving architecture. Unlike the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), which has a two decade record of robust auction structure, cap-setting processes, and independent verification, India's scheme is built on fragmented foundations. Current credits are often based on intensity improvements or project-based offsets, not absolute caps on emissions, wherein the ICM is moving. The CBAM, however, requires a tonne-for-tonne accounting of embedded carbon in goods. Without legally binding caps and strong penalties for non-compliance, EU regulators will treat Indian credits as second class.

There is also no current institutional equivalent in India to the EU's independent regulators or emissions registries that guarantee market integrity. In effect, the EU cannot "deduct" Indian carbon prices unless it is confident that the underlying system delivers environmental integrity. Bridging this institutional gap is not a technical fix. It requires a structural redesign of the ICM to mirror the compliance-grade features of the EU's ETS. Imagining this substantive pivot within the Indian our bureaucratic understanding and opera-

tion anytime soon is challenging. CBAM also relies on a clear and stringent carbon price. In the EU's ETS, the price floats around €60 to €80 a tonne. In India, initial carbon credit prices hover in the range of ₹5 and ₹10. Unless the carbon price is comparable and enforced across covered sectors, European regulators will not deduct much, if anything, at the border. Worse, exporters may end up facing both the Indian compliance cost and the EU's full CBAM levy. This creates political risk inside India, where industries may resist a "double burden" and they could lobby to water down India's scheme, i.e., compliance parameters under ICM. Bridging the price gap requires either targeted sectoral carbon contracts or a negotiated floor price that aligns with CBAM expectations. Both are politically difficult options to negotiate. Even if technical and price issues are solved, CBAM remains controversial. India and other developing countries have consistently opposed it at the WTO and international dialogues as being a unilateral and protectionist measure. Agreeing to a linkage between India's carbon market and CBAM, therefore, creates a political contradiction that India would be legitimising a mechanism it has formally resisted. This tension will resurface in disputes. For instance, if the EU deems India's carbon price to be "insufficient" and refuses full deductions, exporters will cry foul, and New Delhi will be forced to escalate the issue politically or legally. There is also a sovereignty issue because carbon pricing is a domestic policy tool, but CBAM effectively gives Brussels a say in whether India's measures are "good enough". For a country that guards its policy space, this could become a red line. Beyond trade law, there is a strategic risk wherein CBAM deductions will work only if India maintains a steady, transparent carbon market. Any domestic political backtracking, for example, rolling back compliance under industry pressure, would immediately expose exporters to full CBAM costs, destabilising trade flows. In short, the linkage is hostage not only to WTO legalities but also to domestic political economy and EU-India trust. Looking at optimistic resolutions, the Indian carbon market and CBAM linkage is one of the most significant agreements under the strategy agenda by the two big global economies. If it works, it shields Indian exporters, accelerates industrial decarbonisation, and creates a model for North-South carbon market cooperation. But weak domestic architecture, misaligned carbon prices, and political contradictions may sink it. There is an underlying case to be made for more comprehensive collaboration. India can strengthen its market design, and the EU can offer clarity and technical support for a smooth transition. Otherwise, this "breakthrough" will remain on paper, while Indian exporters continue to pay at the border.

Heavy metals in Cauvery fish, study warns against regular intake

Heavy metals are polluting the Cauvery river and its fish, researchers from Tamil Nadu have reported. They have also cautioned against consuming "regular" or "excessive" amounts of fish from here. The study was conducted by a team at Bharathidasan University in Tiruchirappalli and was published in the journal Environmental Earth Sciences in August. Scientists from the university studied the spatial distribution of and ecological risks due to heavy metals in sediments from 18 sites along the river and fish from 10 sites, from August 2023 to February 2024. They focused their analysis on chromium, cadmium, copper, lead and zinc. They found that the accumulation of heavy metals in fish tissues varied significantly across species, with several exceeding the threshold values for non-carcinogenic (non-cancer-causing) and carcinogenic health risks, especially for cadmium and lead, they found.

Rajaram Rajendran in the marine science department at Bharathidasan University and one of the authors of the report said his team's study holds significant ecological, environmental, and public health relevance because it provides a comprehensive assessment of heavy metal contamination in the Cauvery river basin. "It highlights the pressing impacts of urbanisation, industrial effluents, and agricultural runoff on sediment and freshwater fish quality," he said. The team also found what it described as a notable variation in metal concentrations across the various sites. "The detection of cadmium and lead as primary contaminants of concern, with levels exceeding threshold limits in some fish species, underscores the potential risks to both ecosystem health and human consumers," Dr. Rajendran said. The scientists used several pollution indices, each index being a number that evaluates the pollution levels of soils and sediments, calculated using the concentration of specific elements relative to their background levels.

They included Igeo, or the geoaccumulation index, to determine heavy metal pollution in sediments; contamination factor; the contamination degree; the pollution load index; and the potential ecological risk. Dr. Rajendran said that by integrating Igeo and the potential ecological risk indices with multivariate statistical analyses, the study was able to "effectively" distinguish between anthropogenic, or human origin, and natural sources vis-à-vis heavy metals. "This approach provides valuable insights into the dynamics of metal bioaccumulation and pollution pathways in a tropical river system under rapid industrial and urban development," Dr. Rajendran said. The study "provides valuable, updated insight into the scale and risks of heavy metal pollution in freshwater fish populations of the Cauvery river," Nikita Gupta, a researcher at the Vellore Institute of Technology, who along with her colleague, School of Biosciences and Technology assistant professor Sathivelu Arunachalam, has studied heavy metal pollution in tilapia fish in the Cauvery. She added that the new paper highlighted the presence as well as the distribution of key toxic metals in multiple local fish species — "a critical concern given the river's importance for drinking water, fisheries, and agriculture in Southern India." The findings have direct implications for public health: while occasional fish consumption may not pose immediate threats, prolonged exposure could lead to cumulative non-carcinogenic and carcinogenic risks, particularly from cadmium and lead. The risk depends on both the amount consumed, the frequency of intake, and the age of the individual, Dr. Rajendran said. Based on various risk assessment indices from this study, consuming fish twice a week, with a portion size of 250 g per serving, is considered safe," he estimated. Earlier, Ms. Gupta and Dr. Arunachalam had estimated the health risk posed by heavy metals in tilapia fish using atomic absorption spectroscopy. In November 2024, they reported in Frontiers Public Health that the hazard quotient for cadmium, cobalt, lead, and chromium in the fish's liver, cobalt and chromium in the gills, and the cobalt in muscle "showed a significant health risk from the combined effects of these metals". The potential health risk to humans is mainly due to exposure to cadmium and



Heavy metals are polluting the Cauvery river and its fish, researchers from Tamil Nadu have reported. They have also cautioned against consuming "regular" or "excessive" amounts of fish from here

chromium, they added. Like the new study, the duo advised moderate fish consumption to limit the bioaccumulation of heavy metals in the body. "Our study is among the first to provide a thorough, multi-organ and multi-metal health risk assessment for tilapia consumers in the Cauvery basin, delivering actionable data for consumers, regulators, and health authorities," Ms. Gupta said. The new study took these findings further. "In our publication, we focused on one fish species whose samples we could acquire," Ms. Gupta said. "However, in this new publication, we learn that the same phenomenon of heavy metal accumulation in fish is observed in multiple regional fish species. This broadens the claim that indeed the heavy metal pollution in the Cauvery is a fact." "Evidence that some metals, particularly cadmium and lead, pose carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic risks, including through biomagnification up the food chain," she added. "This result agrees with the findings of our study." Using US Environment Protection Agency guidelines, the Vellore Institute of Technology researchers found that the target hazard quotient for several metals exceeded 1, which is the threshold for concern, in the liver, gills, and sometimes even muscles, "indicating real human health risks from regular exposure," Ms. Gupta said.

Dr. Rajendran said his study "exposes gaps in current environmental management practices and emphasises the need for continuous monitoring of sediments, water, and aquatic organisms, stricter pollution control and regulatory enforcement, policy interventions to manage industrial emissions and unsustainable land-use practices, and enhanced public awareness to mitigate health risks." There is an urgent call for systematic, longitudinal monitoring of riverine contamination and more stringent regulation of effluent discharge into the Cauvery, Ms. Gupta added. The new study is especially significant for providing a contemporary, region-specific health-risk assessment and thus a much-needed scientific basis for local authorities to design regulatory and public health interventions, she added. Industrial effluents, particularly from textile and electroplating units operating near Erode stretch, are major contributors to the region's heavy metal contamination. Other important sources include agricultural runoff, mainly from fertilizers and pesticides, and untreated urban wastewater. There is some natural contribution, even if at lower levels, due to the presence of mineralised zones upstream of the river; they are important sources of iron in particular. "However, the elevated and variable levels of cadmium, chromium, and lead are highly indicative of human-driven contamination," Ms. Gupta said. There have been similar reports from other rivers in Tamil Nadu. Researchers from the SRM Institute of Science and Technology in Kattankulathur, for example, studied heavy metal contamination on surface waters in the Noyyal river basin in western Tamil Nadu and reported that industrial activity was an important contributor of contaminants.

Is the Dogri language losing resonance in India?



The story so far: Human society is rapidly moving towards the extinction of its linguistic heritage. In India, the threat of extinction lurks over many indigenous languages. According to one report by UNESCO, India has topped the list of countries with the maximum number of dialects on the verge of extinction. With English as the academic lingua franca, many local languages have been pushed to the margins. According to D.G Rao, former Director of the Central Institute of Languages (CIL), India has lost over 220 languages in the last 50 years.

Is Dogri in decline?

In recent years, growing concern has emerged over the gradual decline of the Dogri language in the Jammu region. Around the world, indigenous languages are being pushed to the margins, overshadowed by dominant tongues. Globalisation, migration, and the pursuit of economic opportunity often encourage speakers to prioritise widely used languages, while regional ones fade into disuse. Political choices and a lack of active interest among native speakers further deepen this crisis. Against this backdrop, Dogri finds itself at a crossroads. Although the J&K Official Languages Bill, 2020 gave it the long-overdue recognition as one of the Union Territory's five official languages — alongside Urdu, Kashmiri, Hindi, and English — its status on paper has not translated into meaningful presence on the ground. Unlike other regional languages that have secured space in school curricula or administrative use, Dogri remains largely absent from classrooms and formal education.

Why is Dogri not being spoken?

The decline of Dogri in the Jammu region can be looked at through three critical lenses — government policy, generational perspectives, and the rural-urban divide. One of the central reasons for the decline of Dogri lies in the absence of sustained government support. Unlike Urdu, Kashmiri, and Hindi, Dogri had to wait until 2003 for constitutional recognition. This long delay meant that by the time Dogri gained official status, it had already fallen behind in terms of institutional backing and visibility. A survey conducted by the authors further underscores this policy gap. The research

employed a random sampling method, selecting households at intervals of three to four units to ensure representativeness. The sample was distributed across 20 different locations in the Jammu region; 130 people filled the survey form completely. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) from the Jammu region believe that the government has failed to provide adequate policy support for Dogri, particularly in relation to its inclusion in school curricula and the creation of platforms for its growth. Another 43.2% felt that the language offers little relevance for employment prospects or career advancement, pushing individuals to invest their energy in learning languages perceived as more economically rewarding. Additionally, Chart 1 reveals a stark generational divide in Dogri proficiency. The oldest respondents, those aged 60 and above, display the strongest connection to the language, with full proficiency in speaking (score of 3) and an intermediate score in reading and writing (average score of 2). This generation, raised in an environment where Dogri was central to daily life, continues to act as the language's strongest custodians. However, the picture changes dramatically the lower you go in the age ladder. Among respondents aged 41-60, writing proficiency drops sharply to just 0.25%, reflecting the gradual erosion of literacy in the language. The decline becomes even steeper in the 21-40 age group. Respondents under 20 years of age show 0% proficiency in both reading and writing Dogri — effectively severing the language among the youth.

The survey also revealed a striking contrast between rural and urban populations in terms of Dogri language usage. As shown in Chart 2, approximately 56% of respondents from rural areas actively speak Dogri, with around 15% demonstrating the ability to write it. In contrast, among urban respondents, only 45% reported speaking Dogri, and only 4% had any proficiency in writing it. Many rural parents actively encourage their children to speak the language and maintain cultural continuity. Urban respondents displayed a more dismissive attitude toward Dogri, often viewing it as less relevant in modern, cosmopolitan settings.

What is the way ahead?

Like Dogri, many other indigenous languages, especially those spoken by tribal communities, are facing extinction as a result of reduced intergenerational transmission, political neglect, and cultural assimilation. Karan Singh, Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir and former Education Minister of India, rightly observed that learning new languages should not come at the cost of ignoring one's mother tongue. To address India's linguistic crisis, two challenges must be addressed. First is technical — with the 2021 Census on hold, we lack updated data on how many languages are endangered, and where urgent intervention is needed. Without this knowledge, both awareness and policy remain adrift. Secondly, one must shed the mindset that equates English alone with progress. The decolonisation of linguistics is the larger task at hand.

Setting up early warning in the Himalaya poses unique challenges

On the first weekend of this month, Mount Everest (on the Tibetan side) turned dystopian: a sudden blizzard, torrential snowfall and lightning strikes hit the mountain's vicinity, trapping a thousand trekkers who were gradually rescued with the help of local villagers trudging through knee-deep snow. In other parts of the Himalayas, at the same time, a heavy downpour and snowfall led to floods and landslides killing scores in Nepal and Darjeeling. This is the latest among scores of disasters in the Himalayas, which are only increasing: of the 687 disasters that the country experienced between 1900 and 2022, as many as 240 were in the Himalayas, according to a 2024 Down To Earth (DTE) report. They include glacial lake outbursts, landslides, floods, wildfires and earthquakes. Between 1902 and 1962, the region recorded just five disasters.

"Since then, there has been a rapid decade-on-decade increase in disasters. In 1963-1972, the region reported 11 disasters, followed by 13 disasters in 1973-82. The last decade (2013-2022) saw the highest number of disasters at 68, and they accounted for 44% of all the disasters reported in India," the DTE report explained. Quoting NASA's landslide data, DTE said: the region experienced 1,121 landslide events between 2007 and 2017. "I've come to the Himalayas around 20 times, but I've never experienced weather like this," a long-time hiker Dong Shuchang, 27, told the BBC. Climate change is indeed making this seismically vulnerable range increasingly unpredictable: the region is experiencing "a faster rate of warming than the global average, ranging from 0.15° to 0.60° C per decade," according to a paper published last year in Springer Nature. So why do we have an abysmally poor number of EWS, a practical mitigator of disasters, in one of the world's most volatile regions to predict events and save lives?

As peer-reviewed studies portend a deepening crisis in the Himalayas, there is clearly a dire need EWS for imminent earthquakes, landslides, snow storms, lake outburst floods, extreme temperatures in this tempestuous mountain range that encompasses 12 Indian States and Union Territories. Considering the sheer scale of the problem, "we need to install many more EWS, one in each valley, across the entire Himalayan arc (there are indeed cases of trans-boundary floods)," glaciologist Argha Banerjee working on Himalayan glaciers at IISER Pune, told The Hindu. "We do not have an indigenous low-cost EWS that are weather-proof, easy-to-install and operate (by local people), uses multiple input parameters (in-situ and remote), transmits live data (many of these valleys are remote, out of the reach of mobile network."

A functional early warning system can clearly save lives, he said. There are challenges to monitoring the 2,400 km range: drones have a scale problem and "are only good for localised studies, and hard to fly in glacierised, windy, rugged Himalayan conditions," Dr. Banerjee said. But artificial intelligence (AI) models, he added, could surely help in transforming live data to credible warning. There is scope for satellite use, although satellite links are very expensive and may not be scalable. "There is some scope for them, although data collection from satellites needs to be rapid. Per Dr. Banerjee: "It is important to involve and train local people to maintain, operate the EWS, and also to react to the warning." Hazard map

There have been promising precedence of Himalayan disasters averted: the recent glacier-collapse/debris flow at Blatten village in the Swiss Alps was prevented from exploding into a humanitarian crisis when a shepherd called the downstream village, saving hundreds of lives. Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences published a paper in 2022 on how they created EWS for glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in Cirenmaco, a high-



Climate change and development have made the Himalayas acutely vulnerable to floods, landslides and lakebursts, killing hundreds. Why are early warning systems not a priority?

risk glacial lake in the central Himalayas with use of an unmanned boat. EWS "prevents loss of life and reduces the economic and societal impacts of disasters," the authors of the paper, published in the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, wrote. It consisted of monitoring lake-level change, end-moraine displacement, ice collapse, and downstream runoff. The data can be transmitted via satellites and a mobile network to the data centre.

A hazard map was created of flood depth and velocity and translated into four intensity levels. "In the future, more refined and accurate simulation results can be relied upon to establish this hazard map, which has implications for determining evacuation locations in downstream areas, constructing GLOF prevention and mitigation facilities, and implementation of economic development measures," according to the paper. Vinod Kumar Gaur, a Bengaluru-based seismologist and former director of the National Geophysical Research Institute is closely involved in the implementation of three EWSs, the third one still at an elementary stage relating to cloudbursts. One of these was recently funded by environment ministry to produce an operational system to provide advance, sub-kilometre scale (a few hundred metres) hailstorms alerts to apple orchard managers in Uttarakhand and Himachal. "The systems are based on a melding local data and AI aided predictions and a rigorously downscaled atmospheric model at the local scale with a capability to capture local land surface and hydrometeorological processes, said Dr. Gaur. Indeed, there's no time to lose: a study published last year in the journal Climate Change predicted that 90% of the Himalayas will experience drought lasting over a year if global warming increases by 3° C. We get clues into this scenario from the fact that wildlife here is trapped in an "altitude squeeze," as a warming mountain range pushes meek deer and snow trout to higher grounds, according to a recent UN report. Himalayan catastrophes are not being given the priority they deserve: either by scientists, engineers, funding agencies, industry, or policy makers in central and local authorities, Dr. Banerjee said. "I think Himalayan people need it, and it is an urgent need. This should be a national priority."

Playing politics over Zubeen Garg



Six years after he threw his weight behind the violent anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act stir and sang "Politics nokoriba bondhu (Don't do politics, friend)", cultural icon Zubeen Garg is at the centre of a political storm in Assam. Since Garg died in Singapore on September 13, the ruling BJP and its rivals have been engaged in a battle of one-upmanship. The leaders of these parties have been trying to project themselves as the biggest fans of the singer-composer-actor. They have also been targeting one another for being allegedly close to the accused in the case. The desperation is understandable. The wave of emotions triggered by Garg's "mysterious" death in Singapore shows no signs of stopping as Assam inches closer to Assembly elections, due by May 2026.

Garg was hugely popular for his craft, philanthropy, and propensity to take a stand, like he did against the CAA and the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom, when it "banned" Hindi songs during the Bohag Bihu programmes. He also spoke out against government policies, even criticising Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for the felling of trees for a flyover in Guwahati in 2024. However, he kept his activism separate from his professional pursuits. This explains why he sang the theme song for the Khelo India event in Guwahati when the anti-CAA protest was at its peak. Garg died by drowning, according to the Singapore Police Force. But his sudden death began escalating into a major political issue when millions of his fans virtually laid siege to Guwahati for four days until his funeral. While the BJP-led government moved fast to ensure a smooth final journey for him and book those accused of causing his death, rivals exploited the charged atmosphere.

For over a month after Garg's death, political parties

and pressure groups have been in a contest to control the narrative surrounding his legacy. While the government constituted a Special Investigation Team and arrested seven people, including Garg's manager Siddharth Sharma and event organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, at whose programme Garg was to have performed, the Congress has accused the BJP of shielding the accused because of interests involved. Mr. Sarma provided fuel for the Opposition by suggesting that the BJP fared poorly in the Bodoland Territorial Council elections, held on September 22, because Garg's death affected the party's campaign. He warned of foul play (by political rivals) in the fight for justice for Garg and advised people to vote the BJP out in 2026 if the government failed to conduct a proper probe. Citing cases of mob violence — first on September 25 when the police searched Mr. Sharma's residence in Guwahati; and then on October 15, at Mushalpur, when the five accused were transferred to the Baksa Central Jail — Mr. Sarma advised the people not to turn Assam "into Nepal" and "weaponise" Garg's death. Pointing to his detractors, he said people "who were never Zubeen's fans are now using his name for their own agenda". Leaders of the Congress, the Rajiv Dal, and the Assam Jatiya Parishad have been relentlessly attacking Mr. Sarma and the BJP for "probe sloth" to "save the accused". They have been flooding social media handles with photos showing the prime accused with the Chief Minister and other BJP leaders. The BJP has been countering their allegations by presenting similar photos of the accused with Opposition leaders, including Congress president Gaurav Gogoi and Rajiv Dal president, Akhil Gogoi. The BJP has also launched a 'Nyay Yatra (justice march)'. Behind the political manoeuvres is the fact that Garg was a unifying figure, whose calls for inclusivity were in sharp contrast with the divisive rhetoric in Assam over the past few years. Garg's fan base encompasses the Assamese and the Adivasis, who are a potent electoral force in central and eastern Assam; the Bengalis in southern and central Assam; and the migrant Muslims, often labelled Bangladeshi, of central and western Assam; apart from the tribal people scattered across the State. They all continue to demand justice for their icon. Garg's death has, thus, created an opportunity for the Opposition, earlier perceived to lack adequate firepower to dislodge the BJP and its allies, and magnified the problems for the BJP to the extent of making Mr. Sarma release a video saying "anti-government politics in the name of Zubeen" will not be tolerated.

The race for global leadership in science

The Trump administration is recurrently cutting basic research funding and disrupting the U.S. science and technology (S&T) system as never before. More than 1,000 grants were terminated between January 20 and March 2025 at three government agencies. The National Cancer Institute funding is down by 31%; the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by 21%; the National Science Foundation by 9%; and even NASA was not spared. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed into law on July 4, calls for a 56% cut to the current \$9 billion NSF budget and a 73% reduction in staff and fellowships. The Environmental Protection Agency is being pruned drastically. Across the S&T system, about 4,000 research grants have been cancelled, according to Nature (June 25, 2025).

The mRNA vaccine programme, which won a Nobel Prize in 2023, faces a \$500 million cut along with 22 more vaccine projects. USAID faces shutdown, eliminating programmes for HIV, TB, and malaria in Africa, while funding for the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization has been withdrawn. These actions threaten fundamental research and weaken the pipeline of cutting-edge innovation. The U.S., once the leading magnet for global talent, is experiencing brain drain.

An anthropologist studying the impact of floods and cyclones on public health in Madagascar is leaving Johns Hopkins for Oxford after her fellowship was withdrawn. Another senior researcher at Ohio State University abandoned a clinical trial after NIH terminated funding (The Guardian, July 20, 2025). The National Association of Foreign Student Advisors reported in August a massive decline in international students — 1,50,000 fewer this fall. This represents a \$7 billion revenue loss and 60,000 jobs (Forbes, August 3, 2025). Since 2018, the 'China Initiative' has pushed thousands of Chinese scientists to return home to leading universities and institutes. European scientists are also leaving Ivy League universities (Nature, May 13, 2025).

In contrast, China has steadily increased science, technology, and innovation (STI) investments over the past two decades, making strategic, long-term commitments to frontier research. China's research output — both in quantity and quality — has surged across biosciences, chemistry, physical sciences, earth and environmental sciences, and health sciences, while Western institutions slid down in the Nature Index Research Leaders Rankings ending December 31, 2024. Of the top 10 universities globally, eight are Chinese. The highest ranking was led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, ranked above Harvard University. The only European institution is the Max Planck Society in Germany (Nature, July 24, 2025). Since the mid-1990s, higher education policies such as Project 211, Project 985, and the C9 League have enhanced research intensity and teaching quality. By 2015, China had about a dozen world-class universities, many of which now compete with top Western institutions. "China's contribution to world-class science is advancing so quickly that its lead over the U.S. in the Nature Index database has multiplied more than fourfold in just one year, based on 2024 data," said an article in Nature. Data from Clarivate Analytics also show that between 2018 and 2020, China produced 27.2% of the world's top 1% most-cited papers, compared to the U.S.'s 24.9% (The Guardian, August 11, 2022). China's further rise

Most scientometric analyses predict China will surge further ahead in the coming years. One area of clear leadership is AI. Stanford University's AI Index Report 2023 found that China accounted for nearly 40% of all AI publications in 2021, far exceeding Europe and the U.K. (15%) and the U.S. (10%). Chinese papers also represented 29% of global AI citations in 2021, ahead of Europe and the U.K. (21.5%) and the U.S. (15%) (Nature, August 10, 2023).

In terms of gross domestic expenditure on R&D, in 2023, the U.S. spent \$823.4 billion, compared to China's \$780.7 billion. However, China's R&D spending is growing at 8.7% annually — far faster than the U.S. (1.7%), the EU (1.6%), Germany (0.8%), and France (-0.5%), according to OECD data. While the administration systematically cuts budgets across U.S. universities, research institutions, and the NSF, Chinese leadership has launched sweeping STI programmes to reinforce its R&D base in frontier sciences.



As the Made in China 2025 programme concludes, the Medium- and Long-Term Plan for the Development of Science and Technology (2021–2035) and the Science and Technology Innovation Mega Program (2030) target strategic fields such as quantum research, AI, and semiconductors, aiming to secure China's position as a global science and technology powerhouse.

China is also poised to expand the share of basic research within its GERD. Current levels of about 7% are expected to rise towards the U.S. benchmark of 20% in the next few years. If present trends continue, China is likely within 2-3 years to surpass the U.S. not only as the world's largest R&D spender but also as its leading science and technology nation. For decades after World War II, the U.S. was the global leader in science and innovation, home to world-class universities and pioneering breakthroughs. Today, however, the rapid erosion of public investment in R&D and higher education threatens that position. If the current trajectory holds, China's rise — driven by consistent, large-scale funding and coordinated policy — may outpace the U.S., reshaping the global innovation landscape and the geopolitical balance of the 21st century.

BPCL, OIL to explore collaboration for proposed refinery in Andhra Pradesh

State-owned Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Oil India Limited (OIL) signed a MoU on Tuesday (October 28, 2025) to explore collaboration for BPCL's upcoming greenfield refinery and petrochemical complex near Ramayapatnam Port in Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh. The companies will evaluate opportunities for collaboration, including the possibility of OIL taking a minority equity stake in the proposed joint venture, for the proposed 9–12 million tonnes facility to be established with an estimated investment of ₹1 lakh crore (\$11 billion). The project has secured key statutory clearances and 6,000 acres from Andhra Pradesh Government, with pre-project activities in progress. "By joining hands with OIL, we are combining complementary strengths to create a project of strategic scale and sustainability. The Ramayapatnam complex will not only reshape BPCL's portfolio but also reinforce India's self-reliance in fuels and petrochemicals, in line with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat," said Sanjay Khanna, BPCL's Director (Refineries) who is holding additional charge of Chairman and Managing Director post. This was one of three Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) BPCL signed on the sidelines of the three day Energy Technology Meet that got underway in Hyderabad. The other MoUs were with Numaligarh Refinery (NRL) and Fertilisers & Chemicals Travancore (FACT). CMD of Oil India and Chairman of Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) Ranjit Rath said the "collaboration reaffirms our commitment to pursue various strategic diversification initiatives to midstream and downstream." "Together, we aim to create long-term value, enhance energy security, and participate in India's expanding refinery and petrochemical ecosystem. This collaboration also embodies OIL's strategic intent to diversify into integrated energy ventures that support sustainable national growth," he added.

Big Tech's contempt for Indian public health



Since 1927, when the topic of drug regulation was first discussed in the Council of State after Sir Haroon Jaffer sought a resolution regarding the "control of the craze for medicinal drugs", the issue of advertisements of drugs claiming to have a therapeutic effect on humans has been a serious public health concern. It took 27 years before India tackled the issue through the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act (DMRA), 1954. This law prohibits any advertisements of any drugs, whether approved or not by the regulator, for a list of 54 medical conditions. For example, the law prohibits the advertisement of any drug for the treatment of diabetes, regardless of whether its efficacy has been clinically established. The advent of Internet-based advertising

A lot has changed since 1954, especially in the world of advertisement. The Internet and the rise of Big Tech platforms, in the nature of search engines, social media platforms, video-sharing platforms and online marketplaces for goods, have steadily eaten into the traditional avenues of advertising in print and broadcast formats. This shift has not only upended print journalism across the world which was reliant on advertisements, but also made it far tougher for governments across the world to police advertisements published on these Big Tech platforms headquartered in the United States.

In a deep dive on the advertising policies and practices of the most popular American Big Tech platforms in India, we were astonished to note that not a single one of them warns advertisers not to submit for publication, advertisements which are in violation of the DMRA. Thus, it is no surprise that all Big Tech platforms routinely publish a wide variety of misleading advertisements, especially for ayurvedic and homeopathic products. For example, a simple search for "ayurveda" + "blood pressure tablets" or "homeopathy" + "diabetes" on the most popular search engine and online market place in India will throw up a variety of advertisements on these platforms under the "sponsored" tag, indicating that they have been paid for by advertisers. One of the most popular social media platforms features video advertisements by a notorious godman with the claim of being able to cure all kinds of diseases using ayurvedic products. Similarly, a search of the online ad-libraries of these Big Tech platforms reveals a long list of offending advertisements, including those for cow-urine based products to treat cancers; these advertisements were supported by a charitable programme run by the Big Tech platform. All these advertisements are in violation of the DMRA. None of these Big Tech platforms runs similar advertisements in the United States for ayurvedic and homeopathic products. The policies of these platforms for advertisements for health-related products to be displayed to users based in the U.S. are elaborate, with some even having pre-screening mechanisms that are meant to ensure compliance with tough American laws; these laws prohibit advertisements for therapeutic claims that are not approved by the drug regulator. In the U.S., violation of American law can attract swift criminal prosecution.

So, what explains Big Tech's brazen disregard of Indian laws such as the DMRA?

The first reason could be the traditional contempt that American corporations, dating back to Union Carbide, have shown for the lives of Indians. It is possible that this con-

tempt arises from systemic racism that afflicts the management of American corporations, wherein Indian lives are not considered to be comparable to American lives. The second is that Big Tech has escaped serious punishment earlier for violation of another law called The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PNDT). This law prevents advertisements for products and services related to determination of the sex of the unborn foetus. A PIL was filed in 2008 by an activist before the Supreme Court of India pointing out how Big Tech platforms were in brazen violation of this law. Before the Court, Big Tech was evasive on the point of instituting proactive measures to block such advertisements, insisting that it was under an obligation to remove offending advertisements only if government or others informed them about such violations. To make a long story short, Big Tech fell back into a familiar pattern of deception, by claiming that it was the "intermediary" not the "publisher".

Under Indian law, intermediaries have qualified immunity from legal liability for content generated by their users because they are presumed to lack knowledge of each piece of content that is posted by users. But when it comes to advertisements, Big Tech knows very well that it is the "publisher" and not the "intermediary". The marketing teams of Big Tech on the ground in India actively pitch for advertisements, sign contracts with advertisers and accept payments for the purpose of displaying the advertisement on their platform. They have complete knowledge about these advertisements; hence, they are publishers and not mere intermediaries who can claim immunity under the law. The PIL regarding the violation of the PNDT languished for nine years before ending with the usual insipid orders for the creation of a government committee to look into the issue. Criminal prosecution was never ordered by the Court despite being the prescribed punishment under the PNDT Act. The abject failure of the Court to enforce the law by ordering criminal prosecutions, and the process which frustrates litigants who represent public interest in such cases undoubtedly emboldened Big Tech's sense of impunity in India. The third reason is that Big Tech is aware that the U.S. government would never extradite top managerial personnel from America to face criminal prosecution in India for violating the DMRA. Big Tech's employees running Indian subsidiaries located on Indian territory cannot be prosecuted because the Indian subsidiary is a different legal entity from its parent company located in the U.S., which legally owns and operates the advertising platforms in India. Undoubtedly, this implicit immunity is what fuels Big Tech's bad behaviour in India. The need for reforms

Tackling Big Tech's dangerous violations of the DMRA should be an urgent priority in a country such as India which self-prescribes medicines and has an inherent bias toward "nationalist" tropes. Registering criminal complaints before courts of competent jurisdiction against the management of these platforms would be a good first step. If Big Tech declines to produce its competent managerial personnel before an Indian court to face these charges, the government will be compelled to ensure reforms that will make Big Tech answerable to Indian sovereignty. It is perhaps time for India to take a page from the new American playbook to regulate Tik Tok and create new regulatory mechanisms. This is to ensure that the managerial personnel responsible for creating and enforcing content and advertising related policies in India are Indian citizens who are based in Indian territory and answerable to Indian courts. Anything short of the threat of jail time for key managerial personnel will fail to ensure that Big Tech's complies with Indian law. Further, a failure of Big Tech to comply with these legal requirements should result in a revocation of the immunity granted to Big Tech under Indian intermediary laws from legal action for user-generated content. Big Tech cannot be allowed to enjoy these benefits under Indian law if it does not enforce relevant Indian laws to protect public health in India. Dinesh S. Thakur is the author of 'The Truth Pill: The Myth of Drug Regulation in India' (Simon & Schuster). Prashant Reddy T. is the co-author of 'The Truth Pill: The Myth of Drug Regulation in India' (Simon & Schuster)

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

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

What's missing In the past decade, top Indian academic institutions have produced around 550 startup founders. In comparison, leading global universities have launched two to three times as many. Subsequently, startups in India only contribute to 5-8% of our GDP, much lower than most developed countries. We are 39th in the Global Innovation Index. Not because Indian students lack ambition or ideas. What's missing is the right kind of support and backing, especially in the critical early stages when there's still peer pressure and parental pressure to seek a stable job instead of pursuing entrepreneurship. Consider this: over the past two years, a student-focused incubation programme received nearly 800 applications from across 26 states and 150 towns. This shows that entrepreneurial energy isn't just concentrated in big cities, it's everywhere. However, while talent is widely distributed, opportunities are not. Take two students: one from Mumbai and one from Jaipur. Their ideas may be equally strong, but the student from Mumbai is twice as likely to be able to access to an entrepreneurship cell or early-stage funding. Geography shouldn't determine destiny, but, in India's startup ecosystem, it often does. Proximity and exposure Beyond formal and structured support, just proximity and exposure to entrepreneurial mindsets and action matter. Academics and researchers like Prof. Saras Sarasvathy have proposed that, while our education teaches us to 'predict the future' (causal logic), entrepreneurs often need to 'control the future' (effectual logic). Entrepreneurs need to start with what they have, talk to customers, and



What's missing In the past decade, top Indian academic institutions have produced around 550 startup founders. In comparison, leading global universities have launched two to three times as many. Subsequently, startups in India only contribute to 5-8% of our GDP, much lower than most developed countries.

co-create realities and even visions that did not exist before. For instance, anyone with common sense will tell you that it's impractical to expect people to go sleep in strangers' houses; even more so to expect people to open up their homes to strangers. This is what our education systems reward. However, effectual or entrepreneurial thinking is when an Airbnb asks "What can I do to get people to trust strangers and share homes?" Of course, bold experiments like Airbnb, Urban Company, and Zerodha did not happen overnight. Each took lots of iterative experimentation, and resilience; not qualities that the Indian mainstream education system prepares or even exposes students to. We're expecting innovation and risk-taking to emerge from a system that rewards perfection and risk-aversion.

Often, when successful student founders display an appetite and ability for experimentation, co-creation, and resilience, it is through their passion, willingness and courage to go against the grain and long bouts of brute force and self-sacrifice. This is neither a sustainable nor a scalable model of entrepreneurship. If we are to become a nation of builders and thinkers who lead the world with cutting-edge innovations and a resilient economy, we need to meet our student founders not just with funding and infrastructure but with more holistic education, trust, and the space to experiment and fail safely.

Why do cyclones move towards land? | Explained



GNS News Agency, March 1

Tropical cyclones are carried by the large-scale wind patterns that govern the atmosphere. These storms form over warm ocean waters, where the sea surface temperature is about 26°C or more, providing the heat and moisture they need to grow. But once they have formed, the way they move depends entirely on the winds that surround them, much like a leaf swept along by a river. The tropical areas where cyclones develop are roughly between 5° and 20° north and south (of the equator). Here the dominant winds are the trade winds, which blow from east to west throughout the year as part of the global Hadley circulation. This is a global convection pattern driven by the uneven heating of the earth: warm air rises near the equator, moves towards the poles, cools and sinks around the 30° latitude, and then flows back towards the equator at the surface. Because the earth rotates, the returning air is deflected towards the west by the Coriolis effect, creating the easterly trade winds.

These winds thus tend to push storms westward across the oceans, which is why tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal move towards India's east coast. It's also why tropical storms in the Atlantic Ocean move from the African coast towards the Caribbean and the Americas and why those in the Pacific Ocean often head towards Asia and Australia. While tropical cyclones draw their energy from

warm ocean waters and can thus become more intense as long as they remain offshore, the winds don't give them a choice. And as the storm moves, it may also encounter other atmospheric systems, such as mid-latitude westerlies farther north, which can alter its course. Sometimes these changes steer a storm harmlessly into open water — but it's often the case that the prevailing flow carries the storm over land. In December 2023, because the steering winds over the Bay of Bengal were weak, Cyclone Michaung moved very slowly and lingered for many hours offshore before making landfall. If the global geography were reversed or if the trade winds blew the other way, cyclones would instead be carried out over open water and rarely make landfall. A question obviously arises here: why then would a cyclone in the Arabian Sea make landfall over the west coast of India? Shouldn't it move towards the Arabian Peninsula or the Horn of Africa instead? If the trade winds were the only influence, then yes, storms in the Arabian Sea should indeed drift towards the Arabian Peninsula or Africa. But in practice, they often move towards India instead because of the monsoons. In the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, the trade winds blow consistently westwards, but in the Indian Ocean, the surface winds reverse directions with the monsoons. From around June to September, the southwest monsoon dominates: winds blow from the southwest towards the northeast. This means that during the monsoon and its onset and retreat phases, the low-level steering flow over the Arabian Sea often points towards India rather than away from it. Cyclones forming in this period thus are carried northeastward and make landfall along India's western coast, particularly Gujarat, Maharashtra, and sometimes Kerala. Outside the monsoon season, during winter and early spring, the circulation reverses: the northeast monsoon brings dry air from the Indian subcontinent towards the equator and Africa. So cyclones that form then are more likely to drift westwards towards the Arabian Peninsula or Somalia.

Why is there a 'Door to Hell' burning for decades in Turkmenistan?

Imagine a gaping, fiery crater in the middle of a barren desert — so deep it looks like an entrance to another world. This is the Darvaza gas crater, famously called the "Door to Hell," blazing in Turkmenistan's Karakum Desert. Spanning about 70 metres across and 30 metres deep, it has burned with relentless heat and flames for more than 50 years. How was it formed? Believe it or not, this fiery pit is a man-made phenomenon. Back in 1971, Soviet geologists were drilling for natural gas when the ground suddenly collapsed, creating a massive crater. Fearing the spread of dangerous methane gas, they decided to set it on fire, expecting it to burn out in a few weeks. But the plan backfired — decades later, it's still burning! What's inside the crater? The crater's interior is a searing inferno of flames fuelled by methane-rich natural gas continuously escaping from underground reserves. There's no water or vegetation inside — only a barren pit with charred rock and soil. The fire has burned away any organic matter, leaving an almost alien landscape of glowing embers and flickering flames. At night, the inside looks like a giant cauldron of fire against the dark desert sky.

Spiders in the inferno?

Some reports claim that spiders have been spotted near the crater, seemingly surviving the extreme heat and gas-filled environment. While this hasn't been scientifically confirmed, it adds to the eerie and mysterious aura of the Door to Hell. Despite the danger and blazing heat, the Door to Hell has become a fascinating spot for adventurous travelers. It got its name because of its fiery appearance especially at night. Visitors come from around the world to witness the fiery crater, especially at night when the flames cast an ee-



rie, otherworldly glow over the Karakum Desert. Guides often take tourists to safe viewing points, making it a surreal experience that combines natural wonder, science, and a touch of danger.

The end of a fiery era?

Also known as the "Shining of Karakum," the Door to Hell has mesmerised visitors for over 50 years. Recently in June, some reports suggested that the flames might slowly be fading, and this fiery wonder could finally be extinguished soon — marking the end of an era for one of the world's most surreal natural spectacles. Other "hellish" sites Mount Hekla, Iceland Known as the "Gateway to Hell" in medieval Europe due to its frequent eruptions. Avernus Lake, Italy An ancient volcanic crater lake, believed by Romans to be the entrance to the underworld Cave of the Dead, Mexico Some caves with natural gas emissions earned nicknames like "Portals to the Underworld."

Bhopal administration prohibits use of carbide guns after children suffer eye injuries



A Prohibitory Order has been issued under Section 163 of the Indian Civil Defence Code, 2023, prohibiting the use of carbide guns in Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh. The move comes as several children suffered eye injuries after playing with carbide guns in Bhopal. According to the official order, no person, organisation or trader will manufacture, store, sell or purchase prohibited firecrackers, fireworks, and illegal modified firecrackers (carbide guns) that produce excessive noise by filling explosive material in iron, steel, or PVC pipes.

An official order from the office of the Bhopal Collector and District Magistrate reads, "No person/organisation/trader shall manufacture, store, sell, or purchase prohibited firecrackers, fireworks, and illegal modified firecrackers (carbide guns) that produce excessive noise by filling explosive material in iron, steel, or PVC pipes." It further said, "The sale, distribution or display of any type of illegal prohibited firecracker, fireworks, illegal modified firecrackers (carbide guns) that produce excessive noise by filling explosive material in iron, steel or PVC pipes will be completely prohibited. SDM, Executive Magistrate, Police Officer and departments concerned will monitor the strict compliance of this order."

Speaking to reporters on Thursday (October 24, 2025), Madhya Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla said the government is monitoring the situation and ensuring no one further suffers eye injuries. Deputy CM Shukla said, "We are monitoring the condition of the children suffering eye injuries. Those admitted to the hospital are being monitored to ensure they don't suffer any eye damage. I will receive the final report. Regarding the use of such pipe barrels for bursting firecrackers, an advisory had already been issued. The Chief Minister also appealed to people to refrain from using such illegally manufactured barrels and bursting firecrackers." He said an investigation will be conducted against those who manufactured and supplied such fire-

crackers and equipment to the market, and strict action will be taken against them. "Those who manufactured and supplied such firecrackers and equipment to the market, causing harm to children, will be investigated and strict action will be taken. This is irresponsible behaviour that has led to the situation of harm to children. We will look into this... When there were already guidelines in place, illegally selling such equipment, which could cause harm, would be considered a crime. This will be thoroughly investigated. And I will speak to the Collectors of a couple of districts, specifically, to find out how it entered the market. Ensure action is taken against those who violated the rules," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

Why AI auditing is banking's new oversight

A loan gets approved at 2:17 a.m., no human on shift, no second pair of eyes. An AI model read the bank statements, guessed income, priced risk, and moved money. That speed is powerful, but dangerous. When models drift or learn the wrong lesson, the damage is instant: unfair denials, bad assets, and angry regulators. AI auditing is the control that proves these systems are fit to decide — how they're built, what data they learn from, what tests they pass, and how they're watched in production. The question is simple: if this model were a trader, would we let it trade without a rulebook and a supervisor? That 2:17 a.m. decision needs a rulebook and a supervisor, and that is what AI auditing provides. Think of it as model-risk management upgraded for learning systems. It began with simple scorecards (document the data, test the model, log overrides). Today's systems read documents, learn from feedback, run on vendor platforms, and can fail differently across languages and segments. So, AI auditing is an independent, evidence-based review of an AI system through its life, design, testing, deployment, and monitoring. It asks five plain questions: (1) What is the system for, and who uses it? (2) What data were used, with what provenance and consent? (3) What tests prove it works accuracy with uncertainty, robustness under data shifts and attacks, privacy and fairness by segment? (4) How are decisions explained to risk teams, frontline staff, and customers? (5) How is it watched in production, paused safely, and improved? The essential blueprint: FREE-AI and the global playbook

Set against those five questions, the familiar Indian rulebooks show clear gaps. For instance, the DPDP Act

All you need to know about: fibromyalgia



Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition that causes widespread pain all over the body. It is still unclear what causes fibromyalgia, and there is no cure for it, but its symptoms can be managed. The condition is often misunderstood, but there is no doubt that it is real and is believed to affect 2 to 3% of the population globally. Here is all you need to know about the condition.

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a pain disorder. It is a chronic or long-term condition. It causes pain and tenderness in the muscles and soft tissues of the body and is often accompanied by fatigue, sleep disturbances, memory issues and mood problems such as stress, anxiety and depression. Anyone can develop fibromyalgia, but researchers believe that having certain health conditions can increase the risk of developing it. It is also thought to run in families. Women are more likely to get the condition than men.

What causes fibromyalgia?

While what causes the condition is still not fully understood, multiple factors are thought to be responsible. Certain inherited genes may have play, as well. Pain signals that function in the brain and nervous system not working as they should, could also be a reason. This could be due to an increase of, or unbalanced levels of, certain chemicals in the brain. Researchers also believe that physical (such as an illness or trauma) or emotional stressors could trigger or worsen the condition. Risk factors include being a woman; family history of the condition; age, as while the condition can develop at any age, it is more common above the age of 40; having a chronic illness especially rheumatic condi-

tions such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus as well as other illnesses such as irritable bowel syndrome; infections and trauma.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The commonest symptom of the condition is widespread musculoskeletal pain. The pain is a constant ache that lasts for three months or more. Pain can be dull, sharp, shooting or burning. It can start in one part of the body, but can move around to other parts. Any part of the body can be affected, and pain can range from mild to severe. The other common symptom is fatigue with sleep disturbances. People with this condition may sleep an adequate number of hours but still wake up tired. The pain they experience can disrupt sleep. Insomnia may also be experienced. Mild to moderate activity as well as prolonged inactivity may exacerbate the fatigue, and the pain severity. Other symptoms include: headaches and migraines, digestive problems such as diarrhoea and constipation, restless leg syndrome, as well as face and jaw pain such as temporomandibular jaw disorders. People with fibromyalgia also experience memory and thinking problems. Known as 'fibro fog', this makes it difficult for people to concentrate on tasks or think clearly. Anxiety and depression are also common symptoms. Those who have the condition may experience 'flare ups', periods where they experience symptoms, and periods where they feel better. Certain events or situations could trigger flare-ups, and these could be different for each individual. Stress, changes in diet, inadequate sleep and contracting an illness could all be potential triggers. There is no specific test to diagnose fibromyalgia, which can make diagnosing the condition difficult. Additionally, symptoms can vary from person to person and certain symptoms can be similar to be those of other conditions. The extent of, and duration of pain may be checked. A diagnosis may involve a physical examination, history of symptoms and the ruling out of other conditions, which may involve tests and imaging. Fibromyalgia may co-exist with other conditions. Treating the condition depends upon the individual's age, symptoms experienced and overall health. There is no single treatment that works for everyone with the condition. The goal is to manage symptoms and improve health. Medication, including anti-pain medicines, anti-depressants and anti-seizure medicines may be prescribed. Other treatments include exercise cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and patient education. Exercise is considered effective to help loosen, relax and strengthen muscles as well as to reduce pain and improve sleep. Water exercises may be recommended. CBT could help with learning relaxation strategies, mindful techniques, busting stress and learning to manage problems through changes in behaviour and thinking. Patient education involves teaching patients how their pain works, what could make it worse and what could improve it. A 2023 research paper in The Open Rheumatology Journal, which looked at 121 fibromyalgia patients, found a high prevalence of psychological comorbidities and sleep disturbance and highlighted the lack of studies on fibromyalgia in the Indian population.

Death rates among youth not declining, despite overall drop globally: Lancet study

Researchers pointed out that about half of the top 10 leading causes of early death and disability worldwide are non-communicable diseases, of which diabetes, anxiety and depressive disorders are among the fastest growing ones. [Image used for representational purpose only] Researchers pointed out that about half of the top 10 leading causes of early death and disability worldwide are non-communicable diseases, of which diabetes, anxiety and depressive disorders are among the fastest growing ones. [Image used for representational purpose only] Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Despite overall death rates declining by 67% across the world, mortality rates among young adults have not witnessed a similar pattern due to factors such as suicide, drug overdose and high alcohol consumption, according to a global study published in The Lancet journal. The findings are part of the 'Global Burden of Disease (GBD) 2023', which has analysed data from about 3,10,000 sources and over 14,000 researchers and experts worldwide. China reported the highest number of deaths in 2023 at 10.7 million, followed by India (9.85 million) and the US (over three million). However, upon adjusting for population sizes, India ranked 73rd in terms of death rate, while China and the US were placed at 166th and 160th, respectively. India also led the list of five countries with the highest number of COVID-19-related deaths, with over three million fatalities, followed by 1.21 million in the US and over one million in Russia, the study found. The researchers added that nearly half the deaths and disabilities across the world could be prevented by addressing 88 risk factors, including high blood pressure, air pollution, smoking and obesity. They also found that life expectancy has increased by more than 20 years since 1950. Pre-pandemic, women had an average life expectancy of 76 years life, while men lived over 71 years on average. "The rapid growth in the world's aging population and evolving risk factors have ushered in a new era of glo-



bal health challenges," said Dr Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, US, which coordinates the GBD study. "The evidence presented in the Global Burden of Disease study is a wake-up call, urging government and health care leaders to respond swiftly and strategically to the disturbing trends that are reshaping public health needs," he added. Though observing a significant progress in combating infectious diseases globally, the researchers said that diabetes, mental disorders, and obesity remain growing challenges. They highlighted that causes of death could possibly be shifting from infectious to non-communicable diseases, creating new global health challenges, particularly for low-income countries, the team said. They also pointed out that about half of the top 10 leading causes of early death and disability worldwide are non-communicable diseases, of which diabetes, anxiety and depressive disorders are among the fastest growing ones. COVID-19 -- the leading cause of death in 2021 -- fell to the 20th place in 2023, with heart disease and stroke becoming top ranked causes, followed by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lower respiratory infections, and neonatal disorders.

protects data rights, but because AI models use data to learn and predict, it says little about complex model behavior like fairness by segment, model drift over time, or the need for human override in automated decisions. This is where RBI's FREE-AI framework adds substance for the banking sector. FREE-AI grounds AI governance in practical requirements that address these gaps, such as establishing clear model ownership, ensuring data provenance, conducting rigorous lifecycle testing, and enforcing strong third-party accountability. In short, FREE-AI gives banks a practical reference to turn those five fundamental questions into AI auditable controls. So, where should banks look for a playbook, do we really need to reinvent the wheel? The answer is no; a complementary playbook already exists in the triad of RBI's FREE-AI Framework, NIST's AI RMF, and CSA's AICM. FREE-AI establishes the 'why' (ethical principles) and the vision for what banks must achieve: a fair, ethical, and responsible structure. The NIST AI RMF suggests the 'how' by proposing a continuous risk management cycle (GOVERN, MAP, MEASURE, MANAGE), which embeds safety into the model development culture. Finally, the CSA's AICM delivers the specific 'what' by listing exact, vendor-agnostic technical controls across key domains like data, security, and governance. Collectively, these frameworks provide banks with the necessary principles, process, and checklist to translate AI trust into auditable checks. In our view, these three frameworks together fit hand in glove.

It takes a village to audit a machine; who leads, and who follows?

We believe establishing AI auditing controls in the In-

dian banking sector will be a critical, multi-stakeholder effort. The FREE-AI already set the guidelines, essentially defining the 'what', and it demands that all AI systems demonstrate assurance, fairness, and clear explainability. We believe, the real heavy lifting, the 'how', falls to the regulated banks, NBFCs and their auditors. Their challenge, and their vital contribution, is converting these mandates into practical, daily operations. This involves constantly checking AI-driven decisions for ethical fairness and, frankly, getting a firm grip on the inherent risks that complex models bring. Critically, the bank's internal technical units will serve as the technical backbone. They are tasked with implementing the actual control systems. This includes ensuring that AI data is meticulously tracked and secured, thereby preserving the complete audit trail. This collective effort, in our view, is what will ensure that AI adoption is fully auditable. Accepting imperfection: Pragmatic AI guardrails So, the immediate issue is practical and let's be frank, some controls we want aren't hard to achieve today. For instance, deep models won't be fully explainable; GenAI won't be hallucination-free; bias cannot be zero; provenance and vendor transparency are patchy. The workable path, therefore, isn't about chasing perfection; it's about establishing pragmatic guardrails. This demands that banks prioritise interpretable models for high-stakes use, cap and constantly monitor model behaviour by segment, and meticulously document any data gaps. Furthermore, banks must establish pragmatic guardrails by aggressively testing and staged model updating for stability and security. Defensively, they must use targeted data privacy methods and demand vendor accountability.

Rachael Haynes backs India to do well at the ICC Women's ODI World Cup, predicts Australian, England and South Africa to make the semifinals



Rachael Haynes belongs to an extraordinary league of women that made the Australian cricket team the greatest in history. She was the first player to retire from that golden generation. The 38-year-old is a winner of two ODI and four T20I World Cups. After making 98 on her Test debut at No. 7 against England at Worcester in 2009, the left-hander moved up the order. She served the Australian top-order with distinction for the best part of a decade. She was also a brilliant fielder who came up with some stunning catches. She captained Australia during the team's successful defence of the Ashes in 2017. Excerpts from an exclusive interview Haynes gave The Hindu at New Delhi:

You have been to India on several occasions, as player, coach and television commentator. Women's cricket has changed a lot in India, hasn't it?

Yeah. I was here for the WPL. I got to be part of that first season [2023] and that was a really exciting tournament to be part of. It has been a couple of years, and it is nice to be back, though in the commentary box, in a bit of a different role. I think the India-Australia series has been a really interesting one to follow because both of these sides are obviously tuning up for the World Cup. It has been interesting to see them find the right combinations and also, I suppose, build that rivalry that we know India and Australia have. And India is probably the second best team in the world. I think they are a team with momentum at the moment and that's really important heading into a big tournament. How do you look back at the experience in the WPL? You were part of the inaugural WBBL back in Australia as well. I suppose it was really different to Season One of WBBL that I was part of. The game has come such a long way over that time. And yeah, I suppose there was a lot of noise about India having a version for the women. When they eventually introduced the tournament, I mean, hats off to them. They did a wonderful job in creating a real spectacle, obviously drawing some of the best players in the world to the tournament. And it was done in a little bit of a different style, you know, with the auction format for players. And for a change, there was really good money in women's cricket.

That is right. And I am sure the players, you know, before the current players have laid a really nice foundation. I suppose, for this generation to be able to step into and enjoy a bit of financial reward. You joined Gujarat Giants as the head coach in the first WPL. But you had a big setback when your captain and best player Beth Mooney got injured in the very first match and had to pull out from the tournament.

Beth picked up that calf injury and it is not easy to replace a player like that. To lose both her keeping and her batting, it is effectively two skills in a team, which threw our balance out a little bit. But that is part of elite sport; that happens. And yeah, we just weren't able to quite get going

after that first match. But all in all, it was really great to work with the local players. And in the WPL's inaugural match at Navi Mumbai, Harmanpreet Kaur played that blinder to lead Mumbai Indians to a huge victory. She also played one of the finest ODI innings, against Australia in the 2017 World Cup semifinal at Derby. I wasn't playing in the match, but I was on the bench that day. And it was just some of the most phenomenal hitting I have ever seen. The ball-striking was amazing. It didn't matter what Australia tried to do to counteract it, she had an answer. And that innings was no exception. She is a fantastic player. And I have had the opportunity to play alongside her as well at the Sydney Thunder in the WBBL. But in the next edition in 2022, Australia regained the World Cup, and you made 68 in the final against England at Christchurch and had a big partnership with Alyssa Healy for the first wicket.

It was great. Alyssa was absolutely smoking the ball and playing wonderfully. So I basically just put myself down at the other end. But yes, it is nice to contribute in big tournaments and I suppose to go on and experience that team success together. Because that is ultimately why you play sport: to be part of that win. Expert view: Haynes, who has won two ODI world titles, picks Australia, India, England and South Africa to make the semifinals in the upcoming World Cup. Expert view: Haynes, who has won two ODI world titles, picks Australia, India, England and South Africa to make the semifinals in the upcoming World Cup. | Photo Credit: P. K. Ajith Kumar

How do you look forward to the World Cup starting here in India on September 30? You wouldn't mind an India-Australia final perhaps?

I would absolutely love to see that. This is a real opportunity for the Indian side. You know, it's a huge privilege to play in a home World Cup and to have that support around. And we certainly experienced that in the T20 World Cup in Australia back in 2020. That was easily the most rewarding and fun tournament I have ever been part of as a player: we played that final at Melbourne in front of 86,000 people that supported us.

Apart from Australia and India, who do you think could make the semifinals?

I think England will be there. You know, Charlotte Edwards is such a fantastic coach and they will have Heather Knight coming back into their team. And I think South Africa will get through, just.

What makes this Australian side, of which you were a part until three years ago, so good?

I think one thing the squad and the selection and coaching group have done well is make sure they are always giving younger players an opportunity around the environment. They have brought Nicole Faltum and Charli Knott, who are sort of performing well in domestic cricket.

How do you view the changes the women's game has seen since the time you started out?

I think the game has just continued to evolve, and that has coincided with an increased investment from a lot of different boards around the world. So Australia, England and India are probably really leading the way in that respect. The success of the national side is really underpinned by the strength of your domestic programme, and there is no coincidence from my point of view that the top three teams in the world at the moment are well-funded and have good, strong domestic structures. I suppose in fairness to New Zealand, they are the current T20 World Cup holders. But a lot of their players end up on that sort of domestic circuit around the world.

Beyond maternity leave: Reintegration is the real test of inclusion for mothers



When conversations about women representation in the workforce come up, maternity leave and related challenges is always a point of contention. However, the real challenge is not the leave itself, but the noise and clutter around it. Streamlining the entire journey and experience, from pregnancy to reintegration into the workplace, determines whether women remain, prosper, or quietly depart. According to the Marching Sheep Inclusion Index 2025, 63% of listed Indian companies do not have women in Key Managerial Positions (KMP). Representation thus out as roles become senior. Another stark reality: multiple studies show that nearly 46% of women in India drop out of the workforce within two years of maternity. Motherhood is still among the largest reasons why women drop off the corporate ladder. These statistics are important because they identify where the talent pipeline starts thinning. The pressures new mothers face

To really understand why so many women step away from work after motherhood, we have to peel back the layers of pressure they carry every single day. Family expectations: In most households, it's still presumed that caregiving is a woman's natural responsibility. Even if both parents are employed, majority of the household chores and caregiving usually fall on the mother. Extended families, though supportive in many ways, can sometimes perpetuate the gender norms: "The child needs the mother more." Societal norms: The stereotype of a good mother is too often defined as one who is always available for the child and takes care of nutrition, academics, hobbies, and everything. Anything less leads to guilt, feeling inadequate. Pursuing professional goals with full focus after childbirth seems like an uphill task. Whether or not openly criticised, new mothers find themselves constantly defending their choices, to neighbours, relatives, even friends. Struggles within: In addition to what others may want, there is also the inner struggle. Long sleepless nights, physical fatigue, and the bouts of emotions that accompany motherhood make new mothers question themselves. Most question: "Am I selfish in prioritising my career? Will my child suffer?" Guilt and self-doubt becomes a constant companion. Organisational systems: Then there's the workplace. Coming back to work after maternity leave is supposed to be like homecoming, but it feels more like entering a war zone. Inflexible policies, no work flexibility, no access to childcare and sometimes even apathy from managers and team seems like being alone. True, the mother has been away for six months or more, and the team would have shared the extra workload and they would have waited for her to return, but now that she is back, what next? The truth is, women don't drop out because they can't cope. They drop out because the world around them makes it far harder than it should be. The ripple effect of dropouts: The impact of working women exiting workplaces is not invisible.

• For organisations: Trained talent is lost, business continuity suffers, and replacement costs add up. A Deloitte report estimated that replacing a mid-level employee costs anywhere between 150–200% of their annual salary. Culture also takes a hit when women disappear from leadership pipelines. • For the economy: India's female labour force participation rate is about 37% in 2024 (PLFS data), one of

the lowest among emerging economies. If women participated at the same rate as men, India's GDP could rise by nearly 27% (McKinsey Global Institute). Dropouts stall this growth. • For society: Every time a mother leaves the workforce, stereotypes about women not lasting long in careers get reinforced. This slows down progress on gender parity. Even international research points to the same trends. It is estimated that by 2023, 40% women will either be single or choose not to have children. In India, with increasing number of women delaying to get married or even putting off marriage or having children at an older age, the demand for greater workplace support becomes even more pressing. What organisations can control is true that companies cannot rewrite family dynamics or erase social expectations overnight. But they do have a circle of control and that is where the biggest difference can be made.

• Train and sensitise managers to respond with empathy when a woman announces her pregnancy and returns from maternity leave. • Create systems that enable women to transition back without penalty on role, increments or bonuses. When companies proactively manage this integration, the impact does not remain confined to the office. It sends a signal to families, to society, and to young women entering the workforce that careers and motherhood can co-exist. Handling the journey not just the leave: The return to work is not a single event. It is a journey that begins the day a woman shares her pregnancy news and continues until she feels fully integrated again. • The moment of disclosure matters: If the manager reacts with worry or disappointment, women tend to hide or delay the news. This creates fear and uncertainty about the future role and career. A response rooted in curiosity, empathy and reassurance sets a different tone. • Policy support is critical: Flexible hours, phased return options, childcare facilities, and support for remote work help women transition at their own pace without impacting role, deliverables and accountability. • Addressing the emotional layer:

Many women experience imposter syndrome "Am I good enough anymore?" Coaching, counselling, and peer support groups can help deal with this emotional turmoil. • Active listening: HR and managers must tune in to subtle signals of distress. Withdrawal, hesitation, or declining participation in meetings are clear signals of waning engagement and need to be addressed. • Role models matter: Women who see seniors balancing motherhood and leadership are more likely to believe that their own careers are sustainable. When organisations view maternity as a complete journey from pregnancy to reintegration they retain not just employees, but also their trust. Retention: When women feel seen and supported, and set up for success after maternity, they stay. They grow professionally and climb ladders instead of stepping away from them. Productivity: A mother who returns to a workplace that offers flexibility and trust brings with her an incredible sense of focus and resilience.

With the appropriate systems in place, a mother doesn't merely come back, she flourishes. Profitability: According to Marching Sheep Inclusion Index 2025 firms with higher women representation in senior positions don't merely look good on paper, but they actually perform better. Reputation: How an organisation treats a returning mother during this critical stage becomes part of its brand's identity. Therefore, the message is clear: A company shouldn't just hire talent, but must stand by it. That reputation draws in not only women but talent of every gender who value fairness and humanity at work. Ultimately, the question is simple: Do we want maternity to be the point where careers stagger, or do we want it to be just another phase in a thriving professional journey? India's workforce cannot afford the loss of talent that happens when mothers leave. Reintegration is not charity, nor is it policy on paper. It is about building a workplace where women do not feel like they are returning after a break because they never truly left.

National Centre for Divyang Empowerment gives jawans injured in line of duty a fighting chance

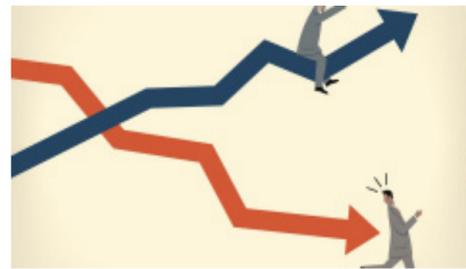
Until a year ago, Amit Kirtaniya, 33, would tremble with fear every time he heard the sound of a utensil dropping on the floor. The clatter would disrupt his sleep and bring back traumatic memories. On June 5, 2023, Kirtaniya, a constable with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and two of his colleagues were patrolling the hills of Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh after receiving information that Maoists were on the move. Suddenly, there was an explosion. "We were thrown in the air in different directions," Kirtaniya recalls.

The three men lay bleeding on the hill. A few hours later, a rescue team arrived and flew them by chopper to a government hospital nearby. The area had been filled with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Kirtaniya says. Having stepped on one, he lost both legs, sustained 95% physical disability in his right arm, and lost vision in his right eye. "A day later, I was airlifted by an air ambulance to Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) where I was admitted for 15 days," he says. "I was awake and conscious. The doctors sought my permission to amputate my legs above the knee. I had watched a viral video which gave me hope that I would be able to walk again with artificial limbs. So, I agreed." The CRPF, one of the seven Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in India, helped him get artificial limbs last April at the National Centre for Divyang Empowerment (NCDE) in Hyderabad. Divyang, which means divine body part, was a term introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 to refer to persons with disabilities. Located at the CRPF Group Centre in Hakimpet, on the outskirts of Hyderabad in Telangana's Rangareddy district, the NCDE is the only facility of its kind in the country. Conceived by former CRPF chief, Dr. A.P. Maheshwari, and inaugurated in December 2020, the NCDE is an exclusive facility for training CAPF personnel who suffer injuries and become physically challenged in the line of duty. In just five years, the NCDE has trained over 219 'Divyang warriors', as they are called on campus, producing medal-winning para athletes and skilled IT professionals. Infrastructure support: The NCDE has a sprawling campus. It has about 180 barracks, each divided into 10x10 feet cubicles fitted with a table, chair, wardrobe with adjustable handles, a motorised bed, a shoe rack, and a window. Of the barracks, more than 100 are wheelchair-friendly, complete with attendant support. It is common to see Divyang warriors rise from their wheelchairs to salute superiors. The campus is equipped with wide ramps and elevators, and motorised buggies and vans to ferry trainees across its grounds. A hospital behind its main complex was built to handle emergencies. The Renault Group, a French multinational automobile manufacturer, has pledged motorised wheelchairs, sports chairs, and a bus by November 2025, signalling further expansion of mobility support to the personnel on campus. Kirtaniya says the artificial limbs were uncomfortable at first, but have now become a part of him. "I remove them while resting or sleeping. It takes 5-7 minutes to wear the entire gear, which requires servicing too. In the monsoon season, the equip-

ment retains moisture and needs further maintenance," he says. The constable, who used to trek for miles in jungles wearing a bulletproof jacket and carrying a gun, has been training to be an archer at the NCDE for the last one and a half years. His batch consists of 20 trainees. Seven of them have already been selected for national games ranging from archery to discus throw. The trainees are also provided skill development classes in IT, which are run in collaboration with BITS Pilani. Kirtaniya's efforts have resulted in some success. The father of two children won two medals — a bronze and a silver — at the Khelo India Para Games this year. He is happy, but says he misses the jungles. "I trained to be a fighter, but now I am a sports person," he says. The physical training infrastructure at the campus is comprehensive. A ramp leads to a fully equipped gym, tailored for the needs of persons with disabilities, with specially designed machines calibrated to their strengths and requirements. Physiotherapists guide them through sessions that focus on improving gait, strengthening arms, and shedding excess weight gained during recovery. Separate physiotherapy rooms offer focused exercises to restore mobility. At a meditation hall, two daily sessions of deep relaxation, mindfulness, and progressive muscle relaxation are conducted to reduce stress, anxiety, and minimise trauma. The counselling wing, led by specialists, focuses on post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma care. The wing also often handles cases of candidates who feel suicidal. "Our goal is to instil confidence in the people here so that they can lead a dignified life even with a physical disability," says Dr. K. Nagarajuna, a clinical psychologist at the wing. The risk of dangerous operations: The CRPF is the main force deployed for anti-Maoist operations. In the 38 districts in India affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE), 15 were located in Chhattisgarh in 2024.

Following a directive by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, security forces have intensified operations in LWE-affected States, particularly Chhattisgarh, since 2023. Continuous operations have led to a sharp decline in LWE-affected districts from 126 in 2013 to 18 districts in April 2025. Four of the six most affected districts are in Chhattisgarh, according to data from the Ministry. However, these operations have also led to many grievous injuries. Since 2016, at least 46 CRPF personnel have lost limbs in IED explosions in LWE-affected areas. In 2023, 10 personnel had to undergo amputations as their limbs were damaged in explosions. On July 27, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan said that CAPF personnel who get severely injured during operations and have to undergo amputation will be allowed to continue in service until retirement with all the benefits. Mohan said the government will ensure that the best medical facilities and technology are available for limb replacement surgery for CAPF personnel. Until July 30 this year, the NCDE had facilitated the fitment of 106 artificial limbs while 135 fitments are under process. Rehabilitation includes personnel who suffer bullet wounds and injuries from road accidents while on their way to duty or on leave.

Why degrees alone won't build India's workforce



India's education system has expanded dramatically in recent years, democratising access across geographies and social groups. But while degrees have become more accessible, employability has not. Each year, over 10 million students graduate, yet, fewer than half meet industry-defined benchmarks for job-readiness. This gap is not a reflection of low aspiration or poor intent. It is a systemic issue rooted in how we define, deliver, and measure education.

Disconnect: There is a dangerous illusion that completing a degree is the same as building a career. For many young people in India, especially in smaller towns, higher education is treated as an automatic gateway to employment. However, only 8.25% of graduates find jobs related to their field of study. Most are either left underemployed or pushed into unrelated roles, not due to lack of intelligence, but due to lack of direction.

Our education system remains syllabus-driven and exam-oriented, rarely aligned with actual market needs. The result is a generation of graduates, confident in theory but underprepared in application. In sectors like engineering, the disconnect is even sharper, with over 80% of graduates deemed unfit for core roles. A critical gap in India's education-to-employment journey is the absence of hands-on exposure. With limited industry touchpoints, especially in non-metros, students graduate without workplace awareness, communication skills, or portfolios that recruiters expect as a baseline. This is further widened by an ecosystem that rewards course completion and enrollment numbers, not placement outcomes. Institutions have little incentive to build employer networks, integrate applied learning, or support structured mentorship. Students are left navigating the most critical phase of their lives — career launch — largely on their own. Looking ahead

The way forward lies in rethinking education not as a product but as a full-stack system that drives employment. This means introducing students early to the landscape of career possibilities through localised, relatable role models

and vernacular resources. Skilling must follow, but in industry-aligned formats that are accessible and affordable. Mentorship should no longer be optional. It must be embedded through digital coaches, alumni engagement, and structured guidance that helps students match their strengths to the right opportunities. Finally, placement support must go beyond urban job portals. We need regional placement ecosystems that reflect local economic realities, connecting graduates to jobs in BFSI, digital services, logistics, healthcare, and beyond. Job creation isn't a peripheral goal; it is the test of whether our education system works. If education is reimagined as a system, it must be wired into demand, employer partnerships, local enterprise incubation, and clear employment pathways. This means creating jobs and not just churning out graduates. India's edtech sector has a critical role to play in enabling this transformation. But the entire focus needs to shift from enrollments to measurable, long-term outcomes. We can no longer measure progress by scores or degrees alone. The real metric is 'how many young Indians find jobs that align with their skills'? It is time we stopped asking, "How many graduated?" and start asking, "How many progressed?" It is not the certificate that secures the future; it is the pathway.

ESIC payroll data: over 20 lakh new employees enrolled in July

New Delhi: At least 20.36 lakh new employees were added in the payroll data of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) in July, an increase of 4.86 per cent from 19.37 lakh new workers enrolled in June, an official statement said on Friday.

Over 48 per cent of new registrations comprise young people under 25 years of age, according to a Ministry of Labour and Employment statement. About 31,146 new establishments have been brought under the social security ambit of the ESI Scheme in the month of July, thus ensuring social security to more workers. "It is noticeable that out of the total 20.36 lakh employees added during the month, 9.85 lakh employees amounting to around 48.37 per cent of the total registrations belong to the age group of up to 25 years," the statement said. The gender-wise analysis of the payroll data indicates that net enrollment of female members has been 4.33 lakh out of the total 20,36,008 employees added in July. Moreover, a total of 88 transgender employees have also been registered under the ESI Scheme in July, which attests to the commitment of ESIC to deliver its benefits to every section of society.

Moody's follows Fitch, only affirms India's sovereign rating with stable outlook



The third major global rating agency, Moody's Ratings, on Monday affirmed its Baa3 rating on India and retained the outlook at stable, one month after Fitch Ratings also maintained the sovereign rating at the lowest investment-grade level. Meanwhile, on August 14, S&P Global Ratings – the world's largest rating agency – had upgraded India to BBB from BBB-, the first time it had done so in 18 years. "The rating affirmation and stable outlook reflect our view that India's prevailing credit strengths, including its large, fast-growing economy, sound external position and stable domestic financing base for ongoing fiscal deficits will be sustained. These strengths lend resilience to adverse external trends, in particular as high US tariffs and other international policy measures hinder India's capacity to attract manufacturing investment," Moody's analysts Christian de Guzman and Gene Fang said in a statement.

Ratings are divided into two rough classes: investment and speculative grades. Entities, including countries, in the former class are worth investing in, while repayment of loans taken by those in the latter is more difficult to predict. Within investment grade, there are several levels, with Baa3 being the lowest as per the scale followed by Moody's. Baa3 is the equivalent of BBB- that Fitch currently has India at. A rating in the Baa category – comprising Baa1, Baa2, and Baa3 – is indicative of "moderate credit risk" and "may possess speculative characteristics". As such, a credit rating is nothing more than a measure of an entity's creditworthiness, or how likely it is that it may pay back borrowed money. Most countries need to borrow money every year to fund some of their expenditures. The difference between the total income and the expenditure for a year is the fiscal deficit; the Indian government's is Rs 15.69 lakh crore for 2025-26. The Indian government has over the last several years aggressively pursued the three global agencies for higher ratings that, in its opinion, better reflect the economy's fundamentals. In fact, New Delhi has repeatedly expressed its displeasure over the agencies' methodologies, saying they were biased against emerging economies. The Economic Survey for 2020-21 even had a chapter titled 'Does India's Sovereign Credit Rating reflect its fundamentals No!'. "Strong GDP growth and gradual fiscal consolidation will lead to an only very gradual decline in the government's high debt burden, and will not be sufficient to materially improve weak debt affordability, especially as recent fiscal

measures to reinforce private consumption erode the government's revenue base," the agency said, referring to the income tax cuts announced in the 2025-26 Union Budget and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate reductions that came into effect on September 22. These two moves, Moody's said on Monday, have made the tax base narrow and will lead to loss of revenue to the government. Interestingly, S&P upgraded its rating on India a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his Independence Day speech that the GST will be reformed. However, S&P analysts later allayed fears about any revenue losses from the tax cuts, saying the simplification of the GST could boost the government's revenues in the long term.

Moody's, though, warned on Monday that the Indian and state governments together have reduced their annual fiscal deficits after the Covid pandemic at a "very gradual" pace "despite robust growth boosting revenue and alleviating spending pressure". "Moreover, while the government has demonstrated a lengthening track record of fiscal consolidation, recent policy measures have signaled a shift towards greater support for the economy amid a weaker global macroeconomic environment," Moody's added. The Centre is aiming for a fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent of GDP for the current year that will end in March. From next year, India will target a reduction in its debt-to-GDP ratio from 57.1 per cent in 2024-25 to 49-51 per cent by 2030-31. However, states do not have a debt target and rating agencies view government debt on a consolidated basis – Centre plus states. Moody's said it expects the government to remain committed to its goal of gradual debt reduction over the next decade. On the growth front, Moody's expects India to remain the fastest growing G20 economy at least for the next two to three years, with the GDP seen rising by 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal, in line with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) forecast.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee began its three-day meeting on Monday and will detail its interest rate decision on Wednesday. Economists expect the central bank to upgrade its growth forecast this week due to the economy growing at a much faster pace than anticipated in the April-June quarter. At 7.8 per cent, the April-June GDP growth rate was the fastest in five quarters and a full percentage point higher than what economists had expected. Like S&P and Fitch, Moody's too sees the impact on India's growth from the US' high tariffs to have only "limited negative effects" in the near term. However, in the medium to long run, these high tariffs could restrict potential growth "by hindering India's ambitions to develop a higher value-added export manufacturing sector". Officials from India and the US continue to negotiate a bilateral trade deal and Moody's expects them to result in less punitive rates on India than the current 50 per cent. Meanwhile, the hike in H-1B visa fees to \$100,000 for new applicants and provisions in the Halting International Relocation of Employment (HIRE) Act are not expected to "significantly weigh" on workers' remittances or India's services exports.

Repo rate: What could push RBI MPC to hold or cut?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee will meet from September 29 to October 1, and is widely expected to keep the repo rate unchanged for the second consecutive time amid strong GDP growth and expectations of benign inflation. A section of economists, however, see a possibility of a repo rate cut in the upcoming policy. The six-member rate-setting panel is unlikely to alter its present 'neutral' monetary policy stance.

Most economists expect that the MPC would continue to maintain the status quo in the upcoming monetary policy, to be announced on October 1. This would be the second time in a row that the RBI may take a pause. Between February and June 2025, the repo rate has been cut by 100 bps to 5.5 per cent currently. "The Monetary Policy Committee is anticipated to maintain the status quo on the repo rate in its October 2025 review. This view is supported by the positive impact of GST reforms on demand, stronger-than-expected Q1 FY26 GDP growth, and an inflation trajectory that, while lowered due to GST rationalisation (FY26 average now -2.6 per cent), is expected to slope upwards thereafter," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA Ltd. In the April-June 2025 quarter, GDP growth rose to a five-quarter high of 7.8 per cent, compared to 6.5 per cent in the year-ago period and 7.4 per cent in January-March 2025. The government has introduced a two-slab structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, effective September 22, abolishing the earlier four-rate tax regime. Lower GST rate will further strengthen the consumption growth drivers. "RBI is likely to remain on pause in October awaiting clarity on GST impact and tariffs," said Gaura Sengupta, chief economist, IDFC FIRST Bank. RBI's assessment on current growth conditions is positive with pickup in rural demand and government capex. Meanwhile urban consumption and private capex remain subdued, she added.

State Bank of India (SBI's) group chief economic advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh said there is a merit and rationale in going for a rate cut, but this will require calibrated communication by the RBI as, post June, the bar for rate cut is indeed higher. "No point in committing a Type 2 error (no rate cut with neutral stance) in September also... A 25 bps rate cut in September is the best possible option for RBI," Ghosh said in a recent report. He added that a rate cut in September is the best possible option for RBI, which also projects it as a forward-looking central bank. Nomura economists anticipate two further cuts, during October and December meetings. "As the market is currently only pricing in around 10 bps of cuts over the next few months, we see the risk/reward as attractive," Nomura said in a report.

According to Goldman Sachs, the headline inflation is expected to remain benign on lower food inflation and pass-through of lower GST rates to consumer prices. In August, headline inflation accelerated to 2.7 per cent from an eight-year low of 1.61 per cent in July. "Assuming a partial pass-through of lower GST rates, we recently lowered our headline inflation forecasts for CY25 and FY26 by 0.2 percentage points and 0.3 percentage points to 2.8 per cent year-on-year," Goldman Sachs said in a report. The MPC meet is happening at a time when India and the US are in discussions to finalise a trade deal. US President Donald Trump has imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods from August 27, taking the total tariff to 50 per cent. The outcome of these talks is expected to have a significant impact on the country's economic growth. The meeting also comes after the US Federal Reserve's decision to lower its interest rate by 25 bps to 4-4.25 per cent, marking its first cut in 2025.

Is a change in the policy stance expected?

Economists believe that the MPC will maintain the 'neu-



tral' stance in the forthcoming policy. In the June 2025 policy, the MPC had changed the policy stance to neutral from accommodative. A neutral stance will mean that the rate can move in either direction, depending on the evolving economic data.

Will RBI revise GDP and inflation forecast?

Bank of Baroda's Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis expects the Reserve Bank to keep the GDP forecast unchanged but may lower inflation projection by 0.5 per cent for FY26. In the August policy, RBI retained its real GDP growth projection at 6.5 per cent in FY26 but sharply lowered its inflation estimate to 3.1 per cent from an earlier expectation of 3.7 per cent. "The GST rationalisation could dampen the headline CPI (consumer price index) prints by 25-50 bps during Q3 FY26-Q2 FY27 relative to our pre-GST rationalisation estimates, taking the average for FY26 to around 2.6 per cent (vs 3 per cent earlier)," said Nayar of ICRA. While October-November 2025 may mark a fresh low for the CPI inflation, the trajectory subsequently remains upward sloping, she added. The RBI has projected CPI inflation at 3.1 per cent in Q3 FY26; 4.4 per cent in Q4 FY26, and 4.9 per cent in Q1 FY27. What happens to lending rates if the repo rate is left unchanged? If the RBI leaves the repo rate steady at 5.5 per cent, all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) linked to the repo rate will not be changed. However, lenders may revise their interest rates on loans that are linked to the marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR).

Should you be concerned about 'overspending' your daily heart beats?

Birmingham: Imagine if your smartwatch didn't just tell you how many steps you've walked or calories you've burned, but how many heartbeats you've "spent" each day.

According to a recent study, that number might one day become another marker of health – a "heartbeat budget" that could, in theory, tell you if you're overspending your most vital resource. The idea of a lifetime heartbeat limit has floated around for decades. It's based on an old myth that the heart comes with a fixed number of beats, often said to be about 2.5 billion, so every extra one you use brings you closer to running out. Thankfully, that's pretty roundly accepted now to be untrue. Exercise doesn't shorten your life by making your heart beat faster. If anything, people who exercise tend to have lower resting heart rates and live longer. But the new research, published in JACC: Advances, borrows that same metaphor in a modern, data-driven way. The scientists behind the study analysed fitness-app data from elite athletes, comparing resting heart rates with total daily beats.

Hatchbacks will continue to exist despite 'SUVisation' of auto industry: FADA president



New Delhi: Amid the ongoing debate over whether entry-level small cars will stage a comeback in the GST 2.0 era, hatchbacks will maintain their market relevance despite the global trend of "SUVisation" across the auto industry, according to the automotive dealers' body Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations. While the country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India, which enjoys a dominant position in the small car segment, expects about 10 per cent growth in the segment after the GST rate reduction, its rival Hyundai Motor India feels that micro SUVs like Exter and Punch will grow at the cost of hatchbacks as consumer preference has evolved.

"This 'SUVisation' of the industry is happening throughout the world. It is not because India has bad roads... this whole thing about SUVs is not going to go away. It is going to be there for quite some time to come," Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President CS Vigneshwar told PTI. He, however, said that while SUVs give a purpose of comfort, style and safety, "hatches will have their own space because some people still want the hatches". Vigneshwar was responding to a query on how the dealership fraternity sees the future of entry-level small cars, which have become affordable post-GST rate cut, after witnessing declining sales in the past few years. Apart from

the continued existence of buyers for small cars, he said, the other main reason is that many manufacturers are continuing to offer multiple products in the segment, keeping the market alive through competition unlike in the mid-size sedan segment, which has been squeezed.

"SUVs in every category, and hatchbacks in one or two categories, you will have literally every OEM with multiple products sometimes. So, this is going to happen. Hatches will exist, and SUVs will exist," Vigneshwar said, adding that it is the sedan market which is getting squeezed. According to industry estimates, from FY19 to FY25, wholesales of entry-level small cars have declined by over 60 per cent to 1.44 lakh units from 3.7 lakh units. On the other hand, the overall passenger vehicle wholesales during the period grew by 28.5 per cent to 43.38 lakh units from 33.77 lakh units.

Earlier, Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Partho Banerjee had stated that while domestic passenger vehicle sales growth is likely to come back to around 7 per cent from the next fiscal, for the small car segment, the expectation is around 10 per cent growth. A combination of factors, including income tax relief on annual income of up to Rs 12 lakh, transmission of the impact of repo rate cuts by the RBI, resulting in lesser EMIs, and the GST rate reduction, will help in making small cars more affordable, thereby encouraging two-wheeler riders to upgrade, he had noted. On the other hand, Hyundai Motor India Ltd Whole-time Director and Chief Operating Officer Tarun Garg argued that the GST rate reductions from "28 plus 1 per cent" and "28 plus 3 per cent" to 18 per cent are not restricted only to hatchbacks, and extend to other categories, which are benefiting. "The micro SUVs) Exter and Punch never existed four years back. The maximum sales are still in the Rs 6-10 lakh segment. The only difference is that earlier, hatches used to sell there. Today, SUVs are selling there (due to changing aspirations of customers)... It is not as if suddenly, because the GST has gone down, aspirations will die..." he had noted.

India in talks for FTAs with US, EU and others, says Goyal

New Delhi: India is negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with a number of countries, including the US, New Zealand, Oman, Peru, Chile, and the European Union, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. He said that Qatar and Bahrain, too, are keen to negotiate trade pacts with India. In August, India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Russia, signed Terms of Reference (ToR) to launch negotiations on an FTA, he said.

"Talks are going with the US (for a trade agreement). Talks are also underway with the EU, New Zealand, Oman, Peru, and Chile," he said at UP International Trade Show, Greater Noida. Last week, the minister led an official delegation to New York for trade talks. After that meeting, India and the US decided to continue negotiations for the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement. Both sides held constructive meetings on various aspects of the trade deal. During the visit, the Minister held meetings with United States Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US Ambassador-designate to India Sergio Gor. These deliberations were important as they took place after the US imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff and an additional 25 per cent penalty on Indian goods entering the American market for purchasing Russian crude oil. At present, a total of 50 per cent additional import duty is

imposed on Indian goods.

In February this year, leaders of the two countries directed officials to negotiate a proposed Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). It was planned to conclude the first tranche of the pact by the fall (October-November) of 2025. So far, five rounds of negotiations have been held. The pact is aimed at more than doubling the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current USD 191 billion. The US remained India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion (USD 86.5 billion exports). The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade. Goyal also informed that the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the four European nations bloc, EFTA (European Free Trade Association), will come into force from October 1. It was signed on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products, such as Swiss watches, chocolates, and cut and polished diamonds, at lower or zero duties. "This pact will benefit Indian traders, he said, adding these agreements reflect increasing interest of the developed world towards India. Further, the commerce minister called for buying Made in India goods to promote domestic manufacturing.

Gen Z is done with restaurants and festivals, is currently enjoying food raves



Ananya Jena first heard about street raves from her cousin abroad last year. Soon after, the culture landed in India, starting in Mumbai. In the months that followed, she came across a variety of raves – especially ones centred around food. Coffee and matcha, doughnuts and noodles, even soup raves have begun shaping the current party scene. With Gen Z, it seems nothing is off the table. Rahul Punjabi, chef & founder of BANG BANG! Noodle hosted Mumbai's first-ever Noodle Rave, aiming to break the mould of conventional dining. "Food has always been at the centre of culture, but I wanted to push that a step further – to make noodles not just a meal, but a movement. Pairing hand-pulled noodles, bold MaLa flavours, and a high-energy music scene felt like the perfect way to bring people together. It's rebellious, playful, and very much in line with the spirit of our restaurant," he explained. Guests experienced noodles being pulled live on the floor, DJs spinning throughout the night, Sichuan flavours hitting the palate, and the collective buzz of sharing food and music under one roof. "We wanted everyone to feel like they were walking into an energy-fuelled night market – with their red glasses on and chopsticks in hand. Not too polished, just pure connection through food, rhythm, and vibes," Punjabi added.

Why are food raves such a hit among Gen Z?

For Jena, a food rave blends the best of a traditional rave and a food festival. While standard festivals can feel exhausting – long queues, distant food stalls, and sprawling crowds – a food rave introduces people to new music while enjoying great food. "Most of my friends who love raves already live on EDM. It's the music they start and end their day with. A food rave layers that energy with good food, people, and a bar-hopping experience in a compact space," she said. Punjabi believes Gen Z loves this format because it's not just dining; it's a layered social experience. "For them, food is social currency. It's not enough to just eat; it has to be memorable, Instagrammable, and in the moment. The fact that they could dance, eat, get their hands messy, capture cool noodles-in-motion shots, and meet like-minded people made it feel like more than just a night out. It be-

came a cultural moment." Food rave A food rave blends together the best of a regular rave and a food festival (Source: Instagram/@kitchenrave.in) Raves and pop-ups allow Gen Z to engage with food in an informal, participatory, high-energy way. It's less about sit-down dining and more about creating memories with friends in a communal atmosphere.

Jaivardhan Bhatia, Director of Sidewalk Cafe, recently organised a matcha rave. Noticing the viral popularity of coffee raves, he sought to create something fresh while connecting more deeply with young audiences. "Matcha itself has been gaining cult popularity among Gen Z for its clean, vibrant, and health-conscious appeal. Bringing rave energy and matcha culture together, we knew we had something special on our hands," he told indianexpress.com. The response exceeded expectations. "Within just one hour of the event details going live, we had over 150 entries. The buzz it created, both online and on-ground, was a clear sign that we had tapped into something Gen Z truly resonated with," Bhatia said. Unlike conventional nightlife, food raves combine taste, health, and culture in one moment. "It is fun, but with a thoughtful twist – exactly what defines Gen Z today," he added. For Divya Jain, who attended the matcha rave, it was all about the vibes. "It was a two-hour event. There was a dress code – we all wore white – and the music was amazing. Plus, matcha is trending, so everyone wants to try it nowadays! It was a completely different experience," she said. Food raves and immersive dining experiences are not just a passing trend; they are reshaping how young audiences engage with eating out. Between viral matcha pop-ups and themed events, people are recognising food's potential as a social experience that goes beyond the table. The game has changed, and party trends are evol-

Dr Reddy's, Zydus Lifesciences recall medicines from US market over quality issues

New Delhi: Two major Indian pharmaceutical companies, Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Zydus Lifesciences, are recalling certain medicines from the US market due to manufacturing issues, the US health regulator has said.

According to the latest enforcement report by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), an American subsidiary of Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's is recalling 571 vials of Succinylcholine Chloride Injection, a medicine used to relax muscles. The recall was initiated on September 26 after the USFDA reported an "out-of-specification result during six-month stability testing."

Behind the rise and rise of armless archer Sheetal Devi: Lifting dumbbells with toes, improvised trigger and clay to strengthen grip



GNS News Agency, March 1

There's no shortage of stories about Sheetal Devi's ingenuity, but Aalaap Jawadekar likes to begin with one from the Paris Paralympics. One afternoon inside the Athletes' Village, the physiotherapist found himself locked out of the sports science office – keys in hand, door refusing to budge. That's when Sheetal Devi walked in. Without hesitation, she took the keys, missed once, then again, and finally, with disarming calm, turned the lock open – using her toes. Jawadekar still marvels at the moment. "The more you think she can't do something," he says, "the more she'll prove you wrong." Born without arms, there's little Sheetal can't do. She eats and writes with her toes, once climbed trees with ease, and now shoots arrows with them.

Defying physics, the 18-year-old is stepping into uncharted territory for an Indian athlete. Last week, she finished third among 60 archers in the compound women's trials for next month's Asia Cup in Jeddah. In doing so, Sheetal became the first Indian para archer to earn a spot on the able-bodied national team, a feat forged through natural core strength, frugal innovation and cutting-edge sports science. Until four years ago, when archery coach Kuldeep Vedwan first took her under his wings, there wasn't even a mechanism in India that would enable her to shoot, let alone hit the bullseye. "She asked me, 'Even if I lift the bow with my legs, how will I let the arrow fly?'" Vedwan said. The moment he saw her, he had a plan. The veteran coach had seen how the OG armless archer, USA's Matt Stutzman, released the arrows with the help of a release aid. Able-bodied compound archers wear a strap that goes around their wrists and has a trigger, similar to a rifle. The moment the trigger is pulled with their fingers, the arrow is released. Stutzman improvised this technique. He first wrapped a strap around his chest. The strap had a release aid positioned over his right shoulder, and he used it to hook onto the bow string. He then used his jaw to push the

release aid's trigger, letting the arrow fly. "He designed this all by himself. I studied the equipment and made a similar one for Sheetal," Vedwan says. "There was no other way for her to shoot an arrow." However, Sheetal developed a wound on her chin because of the relentless pressure. "The chin is not used to that kind of load since it has a softer muscle structure," explains Sheetal's physiotherapist, Ayushi Tomer. "So, whenever she shot, she would get hurt. Because of the pressure, the recoil used to hit the chin, and it really pained a lot." It begins with the teenager using her legs to load an arrow and lifting the 53-pound bow with her toe and the second digit, before letting it fly in one seamless motion. Many muscles are in play simultaneously – the right leg first goes up to lift the arrow, then the bow; the hip movement as she draws the arrow; the slight movement of the shoulder to get the release aid closer to the chin; and then applying slight pressure to release the aid's trigger.

"If everything moves as a log, then you can't really differentiate between those tiny movements," says Jawadekar. "So, there is a lot of isolation required between your trunk, hips and feet. That's where the accuracy element also comes in." Anukool Bharadwaj, head of the Paralympic programme at OGC, who look after Sheetal's day-to-day training, says 'a lot of what she does comes from her natural strength.' "But she has also built up her power through strength training. She's far stronger now than she was four years ago," he adds. One unlikely exercise involves clay – a tool borrowed from shooting to refine control. "In shooting, it helps manage trigger pressure," explains Tomer, who has trained her for two years. "I knew it would help her steady the bow." The first day Sheetal was given clay to work with, she made a snake out of it. "She is constantly making one thing or another with it," laughs Tomer. "Even now, I make sure she carries it whenever she travels... it is simply holding the clay and putting consistent pressure on it, even if we are moving the leg. Because if there is a slight change in the pressure, it could have an impact on the actual shot." The trainers improvised on many fronts to make her strong, but Jawadekar says he is still left jaw-dropped watching Sheetal pull off some of the exercises. Like the time when she sits on a bench, lifts a 5kg dumbbell, and stretches her toes. "Imagine her sitting on a stool and holding a bow; in that exact position, she holds a 5kg dumbbell with her feet; she actually grips it between the toe and the second digit," Jawadekar says. "First of all, it is tough to straighten the knee and then, your body shakes... but she does it with ease. It's insane how she manages to hold it for like a good 2-3 minutes. It's impossible!"

Sunil Chhetri, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu issue plea to take Indian football out of 'dark tunnel'



GNS News Agency, March 1

As the impasse surrounding the Indian Super League continues, and India's top football league continues to be suspended, India's top footballers like Sunil Chhetri, Sandesh Jhingan and Gurpreet Singh Sandhu posted an impassioned plea on social media urging "those involved in running our sport in the country, to do whatever it takes to get the football season underway". The ISL typically begins in September. But right now, there is no clarity on when it will begin, with the league already having missed two months of its regular calendar. This has led to some teams suspending operations. Many top footballers have been without competitive football for months. There are reports that even train-

ing schedules and salary payments have been disrupted.

"We, professional footballers who play in the Indian Super League, are coming together to make a plea and, more importantly, to send the message that we stand united in our efforts to get the Indian Super League season underway. To put it simply, we want to play and now," footballers like Chhetri and Sandhu wrote in a joint statement they posted on their social media handles. "Our anger, frustration and distress has now been replaced by desperation. Desperation to play the game we love, in front of people who mean everything to us, our families, our fans. This is a plea to all those involved in running our sport in the country, to do whatever it takes to get the football season underway. India needs its competitive football now more than ever," the statement read. "As for us, we remain committed, professional and ready to walk out of that tunnel and onto the pitch the moment we're told we can. All we ask of those running our beautiful game, to match our desperation with honest intent. We've found ourselves in a very dark tunnel for long. We could do with a little light." Sharing the statement on his Instagram handle, Chhetri wrote: "We're all standing shoulder to shoulder, willing to do whatever it takes to resurrect the sport we love." Sandhu's message read, "We find ourselves in the midst of our hardest challenge yet. And yet, all we can do at this point is plead."

IND vs SA 1st Test: 'No rank turner request from India at Eden Gardens,' says Sourav Ganguly



GNS News Agency, March 1

Since their ignominious whitewash series defeat at the hands of New Zealand a year ago at home, India will be gearing up for their first stern test at home in the fresh ICC World Test Championship cycle, starting Friday at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, facing South Africa. The reigning WTC champions enter the series after a fine campaign in Pakistan, levelling a two-match series 1-1 even without regular captain Temba Bavuma. Despite a successful thumping of the West Indies at home last month, it remains evident that tackling high-quality spin at home has been difficult even for the senior India batters. South Africa pose three quality spinners in the Test squad in Keshav Maharaj, Simon Harmer and Senuran Muthusamy, and India will be wary of the nature of pitches they opt for in Kolkata and Guwahati, which will host its maiden Test later this month. Gambhir satisfied with Eden pitch preps

Former India captain and Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) president Sourav Ganguly on Monday confirmed to reporters that Shubman Gill & Co. have not requested a turning track with the venue's chief curator, even hinting that head coach Gautam Gambhir was pleased about the nature of the pitch upon his first inspection. "Well, they haven't asked for it (rank turner) yet. So, I won't be able to answer the question. It looks like a very good one," Ganguly was

quoted as saying by PTI. The Eden Gardens tracks have been slow and offered minimal help to fast bowlers in the two Ranji Trophy matches played there this season. Despite not being watered since Saturday, the pitch's preparation satisfied CAB curator Sujan Mukherjee, who noted that head coach Gambhir was also "happy to see the wicket" during his inspection. Mukherjee further revealed that when the coach asked when the track might favour spinners, he indicated that turn was expected "from day three." "It's going to be a good sporting wicket with help for both batters and bowlers. There will be assistance on offer for the spinners as well, and that can happen early as well," Mukherjee said. The iconic Kolkata venue will host its first Test in six years since India's day-night fixture against Bangladesh in November 2019. Ganguly reported encouraging ticket sales for the first three days, stating, "Thirty-four thousand priced tickets have been sold out as we expect a good turnout."

Andhra Pradesh seal victory over Tamil Nadu in Ranji Trophy, Rasheed's unbeaten 87 the highlight

New Delhi: Former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin urged Tamil Nadu selectors to pick a 'role-specific' squad following their four-wicket loss to Andhra Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy Group A clash on Monday. "Tamil Nadu go down to Andhra, Shaikh Rasheed's first innings knock definitely made the difference. It's been a tough season so far for TN, hope the white-ball leg brings some relief," Ashwin wrote on X.

"We have some good young talent and hope the selections can be role-specific, rather than being volume-specific." Tamil Nadu batters failed miserably in both innings and could only manage totals of 182 & 195 in Visakhapatnam.

'Sanju Samson will not get captaincy with CSK trade': Leaving out Ravindra Jadeja a 'big decision' for Chennai, says R Ashwin



GNS News Agency, March 1

Sanju Samson could plug multiple holes for the Chennai Super Kings with a successful trade, but the Kerala star cannot expect captaincy straightaway, felt his former Rajasthan Royals teammate, R Ashwin. Ashwin, who retired from the IPL after his last stint with CSK in August this year, also said that CSK's decision to potentially trade spin legend Ravindra Jadeja is a huge call by the franchise. "I don't think Sanju will get captaincy at CSK because it would be his first year and I am not sure they will give him captaincy right away. But he will definitely be an option to lead in the future if the trade happens," Ashwin said on 'Ash ki Baat'.

Ashwin added that Samson's inclusion will fill a gap in the CSK top order. Since MS Dhoni relinquished the captaincy role, CSK have handed over the reins to Ruturaj

Gaikwad. However, when Gaikwad was out injured early in the IPL 2025 season, Dhoni reprised his role as the talisman of the five-time champions. With CSK pursuing the Samson trade with keen interest, it is all but confirmed that the upcoming edition will be the last for the 44-year-old Dhoni in a professional playing capacity. "CSK also benefit by plugging that gap in the top order. Ayush and Sanju can open, Ruturaj can come at three, which is what he has been wanting to do. That gives them balance. But the loss would be that from where they will bring another spinner? Who is going to be that spinner who they will bank upon to bowl the middle overs? Who is that gun marquee fielder for them? Finishing is the issue," he added. "One thing in the fans' minds will be Jadeja's affinity for CSK. Jadeja is no small player for CSK. There is some emotion attached to Jadeja and CSK. And trading is not something they have done in the past. This could also be a good opportunity for Jadeja. RR is a team built on a lot of youngsters and a lot of connections. It is a big decision for CSK to leave Jadeja out," he said. Ashwin, however, remarked that Samson could benefit with a move to the Delhi Capitals, his former franchise, with better wickets at play at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. "Everyone knows that Sanju Samson wants to leave Rajasthan. Other franchises will be interested for his skill and talent and also that it weakens the other side. From my view, Tristan Stubbs and Sameer Rizvi for Samson in Delhi was very close to completion but it did not happen. It made sense for Delhi and the wicket was good for batting there so it was best for Samson. If you score more in the IPL you are in the limelight. This trade would be have made more sense for Sanju. It was a good deal for RR as well as they had troubles in finishing," he added.

Still recovering from freak injury, Shreyas Iyer doubtful for South Africa ODIs

GNS News Agency, March 1

Indian vice-captain Shreyas Iyer's participation in the upcoming three-match ODI series against South Africa starting November 30 remains under doubt. Post the two Test matches starting November 14, India will play three ODIs at Ranchi, Raipur and Visakhapatnam. The Indian Express understands that Iyer, who returned home from Australia recently, is still recovering from the injury he suffered and needs more time to be fit to play international cricket. The selection committee has been informed about Iyer's status and as per medical reports needs nearly more than a month to be match fit. "He will take more time to be fully match fit and the board and selection committee doesn't want to rush after his injury. He is doubtful for the South Africa ODI series," a source in the Indian board confirmed. A source explained that Iyer's oxygen had dropped to 50 and for ten minutes he wasn't able to stand properly. There was a complete black out around him and it took him some time to come back to normal.

The Mumbai batsman was discharged from the hospital last week after sustaining an injury during the 3rd ODI between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Iyer, while taking a diving catch to dismiss Alex Carey, had injured himself when he fell to the ground. He was admitted to a Sydney hospital for a laceration of the spleen with internal bleeding. "He is now stable and recovering well. The BCCI Medical Team, along with specialists in Sydney and India, are pleased with his recovery, and he has been discharged



from the hospital today," the BCCI had stated earlier in a press release. "The BCCI extends its heartfelt gratitude to Dr Kouroush Haghigi and his team in Sydney, along with Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala in India, for ensuring Shreyas received the best treatment for his injury. Shreyas will continue to stay in Sydney for follow-up consultations and will return to India once he is deemed fit to fly," the note further added. Later, Iyer also put out a message on his social media handles. "I'm currently in the recovery process and getting better every passing day. I'm deeply grateful to see all the kind wishes and support I've received - it truly means a lot.

Thank you for keeping me in your thoughts," Iyer posted. The 30-year-old played two innings on the tour, scoring 11 and 68 in Perth and Adelaide, respectively in the ODI series. Iyer's career has been marred by injuries for quite some time now. The Indian middle-order batsman had earlier written to the BCCI that he will be taking a 'break from red ball cricket' for some time due to stiffness and fatigue issues in his back. The board had accepted his request.

No time for tests, Germany have only World Cup qualification in sight, coach Julian Nagelsmann says



GNS News Agency, March 1

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann is in no mood to test anything in their remaining World Cup qualifiers and only wants to secure two wins that will punch their ticket for next year's tournament. The Germans, who travel to Luxembourg on Friday before hosting Slovakia on November 17, will secure top spot in Group A and automatic qualification to next year's World Cup with two wins in their final two matches.

"We want to have a good balance (in the squad)," Nagelsmann told a press conference on Monday. "We want to cover every position double. The most important thing is... to be successful at these games, get the six points and qualify for the World Cup." "We do not depend on other results, only rely on our team's performances. It is a good starting spot but we still have to make it successful." Nagelsmann raised some eyebrows by ignoring VfB Stuttgart midfielder Angelo Stiller, but said the door for the 24-year-old, who has five caps, was not closed for next year's tournament. "I talked to Angelo. His development is going in the right direction," Nagelsmann said. "But on the six position with Felix Nmecha and Aleksandar Pavlovic, I see them slightly ahead at the moment. Angelo needs to continue his rising form. In March there is a new squad nomination. The door is not closed." Nagelsmann had to replace Nadiem Amiri on Monday with the Mainz 05 player nursing an adductor muscle problem. Germany youth international Assan Ouedraogo received a late call-up to replace him. Germany are in top spot in their group on nine points, ahead of second-placed Slovakia on goal difference. Northern Ireland are third on six, with Luxembourg last without any points. The group winner earns automatic World Cup qualification while the second-placed team goes into a playoff in March 2026. The Germans — four-time world champions — are desperate for a deep tournament run and have set their sights on winning the trophy at the

World Cup, co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, after their disappointing first round exits in the last two editions. "We don't have the luxury of another slip-up," Nagelsmann said when asked about their surprise 2-0 loss to Slovakia in September. Germany have since won their next three qualifiers. "We have improved, as I said, the starting conditions... but still need to complete the task."

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

Cairo: Double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker and multiple Asian Games medallist Esha Singh suffered a setback in the women's 10m air pistol final, as India's top two shooters failed to win a medal in the ISSF World Championships here on Monday. Manu, who won individual and mixed team bronze in 10m air pistol at the Paris Olympics, was leading during the final before a poor 8.8 on her 14th shot saw her drop from the top spot to seventh. She finished with a score of 139.5. Esha, who recently won World Cup gold in Ningbo, China, also failed to convert her promising start into a medal. Inconsistent shots and nerves got the better of her. After a superb 10.7, the 20-year-old faltered with an 8.4 on her 14th shot, finishing sixth in the eight-shooter final. China's 20-year-old Yao Qianxun claimed the biggest medal of her young career with an excellent score of 243.0. Hong Kong's Heo Ching Shing (241.2) and Wei Qian (China, 221.4) took the silver and bronze medals, respectively. India earned some consolation with a team silver. Esha (583), Manu (580), and Suruchi Inder Singh (577) aggregated 1740 points to finish second. Both Esha and Manu entered the final after strong performances in the qualification rounds. Esha, who became the youngest-ever national champion in air pistol at the age of 13 and represented India in the women's 25m pistol at the Paris Olympics, shot superbly to finish in fourth place in the qualification round with a score of 583. She even recorded a rare perfect-100 in the third series to enter the final with confidence.

Shashi Tharoor responds to 'paid review' claim after he calls Ba***ds of Bollywood 'OTT gold': 'I'm not for sale'



Shashi Tharoor defends his high praise for The Ba***ds of Bollywood. Shashi Tharoor defends his high praise for The Ba***ds of Bollywood. Congress Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor recently enjoyed quality time off from his busy life by watching The Ba***ds of Bollywood, the directorial debut of Shah Rukh Khan's elder son Aryan Khan, on Netflix India. He heaped praises on the show on X, claiming it's "OTT gold" and "one of the best things" he has ever treated himself to. Trolls were quick to question Tharoor's authenticity as one of them commented on his long tweet, "Shashi Tharoor new side business... Paid reviews!!" Tharoor responded to the tweet a day later and wrote, "I'm not for sale, my friend. No opinion I express has ever been paid for by anybody, in cash or in kind." He also disabled the comment section of his reply, avoiding any more exchanges with the troll. Tharoor took to his X

handle on Sunday and revealed that since he's battling cold and cough, which forced him to cancel all his engagements for two days. He was recommended The Ba***ds of Bollywood by his staff and his sister and motivational speaker Smita Tharoor. "I'm left grasping for words of praise. It takes time to grow on you, but then you're irresistibly hooked," wrote Tharoor.

"The writing is sharp, the direction is fearless, and the sheer audacity of this satire is just what Bollywood needed. A genius, often hilarious, sometimes moving, and always unflinching look beyond the glamour, sending up every cinematic cliché with razor-like wit — and a series of insider jokes that let the audience into the act & behind the scenes," he added. He then lauded Aryan and congratulated Shah Rukh. "The seven compelling episodes mark the arrival of a true storytelling powerhouse. Take a bow, Aryan Khan — you've delivered a masterpiece: 'The Ba***ds of Bollywood' is brilliant," wrote Tharoor, adding, "@iamsrk: from one father to another, let me say: you must be so proud!!" While Shah Rukh is yet to respond to Tharoor's wishes, it was only a couple of months ago that they shared a memorable exchange on X. Tharoor congratulated Shah Rukh on winning the National Award for Best Actor for Atlee's 2023 blockbuster action thriller Jawan by tweeting, "A National Treasure wins a National Award! Congratulations @iamsrk!" Shah Rukh responded to Tharoor's wish with his signature wit and charm.

Thank u for the simple praise Mr Tharoor... would not have understood something more magniloquent and sesquipedalian... ha ha," he wrote, taking a dig at Tharoor's infamous tendency to use complex words in his routine conversations in person and on social media. Tharoor has never shied away from giving shoutouts to Shah Rukh on X. Back in 2019, Tharoor shared a picture of him with a cutout of Shah Rukh and revealed that the room in a Munnar hotel that he's staying in is dedicated to the superstar since the latter stayed there while filming Rohit Shetty's 2013 hit romantic comedy

Emraan Hashmi reveals few stars come on time in Bollywood; some don't even turn up and cancel shoot: 'Don't want to work on someone else's clock'

Emraan Hashmi and Yami Gautam are all set to share the screen for the first time in Suparn Varma's upcoming courtroom drama Haq. In a recent interaction, the Aashiq Banaya Aapne actor opened up about his experience working with Yami, describing it as "easy and breezy." The reason, he explained, was that unlike many others in the industry, Yami is punctual and straightforward in her approach. Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter, Emraan said, "She is one of those few actresses who come on time like me, so there was no problem there." When asked if actors still tend to show up late to shoots, Emraan quipped, "Kuch log toh aate bhi nahi hain (some people don't even turn up). They just call the shoot off."

Emraan further admitted that at this stage of his career, he has little patience for such unprofessionalism. "I want to work with people with whom I am enjoying the process. Where you don't have to think about it, it dissipates your energy. You are working according to someone else's clock," he said. The makers recently unveiled the trailer of Haq, which is inspired by the historic Supreme Court case of Mohd Ahmed Khan vs Shah Bano Begum. The case redefined India's conversation around women's rights and personal law. In the trailer, Yami is seen playing Shazia Bano, a fiery lawyer who takes on a high-stakes legal battle against her husband Abbas, played by Emraan Hashmi, after he divorces her through triple talaq. Yami's character is a fictionalised version of Shah Bano, representing her struggle and resilience. Directed by Suparn S Varma, the film also



features Vartika Singh, Danish Husain, Sheeba Chadha, and Aseem Hattangady in pivotal roles. The screenplay and dialogues are written by Reshu Nath, while the music is composed by Vishal Mishra. Cinematography is helmed by Pratham Mehta. Haq is slated to release in theatres on November 7. Yami was last seen earlier this year in Dhoom Dhaam alongside Pratik Gandhi, which received mixed reviews. Emraan, meanwhile, grabbed attention with his cameo appearance in Aryan Khan's directorial debut, The Ba***ds of Bollywood.

Rishab Shetty's actioner was made at Rs 125 cr, earned Rs 813 cr as it emerged as 2025's highest grosser



On Monday, which marked its 26th day in theatres, Kantara 2 recorded an India nett collection of Rs 2.92 crore, according to early estimates by industry tracker Sacnilk, thus taking its total domestic earnings to Rs 592.52 crore.

Kantara Chapter 1 (Kantara 2) Box Office Collection Worldwide Day 26: Mounted on a reported budget of Rs 125 crore, the Rishab Shetty film has grossed Rs 813 crore so far and continues its successful run in theatres. Kantara 2 Worldwide Box Office Collection: The Rishab Shetty action drama currently ranks as the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025. Kantara Chapter 1 Box Office Collection Day 26: And just like that, actor-director Rishab Shetty's epic action drama Kantara: Chapter 1 has emerged as the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025, dethroning director Laxman Utekar's Vicky Kaushal-starrer Chhaava and putting Kannada cinema back on the map. Mounted on a reported budget of Rs 125 crore, the movie has grossed Rs 813 crore so far and continues its successful run in theatres despite it being four weeks since the film's release.

On Monday, which marked its 26th day in theatres, Kantara 2 recorded an India nett collection of Rs 2.92

crore, according to early estimates by industry tracker Sacnilk, thus taking its total domestic earnings to Rs 592.52 crore. Although the movie has been performing weaker than Chhaava during the corresponding period — the Vicky Kaushal-starrer had earned Rs 5.25 crore on its fourth Monday — Kantara 2 is likely to surpass it in terms of India nett collections in the coming days. Chhaava ended its theatrical run with domestic earnings of Rs 601.54 crore. However, as the movie gears up for its OTT release, it remains to be seen if Kantara 2 manages to cross the Rs 850 crore mark, let alone surpass Stree 2's worldwide gross of Rs 857.15 crore. Nonetheless, the Rishab Shetty-starrer has managed to smash a few box office records.

Here are all the records broken by Kantara 2: "In a massive feat, Kantara 2 has emerged as the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025, beating Chhaava, which earned Rs 807.91 crore during its theatrical run." Currently, Kantara 2 ranks second on the list of Indian movies of 2025 with the highest domestic nett collection. While it has already surpassed Saiyaara (Rs 329.72 crore), the action drama is trailing behind Chhaava (Rs 601.54 crore) at the moment. "Reportedly, Kantara 2 has also become only the 14th Indian movie to enter the elite Rs 800 crore club. It currently ranks below Stree 2 (Rs 857.15 crore) on the list." It also registered the third-highest single-day collection (Rs 61.85 crore) of 2025, behind only Rajinikanth's Coolie (Rs 65 crore) and Pawan Kalyan's They Call Him OG (Rs 63.75 crore). "As it continued its successful run at the box office, Kantara 2 also crossed the 10 million ticket mark on BookMyShow, becoming one of the few Indian movies to do so." Kantara 2 has also emerged as the second-highest-grossing Kannada film of all time, dethroning its predecessor Kantara (2022), which earned Rs 407.82 crore worldwide during its theatrical run. It is currently trailing behind KGF: Chapter 2 (Rs 1,215 crore). Kantara 2 is also only the fourth Kannada film to cross the Rs 200 crore mark worldwide. The first movie to ever achieve this feat was KGF: Chapter 1 (Rs 238 crore).

Ayushmann Khurrana, Rashmika Mandanna film sees 65% drop, needs Rs 4.45 cr to enter Rs 100 cr club



Thamma box office collection day 7: Aditya Sarpotdar's vampire comedy Thamma, starring Ayushmann Khurrana and Rashmika Mandanna, was expected to enter the Rs 100 crore club at least by the end of the opening week. However, the film is still Rs 4.45 crore shy of hitting that milestone, thanks to a major decline in its numbers on the first Monday, its seventh day at the domestic box office. On Monday (day 7), Thamma slipped down to its lowest single-day earnings yet. It garnered only Rs 4.25 crore, which was a massive fall from its Sunday (day 6) earnings of Rs 12.60 crore. That was a slight decline from the Saturday (day 5) collection of Rs 13.10 crore, a significant rise from its earnings on Friday (day 4) at Rs 10 crore. Prior to that, Thamma benefitted from the Diwali festivities, minting Rs 13 crore on Thursday (day 3) on the occasion of Bhai Dooj, Rs 18.60 crore

on the occasion of Govardhan Pooja, and its highest single-day earnings at Rs 24 crore on the opening day right after Diwali. As per Sacnilk, the total opening week box office collection of the film in India stands at Rs 95.55 crore. While Thamma released both in the original Hindi version and a dubbed Telugu version, the latter could contribute only Rs 80 lakh to the total haul. In comparison, the previous instalment in Dinesh Vijan and Amar Kaushik's Maddock Horror Comedy Universe — Stree 2 — entered the Rs 100 crore club in less than four days and went on to become Hindi cinema's highest grosser in India, bordering on the coveted Rs 600 crore milestone. While Thamma has surpassed the first two instalments of the MHCU — Kaushik's Stree (2018) and Bhediya (2022) — it's yet to surpass the lifetime domestic box office earnings of Sarpotdar's Munjya last year, which crossed the Rs 100 crore mark despite not boasting of any stars, although after a six-week run. However, after the historic performance of Stree 2, and given the traditionally lucrative window of Diwali, the expectations from Thamma were much higher. In comparison, the other smaller release of Diwali — Milap Zaveri's romantic drama Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat — has earned less than half of Thamma. Starring Harshvardhan Rane and Sonam Bajwa, the film has collected Rs 44.85 crore so far. However, its earnings on Monday (day 7) came quite close to that of Thamma (Rs 4.25 crore) at Rs 3.35 crore. Thamma still has a good 10 days before it encounters any major competition. Next week, on November 7, Suparn Verma's thriller Haq, starring Emraan Hashmi and Yami Gautam, is all set to hit the cinemas. This week is sans competition, barring Nachiket Samant's romantic comedy Single Salma, starring Huma Qureshi, which barely has any buzz, unless it turns out to be a dark horse like Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat.

'Aamir Khan helped us find IVF doctor, hosted Jwala Gutta for 10 months at his home,' says Vishnu Vishal on why he asked actor to name their daughter

Aamir Khan has played the saviour in many of his films, but Tamil actor Vishnu Vishal recently revealed how the superstar turned into one in real life for him and his wife, Indian badminton player Jwala Gutta. The actor not only stood by them during their most difficult phase but also played a special role in their happiness — by naming their newborn daughter, Mira. In a recent interaction with Hindustan Times, Vishnu shared the heartwarming story of how Aamir came to name their baby and why he holds a special place in their lives.

Vishnu and Aamir have known each other for years. Their friendship began in 2023 when Aamir's mother, Zeenat Hussain, had to undergo medical treatment in Chennai. At that time, Aamir reached out to Vishnu to help find a homestay for his family. Recalling how their friendship began, Vishnu said, "He was in production for a movie then, and they needed me to find a home stay instead of a hotel for 2-3 months so his team would find enough space to work. I remember arranging villas for them to stay, and we became friends from there." However, their bond grew even deeper when Aamir stepped in to help Vishnu and Jwala during one of the most emotional chapters of their lives. Vishnu, who calls Aamir "the greatest gift God has given" him, revealed that the couple had struggled to conceive and had almost decided to adopt a child. That's when Aamir came to their rescue and recommended a fertility specialist in Mumbai. He said, "He helped us find a good doctor in Mumbai for IVF treatment for Jwala. And when she became pregnant, it made us very emotional because she had almost given up... I brought back joy into our lives. He treated us like nothing less than family."



Aamir's support didn't end there. He also hosted Jwala at his Mumbai home during her pregnancy. Vishnu shared how the Khan family personally took care of her for months, making them feel completely at home. "Jwala was in Mumbai with his family for almost ten months, and his mom and sister took care of her personally. They treated her so well. That bond has now evolved into a close friendship," he said. Given the pivotal role Aamir played in their journey to parenthood, the couple felt it was only fitting that he name their daughter. Vishnu recalled, "When Jwala became pregnant, I told Aamir he should be the one to name our baby, because he was the one to give us hope." The superstar later attended the couple's naming ceremony and named their baby girl Mira.

Baseer Ali accuses Salman Khan and Bigg Boss makers of bias; challenges Awez Darbar: 'There was no guidance given to me'

Reality show star Baseer Ali made a strong impression with his performance on Bigg Boss 19. However, in a surprising turn of events, he was evicted from the show on Sunday. While he refuses to believe that he received fewer votes, Baseer expressed disappointment over several aspects of his Bigg Boss 19 journey. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, the reality star accused Salman Khan and the show's makers of bias. He also slammed Awez Darbar for the allegations made against him and addressed the rumours surrounding his alleged love angle with Nehal Chudasama. While Baseer Ali was widely expected to reach the finale of Bigg Boss 19, his eviction came as a shock. Speaking about it, he said, "I have learnt the art of acceptance due to the experience from the reality shows I have been a part of. Bigg Boss has taught me a lot. When I got evicted, I was in disbelief for a fraction of a second. The day I was evicted, when I woke up, the house where I spent 63 days felt different. I took it as a sign from God. When I was evicted, I just walked out with a smile."

Sharing his thoughts on being labelled 'fake' by his fellow housemates, Baseer said, "For me to fake it on my 5th reality show is a joke. The audience that has been supporting me has been a part of my life since the first show. If I was faking it, trying to put up an accent, or a persona, I would have been called out on the first day. It was too much for the people inside the house to take my strong personality; it was their shortcoming. I got the role in Kundali Bhagya because I was that extra guy. It was too much for people to deal with my personality. I knew that was happening as I had experienced it earlier, too. But I was happy to see I was a topic of discussion in every corner. They were like my personal PRs in the house." Ever since Baseer Ali's eviction, netizens have blamed his friendships with Amaal Mallik and Nehal Chudasama for it, saying, "Baseer ko dosti le doobi." Reacting to this, the Bigg Boss 19 contestant said, "I was reading a few comments like how Amaal and Nehal's friendship backfired for me. But I don't think I can blame anybody for that. I chose to be friends with them; it was my decision. People might not have liked Amaal for the things he did or said. They didn't like Nehal for the same reasons. I just stood by them and guided them when they went wrong. If that's the reason I got evicted, then it is a very mean world."

Baseer Ali also revealed that he has sorted out his issues with Zeishan Quadri. "Zeishan Quadri was the first person I spoke to after coming out of the show. We laughed about a lot of things, but he did share that he saw a clip where Amaal said we would form a new group, and I agreed. Around this time, I was the only one left out while they all started hanging out, so I was hurt. Amaal went and told Zeishan that I spoke about him behind his back. I am glad. Zeishan bhai is not a child; he has a strong mind. We spoke and we moved on. We will stay friends for the rest of our lives. Another person who will be a friend is Natalia Janoszek. You will get to see a lot of us in the real world."

Talking about being accused of creating a fake love angle with Nehal Chudasama, Baseer said, "I was very clear that we are just friends. That was enough for people to believe that it was how I wanted it to look. What line did we cross to be called lovers? People are giving Shehbaz feet massages, head massages, pressing his hands the whole time. Is he sleeping with them or doing anything obnoxious? No. Whatever I was doing with Nehal was healthy; nothing crossed the line of friendship. Housemates perceived it as a love angle. Makers put clips of me just lying in her lap in the last few weeks. Do you think I was constantly just doing that? No, we were doing a lot more; that was not shown. When makers have control of the content, they will show what they like and that is what the audience will believe."

During his time on the show, Baseer Ali shared a strong rivalry with Awez Darbar, with both trading accusations against each other. Following his eviction, Awez reportedly threatened Baseer's PR team, warning that he would expose his secrets publicly. Reacting to Awez's behaviour, Baseer said, "Awez is absolutely unimportant to me. He had a very fragile barrier that was broken constantly by people like me. If he didn't get to hear what he liked... He was very image-conscious; had a fragile ego. I think he was in the wrong place. Bigg Boss was definitely not for him. I wish him all the luck, but he should never be found on another reality show. I was man enough to put it all behind, but others will stomp him and walk over."