

INDIAN CHRONICLE

30 March, 2026|Monday | Volume No:14| Issue No:42 Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Efforts Needed to Realize the Ideals of Dr. A.S. Rao Grand Felicitation for Gaddar Award Winning Documentary

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 29 (Indian chronicle):"Kapra: Speakers at a felicitation event stressed the need for collective efforts to realize the ideals of Dr. A.S. Rao. The event was organized to celebrate the documentary on his life receiving the prestigious Gaddar Award. The program was held on Saturday night at Dr. Homi J. Bhabha Community Hall in AS Rao Nagar. K. Eswarayya, in charge of AS Rao Nagar Housing Society, and S. Vinay Kumar, President of Dasharathi Theatre, spoke on the occasion and said that the life and ideals of Dr. A.S. Rao continue to inspire society. They said the documentary was made based on real life events to present his contributions to a wider audience. Receiving the Gaddar Award from Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was described as a proud moment. Dr. A.S. Rao, founder of ECIL, was praised for his major contributions to the electronics sector and for strengthening the country's technological growth. Former corporator Kotta Ramarao said that the establishment of ECIL in Hyderabad created employment for thousands of families. Despite holding high positions, Dr. A.S. Rao lived a simple life and remained an example for future generations. He was also credited with guiding many young engineers in the field of electronics. The documentary was screened during the event. Artists and members of the film team were felicitated and presented with mementos. The program was conducted under the leadership of G. Yadagiri Rao. Those present included Dasharathi Theatre Vice President Bhoopathi Venkateswarlu, P.B. Chari, former ECIL employee and close associate V.K. Prem Chand, director U. Raghuram Chandra, executive producer BDL Satyanarayana, and others.

Annapurna Colony Committee Hall Inaugurated in Boduppall Division

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 29 (Indian chronicle):"Boduppall: A new committee hall in Annapurna Colony, located in the Boduppall Division of Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation, was inaugurated by Congress leader and Medchal-Malkajgiri District Congress President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav, along with several party leaders and local representatives. The project was taken up as part of development initiatives in the Medchal constituency, following directions from Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and with the support of District In-charge Minister Sridhar Babu. A special fund of 10 crore rupees was sanctioned for the constituency, out of which 20 lakh rupees was allocated for the construction of the Annapurna Colony Committee Hall in the 13th Division of Boduppall Municipal Corporation. Speaking at the event, Vajresh Yadav stated that the government is committed to the development of Boduppall and assured that more infrastructure projects will be taken up in the future. He also urged residents to make effective use of the newly constructed community hall. Senior leaders and local representatives, including Rapolu Ramulu, former corporators Dana Galla Anitha Yadagiri, Kumbham Kiran Kumar Reddy, Rasala Venkatesh Yadav, Podduturi Venkatesh Gupta, Jakka Ramulu, Satyanarayana Yadav, Thotakura Ravinder Yadav, and Saini Amrutham, were present at the event. A large number of local residents also participated in the event.



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM., March 29

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday unleashed a scathing attack on the CPM led LDF and Congress-led UDF, calling these political formations extremely corrupt and communal and claiming that they both work only for creating vote banks.

Addressing his first election rally in Kerala at the Fort Maidan in Palakkad, Modi said these days both the Communists and the Congress are accusing each other of being the "B" team of the BJP. "One thing is

We Will form Next Govt in Kerala, Says Modi in NDA Rally

clear. They both have agreed that the BJP is the "A" team in Kerala.

He said Kerala has been caught between the LDF and UDF for decades. "One is corrupt and the other is extremely corrupt, one communal and the other extremely communal. The policies of the LDF and UDF are only aimed at creating vote banks, with no concern for Kerala's development. I assure you if the NDA BJP government comes to power, we will carry out fast-paced development of Kerala and turn it into a Viksit Kerala. This is Modi's guarantee," he said.

Modi said LDF and UDF have looted Kerala for decades. "There's a practical understanding; some years the LDF will run the government and fill their pockets, then the UDF will take over and do the same," he said.

He said that in Kerala, both the LDF and UDF are targeting the BJP. This means these two corrupt fronts fear the BJP because they believe that if it comes to power, it will expose all their wrongdoings. For decades, LDF and UDF have been involved in major scams, yet the governments here have never taken action against each other.

"Instead, they make false statements before the public. If a BJP government is formed, all corrupt deals of the LDF and UDF will be thoroughly investigated, bringing justice to the people of Kerala. That's why these two alliances oppose the formation of a BJP govern-

ment and fear the massive support it has among the people," he said.

Left - Congress fights in Kerala, but in alliance elsewhere in the country

Modi said the Congress and Left have alliances across the country, including in Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, and Assam. Congress and the Communists are part of the Indi Alliance. They were in alliance at the Centre earlier, now they are together; in Tamil Nadu. However, in Kerala, Congress and the Left pretend to attack each other with fake criticisms. People of Kerala should be aware of these two fronts, he said.

The Prime Minister said Kerala is having a completely different atmosphere this time. "Keralam is giving a message of change. The increasing popularity of NDA, the growing faith of people in BJP, and today's enthusiasm and support, and the massive presence in Palakkad show that Keralam's mood has turned into a movement. Kerala's youth believe that BJP and NDA will work for farmers, women, and all sections of society," he said.

He said the Kerala people's blessings are behind this change, along with the hard work of lakhs of workers. "Many of our workers have laid down their lives in political violence. Today, in this first election meeting of Kerala, I pay my homage to all those martyrs," he said.

"We realise why Kerala is called beautiful when we

reach Palakkad, the gateway to the state. It reflects the traditional life of Kerala and is also a big centre of hard work and talent. The importance of the Kalpathy temple is often compared to that of Kashi. Being an MP of Kashi, it holds a special meaning for me," he said.

Pays rich tributes to social reformers

He paid rich tributes to the great social reformers of Kerala. "I bow my head in reverence before this holy land of our saint Pujya Narayana Guru, Pujya Chattampi Swamikal, Mannath Padmanabhan, Mahatma Ayyankali, and Fr Kuriakose Elias Chavara."

Modi said the BJP and the NDA are in the electoral fray to form the government. "With the blessings of the people of Kerala, we will form the government here and leave no stone unturned for the state's development. The NDA's objective is to fulfil the dreams of the people of Kerala," he said.

At the Centre, we have made many efforts for Kerala's development. When Congress was in power at the Centre, the money Kerala received in ten years is far less than what we have given, five times more to the state. Urban development, road infrastructure, railway projects, agricultural growth, Jal Jeevan Mission, PMRY—all this funding has been provided across the state. But this government has not used the money properly. It was your right to have this money, but they looted it, he said while accusing the LDF government



Telangana CM orders expansion of ghats for Godavari Pushkaram

Hyderabad, March 29

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday directed the officials to take measures for the expansion of ghats at major temples and key tourist destinations for Godavari Pushkaram, scheduled next year.

He presided over a review meeting held to discuss plans for the development of major temples and Pushkara ghats situated along the Godavari river basin, stretching from Basara to Bhadrachalam.

The meeting focused on discussing the specific works that need to be completed by June 2027, in time for the Godavari Pushkaram.

Officials presented the plans formulated for the works to be undertaken in preparation for the Pushkarams to the Chief Minister via a PowerPoint presentation.

According to the Chief Minister's Office, the Chief Minister offered several suggestions to the officials.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy directed officials to constitute a committee of technical engineers to identify suitable locations for organising the Pushkaram.

He instructed this committee to conduct field visits and submit its report to the committee of officials within 15 to 20 days.

The Chief Minister stated that the committee of officials should examine the engineers' committee report and forward it—along with comprehensive cost estimates—to the Cabinet Sub-committee.

He further noted that, following approval by the Cabinet Sub-committee, the full Cabinet would take the final decision regarding the report on these plans.

The Chief Minister advised that the plans should be structured to ensure the completion of both permanent and temporary works according to a prioritised schedule.

To prevent any lack of coordination among various government departments, the Chief Minister ordered the establishment of a dedicated "War Room" at Praja Bhavan.

The Chief Minister also suggested that steps be taken to ensure that no issues arise regarding road infrastructure and connectivity between various regions.

During the meeting, officials presented the master plan for the development and expansion of the Sri Gnana Saraswathi Temple in Basara to the Chief Minister.

The CM offered several suggestions to officials regarding the master plan.

BRS MLAs Suspended Amid Assembly Uproar

The Speaker of the Telangana Legislative Assembly has suspended several members of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) for two days following disruptions during budget discussions.

Hyderabad, March 29

The Speaker of the Telangana Legislative Assembly has suspended several members of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) for two days following disruptions during budget discussions.

Those suspended include K. T. Rama Rao, T. Harish Rao, Krishna Rao, Mahipal Reddy, Padma Rao, Chintha Prabhakar Rao, Kotha Prabhakar Reddy, Marri Rajasekar Reddy, Sabitha Indra Reddy, and Talasani Srinivas Yadav. The action was taken on the grounds that the members were obstructing proceedings in the House.

Separately, the conduct of Padi Kaushik Reddy has

been referred to the Assembly's Ethics Committee, following an incident that has stirred considerable controversy.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy criticised the behaviour, questioning whether the BRS leadership condones such actions. He described Kaushik Reddy's conduct towards senior MLA Kadiyam Srihari as inappropriate and called for action based on the committee's findings.

Revanth Reddy defended Srihari's reputation, stating that his integrity and public service are beyond reproach. He further challenged BRS leaders, asking whether they would justify similar treatment if it were directed at K. Chandrashekar Rao.

Anticipated LPG shortage not a cause of worry for forest dwelling tribals of Adilabad



S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 29"The end to the US-Israel war with Iran is not in sight though it is almost a month since it started. Everyone who is keenly watching the developments expects that there will be shortages of different kinds that will haunt people in the days and weeks to come. "The mutual destruction of petroleum or gas sources in the middle east and the threat to tankers transporting these energy products from the middle east to different countries including India has already cast its shadow. on the day to day life of people. India's situation is comparatively better than other nations thanks to its staying away from taking sides in the war. "At the grassroots level, communities are far better equipped to face the situation. For example, forest dwelling communities like tribals have less to worry if there is an LPG shortage in future as is be-

ing anticipated by experts. The tribals can easily revert to the use of firewood which is gathered from nearby forests. "Traditionally, the Adivasis have cooked food on ovens which use fuelwood. Hundreds of tribal families have given up the practice, totally or partially, of firewood collection after they got the LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Scheme during the last few years. "There are several families in any given village which collect fuelwood to heat bathing water while the food is cooked on LPG stoves. in the event of any LPG shortage hitting the rural areas, the tribal women are likely to head towards the forest in the mornings to collect fallen twigs to be used as fuel. "We are not unduly worried about shortages," observed Athram Sumitrabai, a tribal from Uttoor mandal headquarters. "We will stock up fuelwood in the coming days," she added.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

India's laudable push in the war against cervical cancer

By launching a nationwide HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination for adolescent girls, India has taken a decisive step in the war against cervical cancer, a largely preventable yet one of the most common causes of cancer deaths in India. The vaccination drive, coupled with increased screening and assured treatment access, can dramatically reduce the suffering caused by the dreaded disease within the span of a generation. Unfortunately, India bears one of the heaviest burdens of cervical cancer globally, reporting nearly 78,000 new cases and over 43,000 deaths annually. It is the second most common cancer among Indian women, after breast cancer, and is caused by the HPV infection of the genital tract. Early age of marriage, multiple pregnancies, tobacco use, and poor genital hygiene are linked to increased chances of infection. Most of these risk factors can be addressed through awareness, screening, and vaccination. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has set a clear elimination target, outlining what is called the "90-70-90" strategy: 90% of girls to be fully vaccinated with HPV vaccine by age 15; 70% of women to be screened with a high-performance test at ages 30 and above, and 90% of women identified with disease to receive appropriate treatment. India's vaccination launch is a crucial step towards achieving these targets. Over 140 countries have implemented vaccination against HPV infections, and global data has confirmed its safety and effectiveness. Total elimination of the disease requires sustained efforts and ensuring widespread coverage of HPV vaccination.

India's alarming cervical cancer mortality rate is attributable to the poor screening, lack of early detection, resistance to vaccination and poor hygiene. While urban areas have shown some decline due to factors such as improved hygiene, large rural and underserved populations continue to be present with advanced cervical cancer disease. Against this backdrop, a nationwide vaccination drive could be a game-changer. It would be an effective strategy to target adolescents for vaccination before their exposure to the virus. A time-bound, mission-mode approach can help overcome the inertia that often slows the inclusion of new vaccines into routine immunisation. If implemented effectively, it could shield millions of girls from high-risk HPV strains responsible for the majority of cases. The vaccine, indigenously developed by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), is 97% effective in preventing the disease. While cervical cancer is preventable if detected early and managed effectively, it kills one woman every 8 minutes in the country. The vaccination campaign must prioritise rural districts and underserved communities where screening rates are low, and cancer detection often comes too late. The HPV vaccine has long been available in the private market, and a few States piloted limited public programmes over the past decade. However, cost concerns, logistical hurdles and policy hesitations delayed a universal rollout, leaving coverage fragmented and inequitable.

Grand Graduation Day Celebrations at Chaitanya Bharathi High School

— Students entertained with cultural performances
 — Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended as Chief Guest

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“The Graduation Day at Chaitanya Bharathi High School, located in Ganesh Nagar, Uppal, was celebrated in a grand and festive manner amidst great enthusiasm from students and parents.“Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest. The school Chairman Vemulakonda Venkanna Goud, Vice Principal Vemulakonda Shobha, colony elders, students, and teaching staff participated in large numbers and made the event a grand success.Graduation ceremonies were held for UKG and 5th class students. On this occasion, students presented



vibrant cultural programs, captivating the audience with their performances.Speaking at the event, Chairman Vemulakonda Venkanna Goud said that along with academics, the school also encourages cultural activities and outdoor games to promote the overall development of students.Chief Guest Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy appreciated the school for effectively balancing education with cultural and extracurricular activities. She mentioned that she has been observing the school for the past ten years and praised its consistent efforts in shaping students in all aspects. She also noted that Chaitanya Bharathi High School has established a distinct identity over the last decade and continues to earn appreciation from parents.

Graduation Day Celebrated with Enthusiasm at Vignan Jyothi Grammar High School

School Correspondent Vemulakonda Somasekhara Goud and Principal Renuka attend as chief guests



“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“Graduation Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm and joy at Vignan Jyothi Grammar High School, located in Venkata Reddy Nagar, Ramanthapur. UKG students participated in the event with excitement, and happiness, marking an important milestone in their early education.“The event was graced by School Correspondent Vemulakonda Somasekhara Goud and Principal Vemulakonda Renuka as chief guests. Speaking on the occasion, they said that the young graduates have achieved an important milestone and have grown



into confident, curious, and creative learners. They encouraged students to remember that learning is a lifelong journey and advised them to dream big, explore new things, and never hesitate to ask questions.They also appreciated the teachers for shaping the students in a way that makes their parents and society proud. On this occasion, the students entertained everyone with cultural performances, including songs and dances.During the program, the Principal distributed certificates and prizes to the students. Teachers Sripatha, Shivani, Krishnaveni, Mounika, Damayanthi, Deepa, and others participated in the event.

Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Attends Annual Day Celebrations of Several Schools



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“The annual day celebrations of several schools were held with great enthusiasm and joy, including Positive School in Saibaba Colony (Uppal Division), Chaitanya Bharathi High School in Ganesh Nagar, and Seven Hills Sri Kakatiya Techno School in Uppal.Fomer Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the occasion with vibrant cultural programs such as dance performances, songs, and skits.Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said, “Schools serve as a platform to encourage the creativity of children. Ev-



ery activity helps bring out the talent in students and nurtures strong human values. It is very important to conduct such programs for their overall development.“The event was attended by Positive School Director Srinivas, Principal Shobhana Devi, teachers Nirmala, Ramya, Atya; Kakatiya Techno School Correspondent Kondaraju, Principal Konda Sapna; Chaitanya Bharathi High School Correspondent Venkanna Goud; Saibaba Colony President Anji Reddy; Salla Prabhakar Reddy; Akarapu Arun Patel; Tummala Devi Reddy; Sunku Shekhar Reddy; Mohan Nayak; Prem Goud; Pranay Yadav; Prashanth Reddy; along with teachers, students, local residents, and school staff.

DRDO Dattaram Inspects ‘Amma Ku Aksharamala Ullas’ Examination Centre



“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas.March, 29.“DRDO Dattaram visited the ‘Amma Ku Aksharamala Ullas’ examination centre in Buruguda Village of Asifabad mandal.

A Memorable Tribute: Free Drinking Water Facility Inaugurated at Bambara Premier League Cricket Tournament

“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas.March, 29.“Wankidi mandal Bambara: In a commendable act of service during the scorching summer, a free drinking water facility(Chalivendram) was set up to quench the thirst of players, spectators, and passersby at the Bambara Premier League Cricket Tournament. This initiative was organized in memory of late Kobragaade Jairam by his grandchildren, reflecting a noble gesture of community service.“The Chalivendram, set up at a main junction in the village, was formally inaugurated by the village Sarpanch, Bendre Krishnaji. Speaking on the occasion, he appreciated the family’s effort, stating that organizing such service activities in memory of a loved one is highly commendable. He emphasized that providing drinking water to people suffering in the summer heat is a truly virtuous act.“Through this facility, cool drinking water was made available to players participating in the tournament,cricket fans,and villagers passing through the area. The initiative received appreciation from locals,who noted that such acts help strengthen community spirit and encourage others to contribute to social welfare.The Chalivendram was set up with the support of Jairam’s family members and villagers.Many expressed hope that more such service-oriented activities would be taken up in the future.Prominent attendees at the event included Deputy Sarpanch Jhade Santosh, Kotnaka Venkat Rao, former Deputy Sarpanch Boyire Prakash,former MPTC Petkar Vinod, Congress leader Dikonda Mahesh, BRS Youth President Engali Rakesh Kumar, Ward Member Shailesh,along with players, spectators, and villagers.



Have a safe ride by wearing a helmet: Vira ACP

INDIAN CHRONICLE KHAMMAM K SANJAY “Vira ACP Sarangapani said that helmets must be worn for the safety of two-wheeler riders. As part of the 99-day Public Governance – Progress Plan program undertaken by the state government, a helmet awareness rally was organized in Vira town under the Arrive Alive program under



the authority of Vira Division Police to promote safe travel. “With the aim of reducing road accidents, raising awareness about traffic rules with slogans like “Helmet On.. Life On”, this rally explained how helmets protect against head injuries during accidents.“On this occasion, Vaira ACP said that everyone must wear a helmet while riding a two-wheeler and have a safe journey. They asked us to realize that our family members are waiting for us and our lives are very important to our family. On this occasion, ACP sent helmets to the police station staff. “Inspector Venkataprasad, SSIs Rama Rao, Suraj, Venkatakrishna and Virender participated in the program.

Marneni Phanindra Completes One Year as BJP Uppal Division President

Secured Rs 82 lakh funds and completed several pending works in one year: Phanindra

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“On the occasion of successfully completing one year as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Uppal Division President, Marneni Phanindra met and felicitated Malkajiri MP Etela Rajender, former MLA Bethi Subhash Reddy, BJP State Mahila Morcha President Shilpa Reddy, and BJP State leader Dharma Reddy. He also presented them with the sacred Abhishekam Prasadam of Lord



Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy.“Speaking on the occasion, Marneni Phanindra expressed his gratitude to the people of Uppal for their continuous support and stated that he was very happy to complete one year as the BJP Uppal Division President. He said that he has been working to strengthen the party in the division and has been actively questioning officials regarding public issues.“He further stated that during the past year, he was able to secure approximately ₹82 lakh funds for various development works in the division and ensured the completion of several pending works by bringing them to the attention of the authorities.“He added that it is his fortune to serve the people successfully and assured that he will always remain accessible to party workers, well-wishers, and the public.“If you want, I can also format this like a press release or headline-style news copy.

Cannabis Plants Seized in Maruguda Village

“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. March,29“Police seized cannabis plants illegally cultivated in the jurisdiction of Maruguda village. Acting on credible information, Sirpur (U) Sub-Inspector D. Ramakrishna conducted a raid on the evening of 28-03-2026.“Based on the information received, it was found that a person named Kova Arjun (37), a resident of Maruguda village, was illegally cultivating cannabis plants in his agricultural field. After informing higher authorities and following due legal procedures, the police, along with revenue and agriculture department officials as panch witnesses, carried out the operation.Upon reaching the spot, the police detained the suspect, who behaved suspiciously. During interrogation, he confessed to cultivating cannabis plants in his field.“In the presence of agriculture officials, the land was inspected and a total of 8 cannabis plants (approximately 2 to 3 feet in height) were identified and seized. The value of the seized plants is estimated to be around ₹80,000. The plants were seized in the presence of panch witnesses and registered as case property (MO-1).“A case has been registered against the accused under the NDPS Act, and further investigation is ongoing.



'Prana-2026' Medical Conference Concludes at Prathima Institute, Students showcase research, communication skills over two days.

Khaja Sikander Mohiuddin Staff Reporter, Indian Chronicle Karimnagar, March 29: The two-day undergraduate medical conference, Prana-2026, organised by students of Prathima Institute of Medical Sciences, concluded here on Sunday, showcasing academic excellence, research aptitude and communication skills among budding medical professionals

Karimnagar Police Commissioner Gautham Alam, who attended as the chief guest on the valedictory day, emphasised the importance of practical knowledge in medical education. Addressing the gathering, he said that as future doctors, students must equip themselves with hands-on experience alongside theoretical learning. He observed that such conferences play a vital role in shaping professional competence and career growth.

Mr. Alam also referred to his recent participation in a conference held in the presence of the Chief Minister, where he made a presentation on "Emerging Crimes" and outlined challenges likely to arise by 2047. Drawing parallels with advancements in medicine, he highlighted emerging technologies that integrate brain-generated electrical signals with digital systems to aid in controlling body functions, and appreciated the institute for providing modern infrastructure for student training.

Prathima Group Director Dr. Hasini said the theme "Prana", symbolising life force, enthusiasm and purpose, was reflected in the active participation of students. She noted that the conference had enabled participants to evolve beyond academic boundaries into thinkers, innovators and future leaders. The exchange of ideas, presentations and discussions, she said, had fostered confidence, collaboration and creativity.



Experts from various fields addressed sessions on recent developments in medicine, the importance of skill enhancement and ethical practices in patient care. Students were encouraged to look beyond textbooks and engage in research, leadership and holistic healthcare delivery.

Certificates were distributed to participants by the Commissioner. Dr. Hasini also felicitated Mr. Alam with a memento and a shawl.

Principal Dr. John Israel, CAO Ramachander Rao, Medical Superintendent Dr. C.N. Prasad, Vice-Principal Dr. Kishan Reddy, Registrar-cum-Administrator Prasad Rao, and faculty members, along with organising committee members including Dr. Amit, Dr. Pranay, Dr. Sandhya and Dr. T.K.K. Nayak, were present.

Eye tests for drivers: CI Sanjeev



INDIAN CHRONICLE KHAMMAM K SANJAY "Kusumanchi CI Sanjeev said that eye sight is very important in the driving profession and one can drive the vehicle efficiently only if the eye sight is good. As part of the public governance progress plan undertaken by the state government, the aim of prevention of road accidents is the third installment of Arrive Alive. Under the supervision of Rural ACP Tirupati Reddy, the drivers of heavy vehicles plying on the Kusumanchi highway were given awareness about road safety and a free eye camp was organized in Kusumanchi government school in collaboration with Shiva Optical. On this occasion, auto,

lorry, tractor and car drivers were thoroughly explained about the rules to be followed in road safety. Through this camp, free eye tests were conducted for the drivers and necessary instructions were given. It is normal for the eyesight to slow down with age, and it is advised to conduct regular eye examinations and take appropriate precautions. If the eyesight is clear, traffic signals and road signs can be recognized correctly and vehicles can be driven safely, he said. He said that eye tests were conducted with the intention that many drivers are neglecting their eyesight. "SS Nagaraju of Kusumanchi participated in the program.

Pamphlets Released for Ambedkar Jayanti Celebrations



"Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. March, 29" "The committee members called upon people to celebrate the 135th birth anniversary of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar with a spirit of equality and grandeur. Pamphlets, wallpapers, and posters related to the Jayanti celebrations were unveiled at Deeksha Bhoomi in Kagaznagar town of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. "Speaking on the occasion, the speakers stated that Ambedkar's ideals

are a guiding force for society and urged the youth to follow and implement his thoughts in their lives. They appealed to the public to participate in large numbers and make the Jayanti celebrations a grand success. Members of the Ambedkar Jayanti Celebrations Committee and Sirpur Taluka members took part in the program

Chalivendram (Water Distribution Point) Inaugurated

"Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. March, 29. "A Chalivendram (free drinking water facility) was inaugurated at the bus stand premises in Kagaznagar town by the 1996-97 alumni of Balabharathi High School as part of a social service initiative. The program was attended by District Science Officer (Teacher) Sri Katukam Madhukar, former Kagaznagar Municipal Chairman Dastagiri, RTC Controller Durgam Laxman, and several alumni including Boora Kumar, Ponna

Ramesh, D. Rajeswar, Sanjay Kumar, Thoutam Shyamsunder (PRTU District President), Kambampati Santosh, P. Tirupati, N. Srinivas, Nakka Shankar, Md. Fashi, Rafiq (Municipality Employee), Md. Ilyaz, Chaitanya (Forest Department), N. Shiva Prasad (Health Department), N. Ramu, D. Srinivas, along with passengers. "The Chalivendram was formally inaugurated today, with participants actively taking part in this community welfare activity aimed at providing relief to travelers during the summer season.

Swift Action: Lost Phone Traced and Returned in No Time "CEIR Portal Helps Police Retrieve Lost Mobile Quickly



"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 29, "Kagaznagar: In a swift response, the police recovered a lost mobile phone within a short time and returned it to the owner. "Vadai Sai Kumar, a resident of Chintaguda in Kagaznagar mandal, lost his mobile phone on Saturday evening and lodged a complaint with the police. "According to Sub-Inspector Sandeep Kumar, the police traced the mobile phone within an hour using the CEIR portal and handed it back to the complainant. "He advised the public to immediately report lost mobile phones through the CEIR portal to enable quick recovery. "Constable Venkatesh also assisted in the operation.

Captivating Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi Performances at Uppal Mini Shilparamam Performances by the disciples of Kuchipudi Dance Academy gurus Nalla Ramadevi and Padmavati

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 29 (Indian

Chronicle): "As part of the weekend cultural programs at Uppal Mini Shilparamam, a delightful evening of classical dance performances was held on Sunday. The event featured "Srivari Paadalu" presented through Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi styles by the disciples of renowned dance gurus Nalla Ramadevi and Padmavati from the Kuchipudi Dance Academy. "The performances mesmerized the audience with a variety of classical pieces including Pushpanjali, Mysore Jathi, Krishnashtakam, Kondalalo Nelakonna, Kamakshi Stotram, Gajavadana Jatiswaram, Nartana Ganapati, Bho Shambho, Kavadi Chindu, and Tillana. "The performers



who impressed the audience included Keerthana, Sravanthi, Bhargavi, Pravallika, Kriya Lakshmi, Subbalakshmi, Saritha, Revathi, Vatsalya, Punarvi, Somashree, Mihira, and others.

Mystery Death Near Mosam Village; Police Seek Public Help

"Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 29, "Unidentified Dead Body Found; Police Seek Information" An unidentified male dead body was found near Bandala Orre on the outskirts of Mosam village, within the limits of Easgaon Police Station, said SI Chandrasekar. "According to police, the death is suspected to have occurred approximately two days ago. The deceased appears to be around 50 years of age. "He was wearing a red T-shirt and ash-colored shorts. The body also had a black thread around the neck, a bracelet on the right hand, and red and yellow threads tied to the wrist. "Police have requested the public to come forward with any information that may help identify the deceased. "Contact Details: * SI, Easgaon: 8712670538 * CI, Kagaznagar Rural: 8712670508 * DSP, Kagaznagar: 8712670504



Adult literacy drive gathers pace in Karimnagar, Over 5,300 SHG members appear for ULLAS examinations across 89 centres.



Khaja Sikander Mohiuddin Staff Reporter, Indian Chronicle Karimnagar, March 29: In a significant push towards adult literacy, examinations under the ULLAS programme were conducted across all municipalities in Karimnagar district on Saturday, targeting members of self-help groups (SHGs) identified as non-literate.

Officials said a total of 13,647 non-literate SHG members were identified in the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation, and the municipalities of Huzurabad, Jammikunta and Choppadandi. Of these, 5,344 candidates appeared for the examinations held at 89 centres set up across the district.

To ensure smooth conduct of the examinations, 221 federation office-bearers were deployed as invigilators. The exercise was carried out under the supervision of the Adult Education Department, in line with government directives.

The conduct of the examinations was coordinated by voluntary teachers, community organisers, resource persons, town mission coordinators and the district mission coordinator, who worked in tandem to facilitate the process.

Project Director of MEPMA, G. Swaroopa Rani, visited several examination centres, including those at Housing Board Colony Government School, Karkhanagadda, Ramnagar and Saptagiri Colony. She reviewed the arrangements and offered suggestions to officials to ensure effective implementation of the programme.

Officials noted that the initiative forms part of a broader effort to enhance functional literacy among women from economically weaker sections through structured assessment and learning interventions. "[6:41 PM, 3/29/2026] +91 93907 69610: End



Untouchability in the AI Era? - Keesara Mandal Leaders Meet Victim Families in Yadraspally Village -Police Respond Promptly; Leaders Demand Strict Action

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 29 (Indian chronicle):“Medchal-Malkajgiri district: Tension prevailed in Yadraspally village under Thumkunta Municipality following an incident of caste-based discrimination during a temple event. According to reports, several Dalits from the same village went to attend the Sita-Rama Kalyanam ceremony at the local Ramalayam. At the temple premises, a few individuals allegedly objected to their presence, questioned their entry, and prevented them from sitting alongside others and participating in rituals such as breaking coconuts. The victims were reportedly subjected to verbal abuse. Keesara Mandal leaders visited the village and held a meeting with the affected families, expressing solidarity and condemning the incident. They appreciated the prompt response of the Shamirpet police, including the CI and SI, for intervening quickly. The leaders demanded immediate and strict action against those responsible and stated that the fight for self-respect would continue until justice is delivered. They also called for organizing a civil rights awareness meeting at the same location to ensure such incidents are not repeated. Speakers at the meeting emphasized the need to eliminate social discrimination and encouraged Dalits to live with dignity and confidence in a free and equal society. They recalled the historic temple entry move-



ment led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in 1930, highlighting the continued relevance of that struggle. Several local leaders and activists participated in the program and extended support to the victim families.

End America’s rigid stance, let world peace prevail Prajavani Voluntary Organization



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“Members of the Prajavani voluntary organization staged a placard protest on Sunday, expressing concern over ongoing global conflicts and calling for world peace. They stated that wars involving countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Hamas, India, Pakistan, the United States, and Iran are causing severe hard-

ships to people around the world.“Speaking on the occasion, the organization’s representatives alleged that the rigid policies of former U.S. President Donald Trump have contributed to global instability. They criticized actions such as the imprisonment of the Venezuelan president and unilateral military actions against Iran, which they claimed have disrupted oil transportation and affected many countries. They further expressed concern that sudden wars on developing nations have led to devastating consequences. Referring to an alleged attack on a school in Iran, they said that over 180 children lost their lives and many families have been left struggling. The leaders urged the United States to abandon its dominant approach and put an end to the conflict with Iran, emphasizing the need to restore global peace. They also highlighted that protecting the deteriorating global environment is the responsibility of every individual. The protest was attended by Prajavani President Erram Srinivas and members Siddagoni Raju Goud, Shankar Goud, Ramesh, Kumaraswamy, S.K. Rafiq, Vinod Reddy, and others.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Participates in Srujana High School Silver Jubilee Celebrations“

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended as the chief guest at the Silver Jubilee (25th anniversary) celebrations of Srujana High School, held at Uppal Shilparamam.“On this occasion, the cultural performances presented by the students and the distribution of awards to meritorious students were highly impressive. The MLA appreciated the talent of the students and stated that a bright future can be built only through education.“He also praised the efforts of the school management and teachers in organizing the event and expressed his hope that students will achieve greater heights in the future. A large number of school management members, BRS party leaders, activists, parents, and students participated in the program.



CBI and CID should conduct an investigation into BRS corruption



“Warangal West MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy “Devulapally Srinivas, Warangal Bureau, March 29 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal West MLA Nayini Rajender

Reddy alleged that during KCR’s rule, BRS leaders were involved in illegal misappropriation of around ₹200 crores. He demanded that a comprehensive investigation be immediately conducted by the CBI and CID into the corruption that took place during the previous government. “He strongly criticized the opposition, saying it is shameful for a thief to call another a thief, and stated that if his allegations are proven wrong, he would resign. Referring to allegations that party offices were constructed by encroaching on park land in Hanumakonda, he demanded clarity on the issue. “He said he is ready to resign from his MLA post if his allegations are proven false, and questioned whether KTR and Harish Rao are also ready to resign in the same way. He added that he is directly sending his resignation letter to the Speaker and challenged the opposition to prove the allegations against them are false if they have the courage.

Illegal and prohibited fishing nets in Vellatoor village Police officers seize raiding and smuggling nets

“Andhra Dalari fishermen, migrant workers protest“Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle“Police have taken strict action against fishermen who are continuing to fish with banned Alivi nets in the Krishna river basin area of Vellatoor village under Chinnambavi mandal. A surprise raid was conducted at 4:30 am on Sunday in the Krishna river basin area on the outskirts of Vellatoor village. District circle inspector CI Ratnam, SI Raman Goud along with police personnel, on reliable information, seized two huge Alivi nets in this raid. One accused fled from there, while the other surrendered to the police. He was caught. The person caught was the king (father:Kashinath), Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh On trial as a native of the region It has been revealed. Going into details, Chinnambavi Brokers from some villages in the mandal illegal earnings to earn money Greedily, they brought Andhra fishermen and The Krishna River basin



areas Busy, good, big, small, Vellatoor, Kalur, Ayyavaripalli, chinnamarur, peddamaruru, ayyavarice Palli, Bekkem, Gudem, Prohibited sale in the vicinity of Chellepadu From small fish to big fish with nets Destroying everything until. Due to this, the future fish wealth will be seriously affected Officials said it would be damaged. This is why the government is like this Despite the ban on nets, brokers Ignoring government regulations They are getting agitated. Telangana State Government Improving the livelihood of fishermenThey are spending crores of rupees for this and releasing fish fry in lakhs. It has also been found that the fish fry are being killed and transported to other states. In this context, SI Raman Goud said that legal action is being taken against the fishermen who have not heeded despite repeated warnings. He said that since it is Sunday, the accused will be remanded and will be produced in the Wanaparthy court on Monday. This action of the police has served as a strong warning to those who are illegally fishing with Alivi nets.

Felicitation Ceremony of Bhatraju Association in Injapur Grand Honour to Keerthi Santosh Raj

Position is not important... Service is what matters, says Keerthi Santosh Raj

Let us show the strength of the Bhatraju community to Telangana, calls Keerthi Santosh Raj

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Hyderabad, March 29 (Indian Chronicle):“The Bhatraju community once again showcased its unity and strength at Injapur in Rangareddy district. A grand felicitation ceremony was organized on Sunday under the leadership of the Telangana State Bhatraju Association. The event was conducted in a vibrant manner with the participation of a large number of community leaders and members, reflecting strong unity.“The main highlight of the event was the grand felicitation of Keerthi Santosh Raj, who serves as the State Joint Secretary of the Telangana Journalists Welfare Association. He was honoured in recognition of his notable contributions and for establishing a distinct identity in the field of journalism. Association leaders appreciated his services and extended their congratulations.“On this occasion, Telangana State Bhatraju Association President Devaraju Vishnuvardhan Raju and State General Secretary Pratikanta Pournachander Raju praised Keerthi Santosh Raj for actively supporting the development of the community by bringing its activities to public attention through media. They stated that honouring such individuals is a matter of pride for the association.“Speaking at the event, Keerthi Santosh Raj made key remarks, stating that one does not need a position to serve society—what matters is the determination to serve. He encouraged everyone willing to contribute to society to step forward. He also emphasized that community leaders must stand by members in times of need and highlighted that unity is the greatest strength. With the upcoming Greater elections in mind, he called upon the Bhatraju community to demonstrate its political strength. He urged members to contest in large numbers and secure a resounding majority to showcase their strength across Telangana. Many attendees expressed that the event not only infused new enthusiasm within the Bhatraju community but also sent a clear message about its potential role in future politics.



A massive peace rally was held today from Charminar to Exhibition Grounds under the banner of the Committee Against War, witnessing participation from a broad spectrum of political parties, civil society groups, and community leaders.

“Leaders and representatives from the Indian National Congress, Telangana Jana Samithi, Communist Party of India, and Communist Party of India (Marxist), along with religious leaders, Shia and Sunni community representatives, and various social organizations, actively participated. Thousands of citizens, including senior citizens, joined the march, reflecting widespread concern over the ongoing global conflicts.“The rally was led by M. Kodandaram and coordinated by Syed Nizamuddin. Prominent leaders including K. Narayana and B. V. Raghavulu, Mota Rohith DCC Khairatabad, Khaled Saifullah DCC Hyderabad, Sameer Waliullah, Mushtaq Malik, and Amjedullah Khan, along with other senior leaders, were present.“Addressing the gathering, speakers emphasized that war brings no benefit to humanity and only worsens economic instability, both nationally and globally. The participants collectively appealed to the Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reassess India’s international strategy and take proactive steps in engaging with the United Nations and other global leaders to advocate for an immediate end to war.“A resolution was also unanimously passed at the public meeting held at the Exhibition Grounds, urging the Hon’ble Chief Minister of Telangana to introduce and pass a resolution in the ongoing State Assembly, calling for an immediate end to the war and reinforcing the message of peace and diplomatic intervention.“The rally concluded with a strong and unified call for peace, dialogue, and diplomatic resolution, reiterating that sustainable progress can only be achieved through harmony and international cooperation.“Issued by: Committee Against War, Hyderabad



A MAJOR POLITICAL SHIFT IS TAKING PLACE IN TELANGANA

Hyderabad, Mar 29 : In a significant boost to the BJP in Telangana ahead of the upcoming GHMC elections, a large number of youth, local welfare associations, and leaders from different parties have been joining the saffron fold attracting with visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.“ A large number of youth and members of local welfare associations today joined in BJP in the presence of BJP state president N Ramchander Rao at Dilsukhngar.“ Addressing the gathering on the occasion, BJP Telangana State President N Ramchander Rao stated that the continuous influx of people into the party is a “clear signal of an impending political transformation” in the state. A major political shift was taking place in Telangana, he asserted.“ Rao noted that the state party headquarters is witnessing joining ceremonies almost daily. “It is not just politicians, local residents’ welfare associations and youth are choosing BJP. Former Sarpanches and activists from BRS and Congress are realizing that BJP is the only credible alternative for Telangana’s future,” he said.“ Launching a scathing attack on the Congress government, BJP state chief alleged that chief minister Revanth Reddy was trying to divert attention of people from his government’s failures by raking up construction of temple, mosque and Church alongside Musi River with government money whereas the grand Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was not built with government funds. It was built through the trust and contribution of countless people, he reminded.“ He alleged that the city was neglected during ten years of BRS rule and continues to suffer under the current Congress government. Rao credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership for the infrastructure boom surrounding the city like national highways and improved connectivity around Hyderabad. He further stated that a massive employment for youth was created due to missions of “Make In India and Stand Up India” which has brought defense and mobile manufacturing units to the region.“ On the issue of shortage of petrol, diesel and gas, Rao vehemently denied reports stating that under the leadership of PM Modi there is no shortage of petrol, diesel or gas. The PM not only ensured supply, but he has also reduced prices instead of burdening the people. This was something the public must remember that at a time when the world was facing severe difficulties, our PM Modi is following a policy that protects and relieves the common people.“ BJP state chief urged intellectuals, women, and the youth to support the BJP in the upcoming GHMC elections to end “family-based politics” and “corrupt Congress rule.“ He called upon every worker to celebrate BJP Foundation Day on April 6 by hoisting the party flag on their homes as a mark of dedication to the nation.



Four firms owned by Arunachal CM Pema Khandu's family got 146 govt contracts in Tawang



Arunachal CM family firms: Four firms, two owned by Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu's wife Tsering Dolma, and one each by his brother Tashi Khandu and sister-in-law Nima Drema, were awarded 146 work contracts worth Rs 383.74 crore by the state government in Tawang district alone between 2012 and 2023, as per an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court.

Of this, 59 contracts worth Rs 16.83 crore were awarded directly through work orders without a tender being floated. At least 11 of these work orders exceeded the Rs 50 lakh limit set in 2020 for contracts issued without tenders, which was meant to promote local professionals and entrepreneurs in the state. The contracts were for the construction or maintenance of roads, bridges, drains, irrigation channels, power lines, retaining walls, community halls, cultural centres, residential quarters, office and commercial buildings, tourism facilities, a war memorial, etc.

The Indian Express reviewed the list of contracts submitted in an affidavit by the Arunachal Pradesh government, after the Supreme Court directed the state to furnish the details this March. In a PIL filed last year, Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena had alleged that government work orders were awarded to firms linked to the chief minister's family. The two Arunachal-based organisations have sought the court to direct an investigation by the CBI or an SIT into the award of contracts. On December 2, the apex court took note of the submission of the petitioners' counsel, Prashant Bhushan, that the information provided by the state was not "complete/up to date" and directed the Arunachal government to file a comprehensive affidavit covering all the districts, including Tawang, pertaining to the period 2015 to 2025 within eight weeks. There are 28 districts in Arunachal. Emails and messages sent to Khandu and his office remained unanswered.

In the affidavit, the state named four firms: M/s Frontier Associates and M/s Brand Eagles owned by Pema Khandu's wife Tsering Dolma; M/s RD Construction owned by Pema Khandu's brother Tashi Khandu; and M/s Alliance Trading Company owned by Nima Drema, wife of Pema Khandu's brother and Tawang MLA Tsering Tashi. In

Tawang district alone, M/s Frontier Associates and M/s Brand Eagles bagged 42 contracts worth Rs 209.6 crore, while M/s RD Construction secured 13 orders worth Rs 29.1 crore and M/s Alliance Trading Company 91 orders worth Rs 145.04 crore, the affidavit states. Of these, 59 contracts were awarded without a tender. As per the affidavit, contracts were awarded to firms owned by Khandu's wife by the Public Works Department, the Rural Works Department, and the Water Resources Department in Tawang, as well as the PWD and the Block Development Office in the district's Jang subdivision.

In 2015, the state government passed a law to give preference to local professionals and entrepreneurs "to secure equitable distribution of state development work" as part of the government's policy. An amendment in 2020 specified the list of works requiring "no special technical know-how" and "costing up to Rs 50 lakh" through work orders, without tenders, at justified rates to local contractors. However, 11 work contracts awarded to the four companies prior to the 2020 amendment exceeded the Rs 50 lakh limit, while another five were capped at Rs 50 lakh, the affidavit shows. For example, the work contract for "establishment of government college in Tawang" issued to M/s Alliance Trading in 2018 was worth Rs 2 crore.

In its affidavit, the state sought to explain the awarding of contracts through work orders, stating that it is normal practice in Arunachal Pradesh given "the historic development of the transition of the state of Arunachal Pradesh from predominantly tribal way of life to a modern-day state". Stating that the land for developmental activities in villages is given by villagers free of cost for employment in the contract work, the state's affidavit says, "The normal practice adopted here is that the government contract work is initially allotted to one contractor who is accustomed and used to the concerned village and is eligible, available and willing to undertake the contract work. The villagers normally prefer the contract firm provided by their elected representatives as they have maximum trust and flexibility to carry out the work under such contract firms." It states that the tender system is adhered to "wherever complicated works require high competence, skill and capability is involved." The affidavit also stated that 95% of the contracts awarded to firms and individuals concerned were through the process of open tender. "Since almost all the contracts were awarded through the process of open tender after inviting and evaluation of technical and financial bids, there can be no allegations of pick and choose or that undue favours were made to the respondents or firms/individuals related to them," it states. The Supreme Court Bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta remarked that the allotment of these many contracts to the CM's family is a "remarkable coincidence". The next hearing is scheduled on February 3.

Who was Major Mohit Sharma, why his family claims 'Dhurandhar' is based on him

Dhurandhar controversy explained: The upcoming Bollywood movie Dhurandhar, starring Ranveer Singh, ran into legal trouble after the family of a highly decorated Army officer claimed it is based on his life without due acknowledgement. Major Mohit Sharma laid down his life battling militants in J&K in 2009. He was posthumously awarded the Ashok Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award. His parents approached the Delhi High Court against Dhurandhar, scheduled for release on December 5, seeking protection of their son's legacy and persona. They also wanted the film privately screened for the family before its release.

Filmmaker Aditya Dhar has said the movie is fictional and not based on the Major's life. The censor board on Tuesday (December 2) gave its go-ahead to the movie. Who was Major Mohit Sharma, what did he win his gallantry award for, and what are his family's objections to Dhurandhar?

Who was Major Mohit Sharma?

Major Mohit Sharma was a Special Forces (SF) officer. Before the Ashok Chakra, he had been awarded a Sena Medal for gallantry, for infiltrating a terrorist group in J&K and killing two militants. Major Mohit Sharma Major Mohit Sharma's wife Major Rishima Sharma receives his Ashok Chakra from then President Pratibha Patil on January 26, 2010. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons) Born in Rohtak in 1978, Major Mohit Sharma joined the National Defence Academy (NDA) in 1995. He was commissioned in December 1999 in the 5th Battalion of The Madras Regiment after passing out from Indian Military Academy (IMA). After a stint in J&K in Rashtriya Rifles, Major Sharma volunteered to join the Special Forces. After training and probation, he finally joined 1 Parachute Battalion (Special Forces). It was during his tenure with this battalion that he earned the Sena Medal for gallantry. He is said to have successfully infiltrated a Hizbul Mujahideen group under cover in 2004. In 2009, Major Sharma was again deployed with a Special Forces unit in Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir. He took part in an action in which several militants were killed, but in the process he was grievously injured and lost his life. For acts of bravery beyond the call of duty, Major Mohit Sharma was awarded the Ashok Chakra posthumously. Why is Dhurandhar being linked to Major Mohit Sharma?

The family members of Major Mohit Sharma have al-



leged that Ranveer Singh's character is based on him. This character infiltrates a terrorist network in Pakistan and destroys it. They have stated that no permission was sought from the family before using the story and actions of Major Sharma in the movie.

On social media, speculation has been rife that various other characters in the movie are also based on real-life persons. Sanjay Dutt is supposed to be playing Chaudhary Aslam Khan Swati, an 'encounter specialist' of the Karachi police, who was killed in a bomb blast carried out by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2014. Akshaye Khanna's character is also said to be based on Sardar Abdul Rehman Baloch, a well-known criminal based out of Karachi's Lyari locality who was killed in 2009. Another character allegedly resembles National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, a former intelligence officer. The petition came up for hearing on December 1. The plea said that 'Dhurandhar is being publicly promoted with a view to create a perception that it is based upon the life, persona and operations of Major Mohit Sharma. It was alleged that the same is being done without any consent, consultation or authorisation from the family. The director, screenwriter and co-producer of the movie vehemently denied that the film is being promoted as having been inspired by Major Sharma's life. It was stated that the film is purely a work of fiction and though inspired by true events, bears no connection with the Major. (i) The Central Board of Film Certification shall consider all relevant aspects of the matter, including the concerns articulated by the petitioners, before granting requisite certification for the release of the film. (ii) If considered apposite, the censor board will refer the matter to the authorities concerned of the Indian Army before taking a final decision.

Worried about data tracking? Here are some open-source alternatives for all Google apps on your phone

If you are an Android user and are worried about Google tracking your data through its apps such as Chrome, Maps and Photos, this article is for you. We have listed alternatives for Google apps that may have you concerned about your privacy and the safety of your data. Cromite can be your option for browsing if you feel that Google Chrome works like a tracking tool which runs background connections you never asked for. Cromite's UI is very similar to Chrome and makes browsing easy for Chrome users without forcing them to change their habits. LibreTube (Alternative for YouTube): LibreTube connects you to YouTube through a privacy-friendly backend, letting you watch YouTube videos without using Google's servers. This option is also helpful for users who are tired of ads before and during videos. Organic Maps (Alternative for Google Maps):

Although Google Maps is a very useful tool, it is slowly turning into a space filled with sponsored location listings. If you do not like seeing such listings on Maps, try Organic Maps, which is based on OpenStreetMap data. It lets you download entire regions for offline use. Heliboard (Alterna-

tive for GBoard): Heliboard is a good option for those who want an alternative to GBoard, which some users may not realise can be a privacy risk. Since keyboards know everything you type, from your address to your passwords, they can pose silent risks on your phone. Heliboard, an open-source keyboard based on OpenBoard, is safer as it needs no internet permissions. Its clean layout, which feels similar to GBoard, is also easy to adapt to. Kvaesitso launcher (Alternative to Google launcher): Google's stock launcher is designed to keep you within the Google ecosystem. The Discover feed is a swipe away, the search bar is linked to Google Search, and many features guide you to Google services. Kvaesitso changes this by designing the home screen around your usage instead of Google's needs. It is an open-source launcher that can improve your Android experience if the device feels slow or cluttered.

Thunderbird for Android (Alternative to Gmail): Gmail works well, but features like labels, smart sorting and promotion tabs often tie you to one platform's way of handling email.

Economic offenders who fled the country owe 39000 crores to Indian banks



Just nine Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEOs) owed Indian banks over ₹58,000 crore in principal and interest. Despite having arrest warrants issued against them, these FEOs have left India and refuse to return to avoid criminal prosecution. Of this, the principal amount owed is ₹26,645 crore, while interest accounts for ₹31,437 crore. To date, banks have recovered just over ₹19,000 crore — roughly 33% of the total dues. Earlier this week, the Ministry of Finance informed Parliament that 15 individuals had been declared FEOs as of October 31. Nine of them are involved in large-scale financial fraud, and the amounts they owe have been made public.

State Bank of India (SBI) is owed over ₹22,000 crore, followed by Punjab National Bank and Bank of India. The chart below shows the Amount owed to the banks and the amount recovered. Notably, the SBI has achieved the high-

est recovery rate among these lenders, retrieving close to 52%. This is largely attributed to effective recovery measures, including liquidation, in Vijay Mallya's account. In contrast, the recovery rate for other banks remains below 40%.

In terms of total dues owed initially (principal plus interest), businessman Mallya tops the list with nearly ₹27,000 crore. The chart below shows the amount owed by the offenders and the amount recovered. He is followed by the Sandesara family (Sterling Group) and Nirav Modi. Over 56% of amount owed by Mallya has been recovered till date, date show, while for others, the rate is much lower at 17% for the Sandesara family and 7% in the case of Modi. The charts below detail the loan exposure and recovered amount for the top offenders. SBI led in exposure to Mallya, whereas PNB bore the brunt of Modi's defaults. For the Sandesara family, the exposure was shared among multiple banks. The chart below details the loan exposure of various banks and the recovered amount in accounts related to Vijay Mallya. The chart below details loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to the Sandesara family.

The chart below details loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to Nirav Modi. The data for the charts were sourced from Parliament Questions and Answers. This analysis includes the two fugitive economic offenders who have negotiated loan settlement under One Time Settlement (OTS). In the graphs, members of the Sandesara family refers to amount borrowed/recovered from Nitin J. Sandesara, Chetan J. Sandesara, and Dipti C. Sandesara as mentioned in the parliament document.

Does Google's Quantum Echoes bring Q-day closer?

Using a 65-qubit Willow superconducting processor, Google researchers measured how quantum information spreads and refocuses within an entangled system. This technological leap in quantum computing was called Quantum Echoes. Unlike the 2019 Sycamore experiment, which claimed "quantum supremacy" for completing a random-number task faster than any supercomputer, Quantum Echoes was not a speed race but a test of understanding. Scientists measured out-of-time-order correlators (OTOC) — tiny echoes that reveal how disturbances travel through a network of qubits.

The method resembles giving a material a microscopic "poke," reversing time evolution, and listening for the returning echo. The echo's strength reveals how quickly information disperses, offering insight for chemistry, materials science, and superconductivity. Despite its scientific importance, the experiment does not bring the world closer to breaking encryption or to Q-day.

"Harvest now, decrypt later"

Q-day refers to the day a cryptographically relevant quantum computer becomes powerful enough to break public-key encryption. It would not instantly expose all secrets, but any encrypted data stored today could be decoded later if intercepted now — a risk known as "harvest now, decrypt later."

Governments and researchers are already preparing. The U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has standardised new post-quantum cryptography (PQC) algorithms — CRYSTALS-Kyber for encryption and Dilithium for digital signatures. These rely on mathematical problems that are believed to resist both classical and quantum attacks. Experts expect that machines capable of breaking RSA-2048 will need millions of logical qubits, which could take 5 to 8 years to build. [RSA-2048 is a commonly used standard for public-key cryptography.] Until then, Q-day remains a theoretical horizon, but one the cybersecurity world takes seriously. Public-key cryptography secures nearly all online communication. RSA encryption works by multiplying two large prime numbers to create an enormous product. Multiplication is easy, but reversing it and finding the original primes is so difficult that even the fastest classical computers would need billions of years to solve it.

Machines that test multiple possibilities. Quantum computers operate under the laws of quantum mechanics. Their building blocks, called qubits, exploit superposition — the ability to exist as both 0 and 1 simultaneously — and entanglement — where qubits influence each other instantly, even when far apart. These features let quantum machines test many possibilities at once rather than sequentially. This aspect of existing in multiple places at the same time powers Shor's algorithm, which converts the hard task of factoring numbers into one of finding repeating patterns, or periods, in modular arithmetic. To expose those patterns, the algorithm uses the Quantum Fourier Transform (QFT), a mathematical tool that acts like a detector of hidden rhythms within a signal. Scaling this method to large RSA numbers would let a quantum computer find their prime factors exponentially faster than classical machines.

Craig Gidney and Martin Eker of Google Research

Health security se National security: Why does Centre want to levy cess on tobacco?

Story so far: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025 on Thursday (December 4, 2025), kicking off the Centre's reform agenda for Parliament's Winter session. The Bill proposes to levy cess on "machines installed, or other processes undertaken in the manufacture of pan masala" to fund India's "health and national security". The Lok Sabha has already passed the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the amended Manipur Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill, 2025 while the above-mentioned Bill is currently slated for debate and passage. Introduced as a money Bill, the Health security se National security Cess Bill, 2025 need only be passed by the Lok Sabha. The Upper House has 14 days to provide its recommendations on such a Bill which may or may not be accepted by the Lok Sabha. What does the Bill propose?

Termed the 'Health Security se National Security Cess', the Centre proposes to tax all those people who have machines installed for production of pan masala. The machines include fill and seal machines and any packing machine used to fill pan masala in in pouches, tins or other containers.

The cess will be decided as per number of pouches (tins or containers) produced by the machine per minute and pan masala weight packed in a pouch, tin or container. It will be collected at the beginning of each month, but no

later than the seventh. Those paying the cess can self-declare the machine installed or processes undertaken in their factories producing pan masala. Centre can exempt any one or any class from this cess, if it deems necessary in public interest. The cess has been classified into four categories based on the number of pouches it produces per minute — upto 500, 501-1000, 1001-1500 and above 1500. Correspondingly based on the weight of pan masala packed in each pouch (varying from 2.5 grams to above 10 grams), the cess varies from ₹101 lakh per month per machine to ₹2.5 crores (approximately). It also criminalises any violations upto 5 years imprisonment. According to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS-2), nearly 42% of men and 14% of women in India use tobacco. Moreover, India amounts to 70% of the world's smokeless tobacco (SLT) users i.e. gutkha, pan masala and among smoked tobacco, bidis are preferred over cigarettes, especially in rural and lower income families. As both SLT and smoked tobacco use increase cancer risk in lung, head, neck, stomach, and pancreas, India ranks first globally in male cancer deaths. Experts found that the economic cost of both SLT and smoked tobacco amounted to ₹1.77 lakh crore in 2016-17. Centre's ban on use of gutkha has more or less remained ineffective as the tobacco industry has ensured wide accessibility of its products via policy interference, pricing tactics, targeted marketing and dense tobacco shop networks.

A perfect blend of finesse and power



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Death knell for the rural job guarantee



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

U.S. FDA approves Wegovy pill for weight loss

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

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

"There's an entire demographic that can benefit from the pills," said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, a Massachusetts General Hospital obesity expert. "For me, it's not just about who gets it across the finish line first. It's about having these options available to patients." The Novo Nordisk obesity pill contains 25 milligrams of semaglutide. That's the same ingredient in injectables Wegovy and Ozempic and in Rybelsus, a lower-dose pill approved to treat diabetes in 2019. Clinical trials in a clinical trial, participants who took oral Wegovy lost 13.6% of their total body weight on average over about 15 months, compared with a 2.2% loss if they took a placebo, or dummy pill. That's nearly the same as injectable Wegovy, with an average weight loss of about 15%. Chris Mertens, 35, a pediatric lung doctor in

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

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

Himachal Pradesh needs a financial boost

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

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

so that they are not unduly encumbered.

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

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

Trump repeats claim he stopped potential nuclear war between India and Pakistan



New York/Washington: US President Donald Trump has repeated his claim of resolving the India-Pakistan conflict and asserted that Islamabad's leadership credited him for saving millions of lives. "We stopped a potential nuclear war between Pakistan and India. And the head of Pakistan, a highly respected General, he's a Field Marshal and also the Prime Minister of Pakistan, said

President Trump saved 10 million lives, maybe more..." Trump said Monday.

He made these remarks at Mar-a-Lago, Florida, flanked by Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, Navy Secretary John Phelan, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. "You know, eight planes were shot down. That war was starting to rage, and he actually said the other day that President Trump saved 10 million lives, maybe more. So we solved all these wars. The only one I haven't solved yet is Russia, Ukraine," he said. Since May 10, when Trump announced on social media that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington, he has repeated his claim over 60 times that he "helped settle" the tensions between the two neighbours. New Delhi has consistently denied any third-party intervention. India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgaam attack that killed 26 civilians. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

Bangladesh summons Indian envoy over security concerns for missions

Dhaka: Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, was on Tuesday summoned to Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs amid concerns over the security of Bangladeshi missions in India. Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam summoned the Indian High Commissioner, Prothomo. com reported. Diplomatic sources confirmed the matter. According to the sources, Verma was summoned in light of the emerging security situation surrounding Bangladesh missions located in various parts of India, including New Delhi and Kolkata, the report added. Diplomatic sources said that Verma has been requested to ensure strengthened security for Bangladesh missions located in various parts of India.

This marks the second time in the past 10 days that Verma has been summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The neighbouring country's envoy has been summoned at least six times over various incidents during the tenure of the interim government. Before today, Verma was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on 14 December. A state-



ment issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following that meeting said that India's cooperation was sought to prevent the attackers who assaulted Inquilab Moncho convener Sharif Osman Hadi from fleeing to India, the report added.

New York Assemblywoman condemns mob killing of Hindu youth in Bangladesh



Washington: Condemning the mob lynching of a young Hindu man in Bangladesh, New York State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar warned of what she described as a troubling pattern of violence and persecution targeting religious minorities in the country. In a statement, Rajkumar said she was "deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority," citing the killing of Dipu Chandra Das as the most recent and brutal example.

"The horrific mob killing of Dipu Chandra Das underscores a troubling pattern of violence against Hindus and religious minorities in Bangladesh," Rajkumar said. "We must stand together—from Queens to across the globe—for human rights, justice, and religious freedom." Das, a Hindu Bangladeshi, was just 25 years old when he was killed. Rajkumar said a mob attacked him, beat him, set him ablaze, and left his body on a highway. Authorities have reportedly arrested twelve individuals in connection with the killing. "I am deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority, exemplified most recently by the brutal

lynching of Hindu Bangladeshi Dipu Chandra Das, who was just 25 years old," she said in the statement. The assemblywoman said the killing was not an isolated incident but part of a wider pattern of religious persecution and targeted violence against minorities in Bangladesh. "This incident is part of a troubling pattern of religious persecution and targeted violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh," Rajkumar said. She pointed to figures documented by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, which she said recorded thousands of incidents over the past year. "The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council documented 2,442 incidents of violence against minorities and over 150 temples vandalized from August 2024 to July 2025," the statement said.

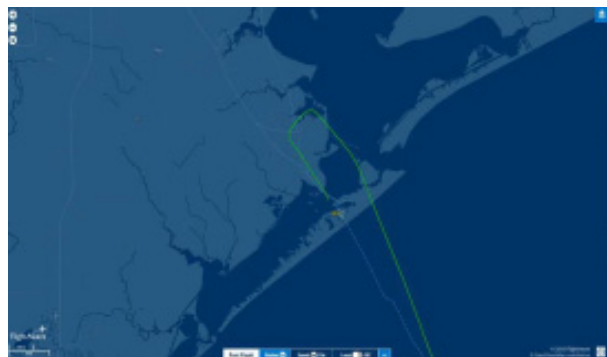
Rajkumar said such figures reflected a climate of fear and insecurity for minority communities, particularly Hindus, in Bangladesh. She added that the impact of such violence extends far beyond the country's borders. "From Queens to countries across the globe, we all share in the fear, pain, and uncertainty faced by Hindus in Bangladesh," she said. Rajkumar said she stood in solidarity with Bangladesh's Hindu community and reiterated her support for protecting human rights and religious freedom worldwide. "We stand in solidarity with Bangladesh's Hindu community and for human rights and religious freedom globally," she said. Rajkumar represents a district in Queens, New York, home to a large and diverse immigrant population, including members of the South Asian and Bangladeshi diaspora. She has frequently spoken on issues related to civil rights, religious freedom, and the protection of minority communities. The statement comes amid growing concern among diaspora groups and human rights advocates over reports of violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, particularly following episodes of political unrest and social tension.

Mexican Navy aircraft carrying child patient crashes off Texas coast, five dead

Galveston (US): A small Mexican Navy plane transporting a young medical patient and seven others crashed Monday near Galveston, killing at least five people and setting off a search in the waters off the Texas coast, officials said. Four of the people aboard were Navy officers, and four were civilians, including a child, Mexico's Navy said in a statement to The Associated Press. It was not immediately clear which of them died.

Two of the people aboard were members of the Michou and Mau Foundation, which is a nonprofit that provides aid to Mexican children who have suffered severe burns. The US Coast Guard confirmed that five people had been killed in the crash and that the cause of the crash is under investigation. The crash took place Monday afternoon near the base of a causeway near Galveston, along the Texas coast about 50 miles (80.5 kilometres) southeast of Houston.

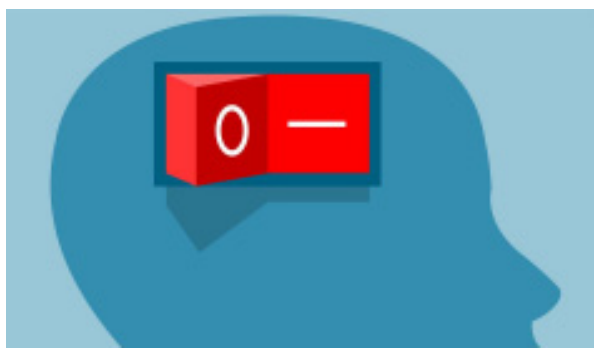
Mexico's Navy said in a statement that the plane was helping with a medical mission and had an "accident." It promised to investigate the cause of the crash. The Navy is helping local authorities with the search and rescue operation, it said in a post on the social media platform X. Teams from the Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board have arrived at the scene of the crash, the Texas Department of Public Safety said on X. The Galveston County Sheriff's Office said officials from its dive team, crime scene unit, drone unit and patrol were responding to the crash. "The incident remains under investigation, and additional information will be released as it becomes available," the sheriff's office said in a post on Facebook, adding that the public should avoid the area so emergency responders can work safely. Galveston is an island that is a



At least five people were killed when a Mexican Navy plane on a medical mission crashed near Galveston, Texas. The aircraft carried Navy officers, civilians and a child patient. US authorities have launched a search and investigation as foggy conditions persist.

popular beach destination. It's not immediately clear if the weather was a factor. However, the area has been experiencing foggy conditions over the past few days, according to Cameron Batiste, a National Weather Service meteorologist. He said that at about 2:30 pm on Monday a fog came in that had about a half-mile visibility. The foggy conditions are expected to persist through Tuesday morning.

Right to Disconnect: Drawing the line after work



The Right to Disconnect Bill has been introduced as a private member's bill, a form of legislation that is rarely enacted. It comes in the context of India's recent consolidation of labour law through the four labour codes, which regulate working hours, overtime, and employer control. Against this background, the Bill marks a pivotal moment in Indian labour law. In this age of digital technologies, work increasingly extends beyond the physical workspace. Therefore, it is only prudent for the legislature to reconsider how labour law responds to constant connectivity. However, it does so in a framework that regulates work primarily through time-based constructs. Indian labour law is yet to define what constitutes as 'work' in a digital economy. While the Bill regulates after-hours communication, it does so without clarifying the scope of 'work'. This omission becomes crucial when the Bill is read alongside other codes governing working time and employer control. Therefore, we examine unresolved questions concerning the definition of 'work', the scope of the proposed right, and its potential constitutional character, while drawing a comparison as well. Some ambiguity

The Bill provides employees the right to not respond to work-related calls or mails beyond the prescribed working hours. However, it fails to address whether such after-hours engagement falls within the legal constructs of work. This ambiguity is particularly obvious in the interaction of the Bill with the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, which continues governing working hours and overtime in Indian labour law. However, the Bill does not clarify whether after-hours digital engagement amounts to "work" under the Code. This inadvertently creates a conceptual gap where communication is regulated without being integrated in the legal framework governing working time. As a consequence, the right to disconnect operates more as a behavioural norm than a labour standard. Approach of other jurisdictions

The gaps become apparent when compared with ju-

risdictions that have already imbibed the right to disconnect in their legal regimes. In the European Union, employer control became a key parameter for assessing working time. Through judicial precedents, an expansive definition was adopted, which included on-call time, standby periods, and other forms of availability, even where no active work is performed but the employer continues to exercise control. This principle further evolved through decisions such as SIMAP, Tyco, and Jaeger, where the European Court of Justice equated employer's control with work. Similarly, France does not try to redefine work. Instead, its labour law demarcates working time and rest time. Periods of availability under employer control are considered working time, and digital communication is integrated into this framework through collective bargaining. Germany enforces strict working time and rest period regulations as well. These comparisons are not offered for replication in India, but to engage with an unresolved legal question: when does an employee's time belong to the employer? The Indian labour code contains mandatory rules, prescribing limits on working hours, and contractual terms negotiated through employer policy and agreements. The Right to Disconnect Bill does not specify whether the given right is a mandatory labour standard or its term can be modified via a contract. Another question concerns the Bill's constitutional character. The freedom to disengage bears an evident relationship with Article 21 of the Constitution. Yet the Bill neither traces its constitutional lineage nor articulates how these guarantees are to be realised within the workplace. The Bill leaves unresolved whether the right to disconnect is purely statutory or indicative of a deeper constitutional engagement between work and individual autonomy. Conclusion The Bill recognises that digital work has blurred the traditional boundaries between working time and personal time, but it does not explain how this transformation is to be accommodated within the legal framework which governs working hours, overtime and employer control. A comparative study reveals that the right to disconnect becomes effective when an employee's time is treated as working time. This gap is yet to be filled. Until the Bill addresses how digital labour complies with existing labour laws, it will continue to rely on a framework designed for regulating physical workplaces. The Bill leaves open whether the right has a constitutional character. Although there is an evident connection between Right to Disconnect and individual autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution, this is not made apparent by the legislature. The Bill neither identifies this gap nor acknowledges it, which leaves it open to divergent interpretations. For these reasons, the Bill is best seen as the beginning of a broader conversation, one that the Indian labour law jurisprudence will eventually address.

Zelensky says progress in U.S.-led peace talks is 'quite solid'



Initial drafts of U.S. proposals for a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia meet many of Kyiv's demands, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday (December 22, 2025). However, he suggested that neither side in the almost four-year war is likely to get everything it wants in talks on reaching a settlement. "Overall, it looks quite solid at this stage," the Ukrainian leader said of recent talks with U.S. officials who are trying to steer the neighbouring countries toward compromises.

"There are some things we are probably not ready for, and I'm sure there are things the Russians are not ready for either," Mr. Zelenskyy told reporters in Kyiv. U.S. President Donald Trump has for months been pushing for a peace agreement. However, the negotiations have run into sharply conflicting demands from Moscow and Kyiv. But U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said on Sunday (December 21) he held "productive and constructive" talks in Florida with Ukrainian and European representatives.

Mr. Zelenskyy said that "nearly 90%" of Ukraine's demands have been incorporated into the draft agreements. The backbone of the proposed deal is a 20-point plan, he said. There is also a framework document on security guarantees between Ukraine, European countries, and the United States, as well as a separate document on bilateral security guarantees granted to Ukraine by the U.S. Mr. Zelenskyy mentioned several key points, such as the Ukrainian army remaining at a peacetime level of 800,000; membership in the European Union; and European forces, under the leadership of France and the UK and with a "backstop" from Washington, ensuring "Ukraine's security in the air, on land, and at sea." "Some key countries will provide presence in these domains; others will contribute to energy security, finance, bomb shelters, and so on," the Ukrainian president said. Ukraine is arguing that the bilateral document with the US should be reviewed by the U.S. Congress, with some details and annexes kept classified, Mr. Zelenskyy said. The U.S. team is now in talks with Russian envoys, and Washington has asked that no details be released, he added.

Ukraine strikes deep inside Russia. Mr. Zelenskyy said on Monday (December 22) he met with his military commanders, who reported that defensive lines are holding firm against the Russian onslaught. "In (recent) weeks, the Russian army has significantly increased the intensity of attacks, and the number of Russian losses has increased accordingly," he said in a post on Telegram. Ukrainian forces hit an oil terminal, a pipeline, two parked jet fighters and two ships in a series of strikes on Russian soil, officials said Monday. The attacks are part of an ongoing campaign to disrupt the Russian war effort and sow fear behind the front line, where outnumbered Ukrainian troops are straining to hold back Russia's bigger army.

The strikes also seek to undermine President Vladimir Putin's attempt to portray Russia as negotiating from a position of military strength in U.S.-led peace efforts, which have yet to make a breakthrough on key points. The killing of a top Russian general by a car bomb in Moscow on Monday, with investigators suspecting Ukraine was behind it, could be another instance of Kyiv picking surprise targets.

Ukrainian partisans burn Russian fighter jets. Ukrainian forces struck the Tamanneftegaz oil terminal, an ammunition depot and a launch site for attack drones inside Russian territory and Russian-held Ukrainian territory, Ukraine's General Staff said in a statement on Monday (December 22). A pipeline, two docks and two ships were damaged in the southern Krasnodar region, and a large blaze broke out, the statement said, without specifying what kind of weapons were used in the attack. It added that a Ukrainian-made missile also hit a temporary base for Russia's 92nd River Boat Brigade in Olenivka, in the occupied Crimean Peninsula. A separate strike targeted an ammunition depot in a Russian-controlled portion of the Donetsk region, aiming to slow the Russian advance there, the General Staff said. A Russian launch site for attack drones was also hit. Ukrainian partisans set fire to two Russian jet fighters in an operation on Sunday evening at a base near Lipetsk, a city in western Russia, according to Ukraine's military intelligence. Russia's Ministry of Defence said only that its forces shot down 41 Ukrainian drones overnight, three of them over the Krasnodar region. Meanwhile, Russian forces kept up their targeting of Ukraine's energy sector, aiming to deprive civilians of heat and running water during the frigid winter. Russia has tried to knock out power in Ukraine throughout the war, in a tactic that Ukraine refers to as "weaponising winter." Energy infrastructure across five regions was attacked during the night, Ukraine's Ministry of Energy said. Russia struck Ukraine with 86 drones of different types overnight, Ukraine's air force said. Ukrainian forces stopped 58 of them, it said.

Shriram Finance expects MUFG transaction likely to finalised around March-April

We would want the MUFG transaction to be finalised by April-March next year, Parag Sharma, managing director and chief executive officer at Shriram Finance told The Hindu in response to a query about the timeline for completion of the transaction. "We would ideally want the transaction to be completed around March-April next year," he stated, adding, "We would be calling for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) for [seeking] shareholders' approval around the middle of January."

Mr. Sharma informed that the transaction would require approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). He exuded confidence about receiving approval from the apex banking regulator considering their positive push in the non-banking

financial services space. In a deal suggested to be the largest foreign direct investment in a financial services company in India, the non-banking financial company (NBFC) informed Monday that their board of directors approved acquiring an investment of ₹39,618 crore from Japanese financial services provider MUFG in return for a 20% stake in the Chennai-headquartered company. The deal would be facilitated through a preferential issuance of equity shares. Further, responding to a query about MUFG potentially increasing their stake in the Chennai-headquartered company, Yasushi Itagaki, Group Head of the Global Commercial Banking Business Group at MUFG said they were happy with their present status as the "significant minority shareholder".

Western Command and NDMA's disaster mgmt conclave: Speakers stress 'first 24 hours most critical', suggest regular mock drills to enhance disaster preparedness



National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) member Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd) on Wednesday stressed conducting frequent mock exercises to enhance disaster preparedness across the country and shifting from reactive response to proactive resilience. Lt Gen Hasnain was speaking at the Western Command Disaster Management Conclave on 'Disaster Risk Resilience' organised by the Western Command Headquarters, in collaboration with the NDMA, at Chandimandir, Panchkula.

The conclave opened with a series of key addresses, outlining the vision for a more robust national safety framework. "Such exercises focus on strengthening response coordination, testing emergency plans, and better preparedness for various disasters among agencies that are involved to tackle them," Lt Gen Hasnain said, delivering the opening address. The conclave identified concrete action points for 2026, including the development of joint training calendars and a unified command structure to enhance inter-agency coordination. In the coming weeks, a mega mock drill has been planned for Punjab. The event brought together senior military officials, NDMA policymakers, state disaster management representatives, and academic and technical experts to foster greater civil-military synergy and integrate advanced technologies into national disaster governance, according to a Western Command statement. Stressing resource mapping, Lt Gen Hasnain said, "When disasters strike, civil and other agencies involved should know what equipment and resources are available so that these can be immediately put to action."

Delivering a keynote address, NDMA member and Head of Department Rajendra Singh lauded the exemplary role played by the Army's Western Command during the devastating flood in Punjab last year that claimed about 60 lives and caused extensive damage to infrastructure and crops. "When lives, livelihood and critical infrastructure were under serious stress, the Indian Army sprang into action with remarkable speed, professionalism and compassion. Army columns were among the first responders on the ground, rescuing citizens and providing essential relief material, restoring connectivity and instilling confidence

in disaster-affected people," he said. Delivering a plenary address, Lt Gen Manoj Kumar Katiyar, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Command, reiterated the Indian Army's role as the "preferred responder" in extreme crisis situations. Lt Gen K S Brar (retd), who has been part of several Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations, including the Wayanad landslide in 2024, stressed that the first 24 hours are most critical.

"...If you have to save lives, do any kind of mitigation, you have to react very fast," he said, underlining that synergy and preparedness are key in responding to various kinds of disasters. "Now, there are AI models, how much water can be released from upstream, how far it will flow, you can do a digital simulation. So, all models can be made, and one can have a digital model of what has to be done," he said. Exploring ways to harmonise protocols and maximise the critical "Golden Hour" in relief operations, Lt Gen Ajay Chandpuria, General Officer Commanding 11 Corps, said a large part of the northern region is exposed to a wide range of hazards, including seismic, floods, landslides, avalanches, cloudburst, extreme weather and man-made disasters. The landscape is not only diverse, but it is operationally demanding. The nature of the terrain, population density, and other aspects involved pose a clear operational imperative on how we plan, deploy and respond to various challenges. "Disasters also have a national security implication, and hence, the armed forces have a mandated role to respond to it as a whole of nation or whole of society approach," Lt Gen Chandpuria said.

The technical sessions highlighted innovation and lessons from recent disasters. Dr Kala Venkat Udhay from IIT Mandi presented advancements in remote sensing and landslide early warning systems. Mohammad Afzal, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Power, spoke about reducing vulnerabilities in hydroelectric river basins. Commandant Santosh Kumar of the 7th Battalion NDRF shared operational insights and challenges from the 2025 floods and proposed solutions to improve resource mobilisation for future urban and rural flooding scenarios. A dedicated panel discussion featuring KK Pant, Additional Chief Secretary, Himachal Pradesh, Snober Jamil from the State Disaster Management Authority, Jammu & Kashmir, and Mohsen Shahidi, DIG Operations, HQ NDRF, examined gaps in state-level frameworks and the game-changing potential of artificial intelligence in disaster management. Meanwhile, an interactive exhibition showcased the country's growing indigenous disaster response capabilities, such as AI-integrated next-generation early warning systems, satellite-linked communication modules resilient to network failures, high-altitude rescue equipment, CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear) protection suits, advanced medical trauma kits, and community outreach programs aimed at turning local populations into the first line of defence.

'Direct link to passenger safety': Delhi High Court asks for DGCA's response on revised norms for pilot rest

Highlighting that the relaxation has "increased accident risk, pilot fatigue exposure", the petitioners have also objected to Indigo and other airlines marketing themselves as "low cost airline". Highlighting that the relaxation has "increased accident risk, pilot fatigue exposure", the petitioners have also objected to Indigo and other airlines marketing themselves as "low cost airline". The Delhi High Court Wednesday, while hearing a Public Interest Litigation raising concerns on the "illegal dilution of fatigue norms" for airlines' pilots, told the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to take instructions on the issue and report back to the court Thursday, even as IndiGo questioned the maintainability of the PIL. In their PIL, Sabari Roy Lenka, a former aircraft engineer, Aman Monga, a crew resource management trainer, and Kiran Singh, a social worker, have objected to the relaxation of the weekly rest clause as stipulated under the revised Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms, by way of a DGCA order on December 5, 2025. The relaxation came following en masse IndiGo flight cancellations and delays, leading to a collapse and chaos in the aviation sector.

Highlighting that the relaxation has "increased accident risk, pilot fatigue exposure", the petitioners have also objected to Indigo and other airlines marketing themselves as "low cost airline". The petitioners seek that DGCA's December order be quashed and set aside, and that all scheduled airlines operating in India be immediately restrained from describing, projecting, or advertising themselves as "low cost airlines" on their websites, booking portals, etc., as there is no such statutory recognition under the laws and rules. IndiGo, which is the only airline under a party to the litigation, represented by Senior Advocate Sandeep Sethi, raised an objection to the maintainability of the petition, questioning the petitioners' locus. "How are they concerned? They are not a pilot."

While the bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia orally observed that the DGCA order only allowed for deferment of implementing the FDTL norms in toto in the back of the IndiGo crisis, CJ Upadhyaya, addressing IndiGo's counsel, orally remarked, "We cannot straightaway rule out his standing. Petitioner 1 has been an aircraft engineer." The regulator has prescribed a certain period of rest for the pilots. This has a direct link to passenger safety. So, the concern cannot be ruled out altogether. If the regulator has provided some regulations, unless they are challenged or there is an inherent flaw, it needs to enforce them. The new regulations are not being practically followed... So concerns expressed in the petition cannot be brushed aside. "The petition points out public safety in general, so we can't say that the petition can't be maintained. It is only that at the moment, there must be some rationale available with DGCA (for putting the norms in abeyance)," CJ Upadhyaya added orally. The new FDTL rules were implemented in two phases to better manage pilot fatigue, a key risk to aviation safety. Under the new rules, the weekly rest period for pilots was increased to 48 hours from 36, and night landings were limited to two from six earlier. The night-duty-related changes took effect on November 1, 2025, and began affecting IndiGo's flight operations, as the airline operates a significant number of night-time flights and relies on high utilisation rates for aircraft and crew. The ex-



emptions granted to IndiGo include that the airline's definition of "night" will be midnight to 5 am, instead of midnight to 6 am, as prescribed in the new FDTL rules. The exemptions also allow IndiGo pilots flying during these hours to perform up to six landings, whereas the new norms capped night landings at just two.

25 cases of hate speech still pending: Akal Takht on police action against Delhi youth

The Punjab Police's swift action in Amritsar against a youth, who rinsed his mouth in Darbar Sahib's sacred sarovar, for hurting Sikh sentiments has raised questions on the law enforcement agency's functioning in other such cases.

The accused, Subhan Rangrez, has been sent to police remand for three days by the court on Wednesday, after which police brought him to Amritsar. The youth from Delhi had come to Darbar Sahib on January 13, where he allegedly rinsed his mouth in the sarovar. He roamed around the Darbar Sahib complex and had a video shot by another companion.

Following a complaint by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), police arrested him within three days and registered a case of sacrilege against him. The SGPC lawyer, Amanbir Siali, highlighted the glaring inconsistencies in handling of cases involving hurt religious sentiments by police. While this incident led to a swift arrest, some older complaints against social media offenders have been stalled for years. One such offender includes a Gujarat woman named Archana Makwana. Makwana was also booked for hurting Sikh sentiments after she performed Yoga in Darbar Sahib premises on June 21, 2024 — World Yoga Day. "We have filed an application in court for directions regarding her arrest," Siali said. No chargesheet has been filed in the Makwana case and the accused has neither obtained anticipatory bail nor joined the investigation, he said. "Police is actually defending Makwana in court as in response to our demand of her arrest, police informed court that Makwana has apologised to SGPC via email."

Politically attractive Mukh Mantri Sehat Bima Yojana is economically hollow: Tarun Chugh



Terming the AAP government's Mukh Mantri Sehat Bima Yojana (MMSBY) "misleading, impractical and entirely publicity-driven", BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh on Wednesday said the rigid package capping was the biggest and most fundamental failure of the scheme, exposing the Rs 10-lakh health coverage claim as "hollow" from the very beginning. "The central government's scheme Ayushman Bharat provides genuine, pre-insured protection, but AAP's MMSBY rests on hollow claims and weak foundations," he said, addressing a press conference in Chandigarh.

Chugh said, "The biggest lie of this Kejriwal-Mann scheme is the promise of Rs 10 lakh health security. The reality is that the scheme provides actual insurance of only Rs 1 lakh per family, while the remaining Rs 9 lakh is left to the mercy of the debt-ridden Punjab government. Where will this Rs 9 lakh come from when the state is already struggling financially?" Chugh said, "Kejriwal and his party are loudly advertising the false Rs 10-lakh claim, but they have imposed such harsh capping on even the most se-

rious medical procedures that proper treatment becomes impossible. When treatment caps are fixed so low that complete care for critical illnesses cannot be provided, the Rs 10 lakh promise remains nothing more than a paper claim." He alleged that the scheme had been deliberately designed to either offer incomplete treatment or force patients to pay heavily from their own pockets.

Referring to Ayushman Bharat, Chugh said the central government's scheme sets a national benchmark by fixing package rates based on the actual cost of treatment. "In contrast, the MMSBY has imposed extremely low caps on complex procedures like heart surgery, brain surgery and knee replacement, pushing major and credible hospitals away from the scheme and leaving the poor and middle class to suffer." Chugh said it took the Mann government 48 months just to announce this scheme, and even now, the government itself admitted that it would take several more months to implement. "The truth is that patients will not get treatment under this scheme, but in an election year, AAP will use public money only for self-promotion and propaganda." Raising serious concerns over Punjab's deteriorating financial condition, Chugh said, "The state is already burdened with debt exceeding Rs 4 lakh crore. Over the past four years, the Mann government has added more than Rs 1 lakh crore of fresh debt, and in the current financial year alone, Punjab must repay Rs 90,000 crore. While the government claims it has no money to pay DA to its employees, it has ample funds for Kejriwal's helicopter rides." Chugh further said, "If even one per cent of families avail benefits under the scheme, the annual expenditure would reach Rs 6,500 crore, while the budget allocation remains negligible. The real debate is not Rs 5 lakh versus Rs 10 lakh, but real insurance versus paper promises."

Chandigarh man booked for illegal possession of two Indian parakeets



Range Forest Officer, posted at Paryavaran Bhawan, Sector 19-B, Chandigarh.

As per the wildlife department officials, they received information from former Union Minister Maneka Gandhi. Gandhi alerted the department about the alleged illegal captivity of two Indian parakeets by the accused. Following this, a team of the wildlife department conducted an inspection of the area on January 24. During the inspection, the team found and rescued the two parakeets confined inside the accused's house.

Both parakeets were placed under the supervision of the department's veterinary doctor. Officials said the birds are in a safe environment and their health condition is being closely monitored. Further action regarding their rehabilitation and release will be taken as per established wildlife conservation protocols. Police said further investigation is underway to determine how the birds were procured and whether any other individuals were involved in the offence. According to the wildlife department, the Indian rose-ringed parakeet is a protected species listed under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and keeping, capturing or confining the bird without official permission is a punishable offence under the law.

Police in Chandigarh have registered a case against a man for allegedly illegally keeping two Indian rose-ringed parakeets at his residence, violating the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, following a UT Forest and Wildlife Department official's complaint. Police said the case was registered against Sandeep Kumar, a resident of Chandigarh's Sector 24, at Police Station Sector 11 under Sections 9, 39(3)(A) and 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The complaint was filed by Jatinder Singh,

New Chandigarh Golf Club president lays out 100-day reform agenda

Three days after being elected president of the Chandigarh Golf Club with the highest winning margin in recent years, Major Rajinder Singh Lally (retd) has outlined an ambitious first-100-day agenda focused on professional management, governance reforms and member welfare. Virk, 57, defeated Capt Mohanbir Singh (retd) by 304 votes in the recently concluded elections. Speaking to The Indian Express, he said the mandate reflected members' desire for a more transparent, accountable and progressive club administration. The main focus will be professional course management. We plan to appoint a professional consultant to improve course maintenance and playing conditions," Virk said, adding that improving the overall golfing experience would be a priority in the initial months.

Another key area identified by the new president is a comprehensive review of the Chandigarh Golf League. He said the league format would be refined in consultation with stakeholders and team owners, with attention to handicapping, scheduling and transparency. "The aim is to ensure satisfaction for all members, both league participants and regular players," he said. Virk said governance reforms would form a major plank of his agenda to enhance accountability and transparency. These include proposed amendments to the club bylaws to extend the managing committee's tenure to two years, hold separate elections for the club captain, introduce seamless digital voting, and regularise and digitise Annual General Meetings. He also proposed a model code of conduct to keep election months free from official party activities.

Digital transformation will accompany these reforms, with greater use of online platforms for AGMs and member-related processes to improve accessibility and transparency. The new president also flagged long-pending civic issues within the club premises. A dedicated team will be set up to propose and implement a sustainable parking solution. Caddy welfare will be another focus area, with plans to improve caddy hut facilities and review working conditions to ensure their well-being. "We will keep the club community informed at every step, and I remain fully accessible to members for ideas, suggestions and feedback," Virk said. Twelve members were elected to the managing com-



mittee: Jasprat Singh Sekhon (765 votes), Amarbir Singh Lehal (755), Brigadier TS Mundi (720), Dr Angad Singh Sangha (666), Raman Singh Gill (642), Dr Atul Sachdev (597), Amarinder Singh Aulakh (590), Alamgir Grewal (573), APA Kahai (570), Shona Singh (559), JS Toor (557) and Brigadier Balvinder Singh (547). Dr Atul Sachdev has been appointed senior vice president, and JS Toor the vice-president while Alamgir Grewal has been named the club captain. Amarbir Singh Lehal will serve as secretary and Brigadier TS Mundi as treasurer. Sachdev will also chair the medical camps subcommittee and coordinate the Chandigarh Golf League, while Toor will head the entertainment and legal affairs subcommittees. Shona Manco will chair tournament and handicapping, while Grewal will chair the greens subcommittee, Lehal the HRD and new construction subcommittees, and Mundi the finance, food and bar, discipline, and IT and digitalisation subcommittees. Other members will oversee additional areas of club functioning.

2022, 2023 and 2024 respectively. His latest Laadli Award, in November 2025, came for an article on Deepthi Jeevanji, who won India's first gold medal at the World Athletics Para Championship and was lauded for her unusual features as a child. Nitin mainly covers Olympics sports disciplines with his main interests in shooting, boxing, wrestling, athletics and much more. The last 17 years with The Indian

Former Congress MP flags IPS officers' role in land settlements

Hyderabad: Expressing concern over deteriorating policing in the State, former Congress MP Madhu Yashki Goud alleged that a few IPS officers were setting aside their responsibility of monitoring law and order and were involving themselves in land settlements. Speaking during an informal interaction with media persons at Gandhi Bhavan on Wednesday, he said a senior IPS officer was more focused on hitting headlines in the media and interfering in land disputes. The officer was misusing power and subjecting the poor and innocent to harassment, he alleged.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had clearly instructed

police officials to handle and investigate cases strictly as per rules and procedure. However, instead of following established norms, a few officers, under the guise of investigation, were taking people into custody late at night, he said. "I strongly condemn the conduct of a few IPS officers. Due to their conduct, the Congress government's image is taking a hit," Goud charged. He said the officials should bear in mind that the Congress government had come to power in Telangana and should work accordingly. They could not continue to function as they did during the previous government's tenure, he stressed.

India, the beautiful — but first, India the functional



India is a land of astonishing contrasts. It offers snow-capped peaks and sun-drenched beaches, ancient temples and cutting-edge tech parks, spiritual retreats and bustling bazaars. Yet, despite this kaleidoscope of experiences, India welcomed just 5.6 million foreign tourist arrivals till August 2025 — a modest figure for a country of 1.4 billion. Singapore, with a population smaller than Delhi's, drew 11.6 million by August 2025. Thailand earned over \$60 billion from tourism; India made barely a third of that. These numbers are not just statistical curiosities. They reflect a deeper malaise in India's tourism strategy — one that demands urgent attention if we are to unlock the sector's full potential. Tourism is not merely about showcasing monuments or selling sunsets; it is about creating experiences that are seamless, safe, and memorable. And on that front, India has work to do.

Three main problems India's problems can be summarised in three "I"s: image, infrastructure and 'India itself'. Let us analyse each. First, image: the perception of the country abroad. India's 'Incredible India' campaign is evocative, but branding alone cannot overcome the weight of negative headlines. Concerns about safety, especially for women, with many foreigners considering India to be unsafe for women travelling alone; scams; sanitation; and bureaucratic hassles often shape the global imagination more than our cultural richness. Tourists want to feel welcome, not wary. Singapore and Thailand have succeeded not just by being clean or affordable, but by being consistent in their messaging as safe, efficient, and, especially in Thailand's case, fun.

India's vastness makes a single narrative difficult, but that does not mean marketing the country is impossible. We must segment our appeal — Spiritual India, Adventure India, Luxury India — and market each with clarity and conviction to different audiences abroad. It is time for 'Incredible Indias', in the plural, to be sold to the world. The Buddhist circuit, the Ramayana circuit, even the cricketing circuit should all be marketed to appropriate foreign constituencies. Infrastructure is the second problem area. The tourist experience begins the moment one lands. Airports, immigration counters, taxis, Wi-Fi — these are first impressions. A luxury hotel means little if the road outside is potholed and the signage indecipherable. Last-mile connectivity to remote destinations remains a challenge. Clean public toilets, reliable internet, and well-maintained heritage sites are foundational. Paradoxically, while India can be a budget destination, mid-range and luxury travel often comes at a premium, making the country less competitive than its Southeast Asian neighbours.

Then comes 'India itself'. The sheer scale can overwhelm the uninitiated. Crowds, noise, and a service culture that is not always tourist-friendly can cause frustration. Scammers, touts, beggars and sexual harassers exist, and they erode trust. The hospitality sector reportedly faces a 40% shortfall in trained staff, and many graduates prefer the predictability of office jobs to the unpredictability of guest relations. We need vocational training, multilingual guides, and a professional workforce that sees tourism not as a fallback, but as a calling. Immigration, too, must evolve. While e-visas have helped, India still ranks behind many Asian countries on ease-of-travel indexes. A 'Visa on Arrival for the World' policy may sound ambitious, but it is worth exploring — though I am certain that would require a major transformation in the attitude of the Home Ministry. Stories of foreigners turned away at Indian airports because of past criticisms of the country do disproportionate damage. India is a large and confident nation; it can absorb dissent without rejecting the dissenter. We need to train immigration officers to be friendly and welcoming to foreigners. And as a nation, Indians need to accept criticism of policies as part

of democratic discourse. Fixing the deficit

Fixing India's tourism deficit therefore requires a multi-pronged strategy that addresses both perception and reality. First, rebrand and relaunch. Let us move beyond generic campaigns and build targeted narratives. Promote well-defined circuits — the Golden Triangle, the Himalayan trail, the coastal belt — with impeccable infrastructure and safety. Invest in digital storytelling: immersive virtual tours, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content that showcases India's magic through authentic lenses. If I were to write India's tourism tagline, I would say, 'Incredible Indias: Experience the Infinite'. 'Not just a place to visit, but a world to inhabit — spiritually, culturally, and emotionally.' Second, build infrastructure that matches ambition. Encourage public-private partnerships to adopt and maintain heritage sites. Scale up the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme for companies to renovate and maintain sites everywhere in India. Improve roads, rail, and sustainable transport to lesser-known gems. Launch a nationwide 'Clean Tourism' campaign with clean restrooms, signage, and waste management at every major destination. Make museums more digital, more interactive, less dusty and worn. Third, prioritise safety and training. Expand the tourist police force, especially by hiring and training large numbers of women; ensure multilingual support; and crack down on scams and harassment. Create centralised apps for verified guides and transport. Invest in skill development — not just for five-star hotels, but for homestays, eco-lodges, and local artisans. Fourth, streamline the visa process. Make e-visas faster, simpler, and more intuitive. Offer long-term multi-entry visas for frequent travellers. Reciprocity is the usual rule, but India can identify countries whose nationals are unlikely to pose any immigration risk, and make an exception to that rule. It is important to remove bureaucratic hurdles that deter rather than protect. Fifth, promote sustainability and authenticity. Today's global traveller seeks eco-tourism and meaningful experiences. India must balance growth with preservation. That means regulating footfalls at fragile sites, promoting community-based tourism, and ensuring that development does not come at the cost of cultural or environmental degradation.

Tourism must be a national priority. A World Tourism Organisation report notes investment on tourism creates multiple times more jobs than the same amounts spent on manufacturing. As automation reshapes industry, the differential will only increase. Tourism offers employment not just to more people, but particularly to the unskilled and semi-skilled — precisely the demographic that needs to be uplifted. In a region where youth unemployment can fuel unrest (as we have seen in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal), tourism is not just an economic opportunity; it is a strategic imperative. This is why it deserves to be supported by the government as a vital industry, with tax breaks and policy support. The hospitality industry is a curator of India's image in the eyes of the world. It is a shame that the otherwise rightly hailed GST reforms have left the hospitality industry behind. The denial of input tax credit across the full range of hotels' revenue sources ironically means that they were better off at 12% GST than they now are at 5%. This must be fixed. India has the history of Egypt, the natural beauty of New Zealand, and the cultural depth of a continent. But until we address the fundamentals — image, infrastructure, and experience — we will remain a tantalising idea rather than a top-tier destination. India doesn't need to reinvent itself. It needs to refine itself. The world is waiting. Let us give it a reason to come — and to stay. Shashi Tharoor, is the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram, an award-winning author, a former Minister of State for Human Rights Resources Development, and a former Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology.

Government unveils new Aadhaar app for faster, safer digital verification

New Delhi: The government has unveiled a new Aadhaar mobile app designed to make identity verification faster, safer and more citizen-friendly by enabling users to carry and share their digital identity from their mobile phones. The application allows users to present Aadhaar for verification without showing a physical card or submitting photocopies. Further, users can share only the specific details required on a use-case basis and will speed up identity checks at places such as airports, hotels, hospitals and on various service platforms.

Key features include QR code-based offline verification for hotel check-ins and similar services, optional face verification to confirm presence, and age verification for services such as movie bookings.

"Designed for ease of use across the entire spectrum of users, the Aadhaar App supports a wide range of real-life use cases. These include hotel check-ins through Offline Verification Seeking Entity's (OVSE) QR code scanning. It allows optional face verification, age verification for cinema ticket bookings, hospital admissions for visitors and attendants, verification of gig workers and service partners among many such use cases," an official statement said.

The app also lets users lock or unlock biometrics with a single click. Users can view their Aadhaar authentication history and manage up to five Aadhaar profiles on a single device under a "One Family-One App" feature. In addition to address updates, residents can now update their registered mobile number through the app, reducing the need to visit banks or Aadhaar update centres for minor changes.



More update services are planned in the future, the government said. The government said that Aadhaar numbers will not be stored by verifying agencies when data is shared through the application and only digitally signed and verified data will be exchanged, reducing the risk of misuse and aligning with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. The application, developed by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) was unveiled by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry and Electronics and IT, Jitlin Prasada. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology Secretary, S. Krishnan, said the new app will promote data minimisation and enhance security and promote selective sharing of information by Aadhaar number holders. Senior officials at UIDAI said the journey from paper to paperless is a great step forward, adding that the key feature of the app is selective credential sharing.

The new logic of the Chinese economy

As the global economic and trade order suffers a severe blow, the giant ship of the Chinese economy once again demonstrates its strong resilience, with its GDP exceeding 140 trillion yuan (approximately \$20 trillion) in 2025. This represents a year-on-year increase of 5%. China's contribution to global economic growth is expected to reach around 30%. This hard-won achievement has drawn significant global attention. I would like to share some views on several specific issues that Indian friends are concerned about.

What drives China's economic growth?

In 2025, China's economy moved forward, driven by consumption, exports, and investment, but its internal structure is undergoing a profound and positive transformation. Domestic demand is the primary engine of China's growth. In 2025, final consumption expenditure contributed 52% to economic growth. Some people may conclude that China has "insufficient consumption" simply because the prices of Chinese goods and services are significantly lower than the global average. In fact, measured by internationally accepted standards of physical consumption, China ranks among the world's top countries in terms of total basic consumption. Among these, the average number of mobile phones owned per person is 1.28, which is among the world's leading levels. The average daily protein intake is 124.6 grams, which is higher than that of the U.S. and Japan. The average annual vegetable consumption is 109.8 kilogrammes, the highest in the world. China's exports of goods and services demonstrated strong resilience, contributing 32.7% to economic growth and becoming a key booster. Despite an unfavourable international trade environment, 'Made in China', especially high-tech products, were widely popular thanks to its complete industrial chain and continuously improving innovation capabilities, with high-tech product exports growing by as much as 13.2% throughout the year. Exports to major markets such as ASEAN and the European Union maintained stable growth, effectively offsetting market fluctuations in other regions.

In contrast, gross capital formation contributed 15.3% to growth, which reveals that the Chinese economy is undergoing a difficult but necessary transformation of growth engines: from relying on investment and exports to a better model in which domestic consumption takes the lead, while export and innovation add impetus. Amid this transition, breakthroughs have been consistently achieved in cutting-edge fields such as AI, quantum technology, and brain-computer interfaces. The output of high-end manufacturing, including servers and industrial robots, has maintained rapid growth. Green industries such as renewable electricity and clean energy have flourished. These emerging drivers are clearly outlining the future course of the Chinese economy.

Why export production capacity?

China is not exporting "overcapacity," but rather high-quality production capacity and advanced solutions that are widely welcomed by developing countries. From the supply side, there is no "overcapacity" in China. In 2025, the capacity utilisation rate of China's above-designated-size



industry stood at 74.4%, equivalent to that of the U.S. and the EU across all sectors. The global competitiveness of Chinese products stems from long-term, high-intensity R&D investment, robust domestic competition, and the most comprehensive industrial system, rather than subsidies or dumping. From the demand side, the fundamental driving force behind the booming development of China's production capacity is the real demand from the global market. Many developing countries have enhanced their infrastructure, achieved energy transition and embarked on industrialisation by introducing high-quality Chinese equipment and technology. As the American economist, Jeffrey Sachs, pointed out, the Western labeling of Chinese manufacturing as "overcapacity" is out of "jealousy."

Mitigating India's trade deficit with China According to data from General Administration of Customs of China, China-India trade reached a historic high of \$155.6 billion in 2025. Many of the goods imported from China are raw materials and components that are much needed in India and that are conducive to India's economic development. This fully demonstrates the strong economic complementarity and great potential for cooperation between the two countries. Meanwhile, India's exports to China have shown positive momentum, reaching \$19.7 billion in 2025 and marking a year-on-year increase of 9.7%. Notably, growth rates in the last two months of 2025 were particularly strong, reaching 90% and 67% respectively. China has never deliberately pursued a trade surplus and is willing not only to be the world's factory but also the world's market. China's tariff level remains low by international standards at 7.3%. The negative list for foreign investment access has been continuously shortened, and China's visa-free policy keeps expanding. In particular, the Central Economic Work Conference identified "expanding domestic demand" as the top priority for economic work in 2026. With a population of over 1.4 billion, including more than 400 million in the middle-income group, China offers huge opportunities for high-quality Indian products. We welcome more Indian enterprises to leverage platforms such as the China International Import Expo to bring more premium Indian products to the Chinese market, transforming trade deficits into cooperative surpluses. By moving towards each other, we can share dividends of development and jointly create a brighter future for Asia.

Quenching Chennai's growing thirst



It is well known that Chennai and most of Tamil Nadu do not have much potential for tapping surface water and building any new reservoir, even for drinking water purposes. So, when the State government announces a plan to raise one, particularly for the city, the move should have drawn praise. Instead, the government is drawing flak from sections of fishermen and residents on the grounds that the initiative will "disrupt their livelihood and permanently alter" the fragile brackish-water ecosystem.

The project in question is the ₹342.6-crore Mamallan drinking water reservoir project, for which Chief Minister M.K. Stalin laid the foundation stone on January 19. Billed as the city's sixth drinking water source (the others being Cholavaram, Red Hills, Chembarappakkam, Kannankottai Thervoykandigai and Satyamurti Sagar in Poondi), the proposed reservoir will come up in two years near Mamallapuram, a world heritage site about 55 km from Chennai. It will be spread over a land parcel in Thirupur taluk of Chengalpattu district between the East Coast Road (ECR) and the parallel Old Mamallapuram Road (OMR).

Named after Narasimhavarmam I (630-668 CE) of the Pallava dynasty who was called Mamallan (the great wrestler), the drinking water reservoir project is aimed at harnessing surplus flows from the Manamathy group of tanks and Kovalam sub-basin to augment Chennai's water supply with up to 170 million litres per day (MLD). To be constructed with a capacity of 1.65 thousand million cubic feet (TMC), the proposed reservoir will benefit approximately 13 lakh people, accounting for about 14% of around 1,200 MLD that is being supplied by the Chennai Metrowater to Chennai and other parts of the Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA). Among those who are going to be covered are residents of Sholinganallur, Pallikaranai, Siruseri and Mamallapuram. As Chennai does not have any perennial source of water and is dependent on the Krishna water from Andhra Pradesh for a bulk of its requirements, its average quantum of water supply is 700 to 800 MLD. The present demand of 1,100 MLD is expected to double in 10 years. For the broader CMA that covers the reservoir site, the demand is projected to be 2,500 MLD by 2035.

People of fishing villages, from Kanathur Reddikuppam to Kokkilmeedu, have conveyed to the State government that it would "destroy their customary fishing grounds and undermine the spirit" of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules. People of Kovalam Kuppam have even sought the intervention of the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways in the matter as they contend that the reservoir would block the natural flow of the Buckingham Canal. Many residents used the Gram Sabhas organised on Republic Day to reiterate their opposition to the project and submitted petitions in this regard. Spokespersons of the concerned

people complained that in some places, officials, who had refused to accept the petitions and permit the Gram Sabhas to adopt resolutions against the project, had however nothing to object to motions that were critical of the Centre's new rural job guarantee scheme. It may be recalled that in the 1990s, the ECR project faced a similar opposition. Then too objections were raised citing likely damage to the environment and livelihood opportunities of different sections of people, including farmers. Now functional for nearly 30 years, the Chennai-Cuddalore stretch of the ECR is among the upmarket areas of the State. Defending the project in the Kovalam sub-basin, senior officials say it will serve as a flood buffer and avert sea water intrusion. In the last 25-odd years, the Information Technology (IT) sector boom has led to a spike in commercial activity, especially in the real estate segment, on the ECR and the OMR. This has shrunk the flood plains and swamps, causing rapid reduction of flood buffering capacity of Pallikaranai swamp, according to an internal official document on the project. The project, which does not involve the acquisition of private land, has been mooted to address these problems. Apart from new fishing opportunities in the reservoir, the project envisages the removal of silt from the Buckingham Canal which will, in turn, improve the flow of brackish water and floodwater, eventually creating a better fishing ground, the officials explain. Notwithstanding the pros and cons of the project, all stakeholders should keep in mind that development comes at a price. At the same time, the authorities should ensure that such development remains sustainable without jeopardising the interests of people, especially vulnerable sections. And that would be the best tribute to Mamallan and other great Pallava kings, who had excelled in water management even about 1,500 years ago.

Samsung unveils advanced privacy tech, showcases Olympic edition Galaxy Z Flip 7

Seoul: Samsung Electronics said on Wednesday its upcoming Galaxy smartphone will come with a built-in privacy feature allowing users to protect on-screen information from others without the need to attach an additional film.

The South Korean tech giant said the new feature will allow users to customise display visibility to prevent "shoulder surfing," noting the feature will be "coming to Galaxy very soon." Samsung Electronics is expected to hold a showcase event for the Galaxy S26 smartphone in February. The new feature is set to be available for the Galaxy S26 Ultra, according to sources, reports Yonhap news agency. "With multiple settings for adjusting visibility, you can limit what others can see based on the level of privacy protection you need," the company said in a release. The company said users can customise the feature depending on applications. "It took over five years of engineering, testing and refining to get here," the company said. "We studied how people use their phones, what they consider private and how security should feel in everyday life."

India's consumption story has a wage growth problem



The year 2025-26 has been about supporting household consumption. First, the Union Budget presented last year lowered income tax rates under the new regime. Then, in September, the long-awaited rationalisation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was finally announced. Now, with the Union Budget for 2026-27 around the corner, it is expected that segments other than the consumer will be the focus.

But it is worth examining if consumption – even after the two supportive measures of the last one year – is indeed doing well. The problem is that there is no clear answer. Yes, demand for consumer durables rose in the aftermath of the GST rate cuts, with vehicle sales increasing significantly, in particular as households took advantage of lower prices. According to credit bureau TransUnion CIBIL, demand for consumer durable loans was incrementally higher by around one-and-a-half times in the 20-day festival window between Dussehra and Diwali compared to the previous year. This, the firm said last month, was indicative of “renewed consumer confidence”.

While goods and services have definitely become cheaper – helping lower headline retail inflation to a record low of 0.25% in October – the entire tax cut may not have been passed on to consumers. Further, consumers likely postponed purchases ahead of the rollout of the tax cuts, leading to artificially inflated demand starting from the last week of September. Then there is the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest Consumer Confidence Survey, conducted during November 1-10. While the assessment of the current situation and expectations about the future improved for both rural and urban households compared to September – the only metric of the four to see a decline was rural consumer confidence for the current period – the headline index numbers hid something interesting. As per the qualitative responses, perceptions about current income and spending deteriorated in November for rural households compared to September. And while urban households did report a slight improvement in current income, their assessment of current spending deteriorated.

The prevailing narrative on consumption is that urban demand is subdued but recovering, while rural demand is doing well thanks to the good monsoon. Data seems to back this: as per Labour Bureau data, real rural wage growth – or wage growth after adjusting for rural retail inflation – rose to 4.1% in the first quarter of 2025-26 after averaging zero over the previous three years. However, this rebound in real ru-

ral wage growth has been due to a sharp fall in inflation, with rural Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation averaging 2.4% in April-June 2025, less than half the 5.5% recorded a year ago. In nominal terms, rural wage growth was 6.5% in the first quarter, the highest since mid-2023. This needs to continue.

According to Gaurav Kapur, Chief Economist at IndusInd Bank, nominal wage growth needs to be aligned to inflation, which bottomed out in the final quarter of 2025 and will now start rising. “Thus, to sustain rural demand, nominal wages will need to rise too, particularly in relation to core inflation. Otherwise, prolonged deflation in food prices may have an adverse effect on overall rural income and demand going forward,” Kapur said. For urban wage growth, a proxy often used is the increase in staff costs of listed companies. According to an analysis of data compiled by RBI on the performance of more than 3,000 non-financial private companies, real urban wage growth – or the growth in staff costs after adjusting for urban CPI inflation – in July-September 2025 was 5.7%, the highest in over two years. Again, this was due to low inflation of 2.1%. In nominal terms, this proxy of urban wage growth was 7.8% in the quarter – a level it has been broadly stuck at since mid-2023.

Borrow to spend What about loans? As mentioned above, personal loan growth for banks has indeed risen; but it is worth recalling that the RBI acted in November 2023 to curb the boom in retail lending, especially unsecured loans. As has been well chronicled, the financial situation of Indian households worsened in the wake of the pandemic, when they drew down on their savings. Since then, households have borrowed a fair bit more: in 2019-20, their financial liabilities amounted to 3.9% of GDP. This rose to 6.2% in 2023-24 before declining to 4.7% in 2024-25. Their net financial assets, meanwhile, had fallen to a multi-decade low of 4.9% of GDP in 2022-23 and stood at 6% in 2024-25. “Between FY09 and FY23, while industrial wages rose 1.9x, real personal bank debt rose 2.9x, reaching 3.6x by FY25,” ANZ economists Dhiraj Nim and Sanjay Mathur said in a note last year. “There has been a marked rise in real household debt burden over the years, especially relative to income, underscoring a stress in household balance sheet.” Given these numbers, it is hardly a surprise, then, that private investment continues to meander – why invest in capacities when the foundations of future demand are unclear?

Budget action?

So, what can Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman do on Sunday to help drive consumption? Not much, according to economists, who think the fiscal room is unavailable. Further, IndusInd Bank's Kapur sees the forces supporting consumption remaining in play, with the RBI's 125 basis points worth of interest rate cuts announced in 2025 still being passed through the system. And with the outlook for inflation benign, Sunday's Budget can continue to focus on capex and supporting labour intensive export sectors directly impacted by the US tariffs, while maintaining discipline to keep building fiscal buffers to act in the future “if the need arises to support growth through a boost to consumption”.

Govt 'not satisfied' with X response on Grok AI, considering next steps

In its response to the government's stern notice over Grok AI generating objectionable images of women without consent, Elon Musk-owned social media platform X has told the IT Ministry that it was open to permanently disabling accounts which engaged in such activity on the platform. The government, though, is unconvinced by the company's response, owing to a lack of any technical explanation behind the issue, and any steps to prevent Grok from generating such images in the first place. The Indian Express has learnt. In its formal response, sent on Wednesday, X is understood to have acknowledged the severity of the issue and committed to taking action against accounts creating such inappropriate prompts on its artificial intelligence platform. The Indian Express has learnt. The company has assured the government that it will strictly comply with India's Information Technology Act, 2000 and associated rules governing digital content.

“X has basically reiterated their stance that they will take action on users who prompt Grok AI to generate such images and videos. But there is very little assurance of any concrete changes to Grok's responses itself. We are not satisfied by the company's response and are considering our next course of action. We can not be lenient when the dignity of women is in question,” a senior government official said, requesting anonymity. X has also indicated its willingness to take stringent measures against violators, including permanently disabling accounts that engage in generating non-consensual objectionable content. The platform has already blocked pieces of such content that were flagged by the government. As part of its response, X has offered to provide the Indian government with a comprehensive demonstration of how Grok functions, including detailed explanations of its content moderation mechanisms and enforcement protocols. This proposal appears aimed at building transparency and trust with regulatory authorities.

Queries sent to X and the IT Ministry did not elicit a response until publication. On January 2, the IT Ministry had taken note of Grok being abused to generate objectionable pictures and videos of women, without their consent, while increasing the risk of exposure and harm, and had sent a missive to the company saying that it was not adhering to the country's laws, raising red flags over “serious failure” of safeguards enforcement. The issue became a global concern, with regulators in the European Union, United Kingdom and Malaysia also scrutinising the social media company.

The notice said that due to Grok's actions, X was not adequately adhering to provisions of the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021, and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, particularly in relation to obscene, indecent, vulgar, pornographic, paedophilic, or otherwise unlawful or harmful content which are potentially violative of current laws. Users on X were increasingly tagging Musk's AI chatbot Grok to generate sexualised and objectionable images of women without their consent, raising fresh concerns over AI misuse and platform safeguards. In several instances, users replied to photos of women, often taken from public posts, and prompted Grok to alter their appearance by adding revealing clothing or creating suggestive visuals, which the AI-bot promptly did. The AI-generated images appear publicly in the same threads, exposing the women to harassment without their approval or knowledge. The government had also directed the company to undertake a comprehensive technical, procedural and



governance-level review of Grok AI, including its prompt-processing, output generation, and image handling and safety guardrails, “to ensure that the application does not generate, promote or facilitate content which contains nudity, sexualisation, sexually explicit or otherwise unlawful content”.

Record high prices pull India gold demand down 11 pc in 2025: WGC

Mumbai: India's gold demand declined by 11 pc in 2025 and is expected to be around 700 tonnes this year, weighed down by record-high prices and changing consumer buying patterns, the World Gold Council (WGC) said in a report on Thursday.

Overall gold demand in India fell 11 per cent to 710.9 tonnes in 2025 and is expected to be between 600 and 700 tonnes in 2026, according to the WGC's Full-Year 2025 Gold Demand Trends report. In 2024, the overall gold demand stood at 802.8 tonnes. However, in value terms, skyrocketing prices boosted demand by 30 per cent to Rs 7,51,490 crores, compared to Rs 5,75,930 crores in the previous year. “India's gold market in Q4 2025 clearly reflected the dual impact of record-high prices and shifting consumer behaviour. Total gold demand for the quarter stood at 241.3 tonnes, marking a 9 per cent decline compared to Q4 2024. “However, this moderation in volume was more than offset by a sharp rise in value, with overall gold demand increasing 49 per cent year-on-year to approx. Rs 3,03,470 crores,” WGC Regional CEO, India, Sachin Jain said. The average gold price on January 1, 2025, rose by 67 per cent to Rs 1,01,572 per 10 grams in 2025, compared to Rs 70,754 in January 2024. Demand for gold in India for the October-December quarter declined by 9 per cent at 241.3 tonnes as compared to 265.8 tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year. However, demand value surged by 49 per cent to Rs 3,03,470 crores from Rs 2,03,070 crores in the same period of 2024. Total Jewellery demand in India for the whole of 2025 decreased by 24 per cent to 430.5 tonnes compared to 563.4 tonnes in 2024. The value of jewellery demand increased by 12 per cent at Rs 4,54,390 crore, compared to Rs 4,04,510 crore recorded in 2024. “Despite the wedding season, jewellery volumes dropped by 23 per cent to 145.3 tonnes as record-high prices and affordability pressures weighed on consumption.

The photographic memory myth: Doctors weigh in on the viral '5-object' hack



We all aspire to have razor-sharp memory. But can it really be developed? While some people are born gifted, if social media is to go by, one can develop such a memory at a later stage with a simple trick. All you need to do, apparently, is look at five things as soon as you wake up and then try and recollect the spots where they were placed throughout the day. Does it work?

What is eidetic or photographic memory?

Photographic memory is the ability to recall an image or scene in great detail after seeing it only once. “People with photographic memory can recall images, sounds, or events with great accuracy. For example, they can recall street names, details of people in a group photograph, or past events, including the dates on which they occurred. Photographic memory looks like a great quality to possess; however, unfortunately, it is uncommon. Most adults do not possess a photographic memory,” said consultant neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad. Bill

Clinton, the former US President, is said to possess a near-perfect eidetic memory, noted Dr Kumar.

Can you train your memory to be photographic?

The above mentioned trick is unlikely to help improve photographic memory, said Dr Kumar. “In general, with repetition (5 times a day) and recall, memory (in general) may improve, though,” said Dr Kumar. According to Dr Kumar, no good quality research shows that one can train to have a photographic memory. “However, certain lifestyle measures and techniques could help,” said Dr Kumar.

“Regular exercise, including aerobic exercises and strength training” Practicing mindfulness meditation “Consumption of nuts and omega-3 fatty acids” Sleeping optimally (7-9 hours) Techniques associated with improved memory “Repeating (what you wish to memorise) several times daily. “This improves long-term memory,” said Dr Kumar. “Solving crossword puzzles or Sudoku” Reading newspapers, magazines “Learning a new language or skill, such as playing a musical instrument. Apart from this technique, “pairing visualisation with storytelling is another effective technique”. “By creating narratives around the objects you aim to remember, you give your brain meaningful connections that make recall effortless,” said Dr Pavan Pai, consultant, interventional neurologist, Wockhardt Hospitals, Mira Road. The benefits of these memory techniques enhance confidence, productivity, and even emotional intelligence, mentioned Dr Pai. “By doing so, you will be able to take utmost care of your cognitive health. When you train your mind to notice the finer details, you start experiencing the world with greater clarity and appreciation,” said Dr Pai. Remember, though there is “no scientific way” to train photographic memory.

Chef Amrita Raichand recalls gaining 22 kilos during her pregnancy: 'Jo mazza tha na...'



Chef Amrita Raichand recently shared a personal story while preparing bajra-gond laddoos. Revealing that she put on 22 kilos during her pregnancy, the former model said: “I used to model for 10-12 years before I got pregnant. So, I was always very particular about my weight. I used to exercise and all. I left all the caution behind when I got pregnant. I thought I would eat whatever I want. Will put on weight. I don't give a damn. Literally, put on 22 kilos,” Raichand, in her 40s, shared on her Instagram.

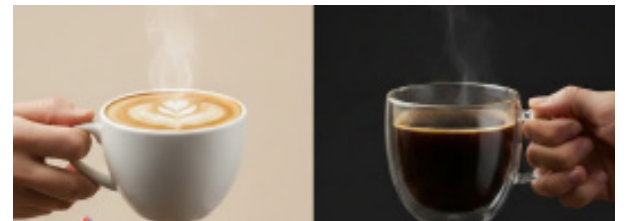
The twist? She lost all the weight immediately, too. “Jo mazza tha na... kitna ghee, kitni rotiaa, and kitne laddoo khaa rahe hai. It was good! So, you shouldn't take tension about weight. You should be worried about strength,” she added. Dr Shruti Chandak, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, said weight gain during pregnancy is normal and necessary for a healthy baby. Adding that pregnancy is both physically and emotionally taxing, familiar, culturally significant foods can offer comfort, reassurance, and a sense of care, she said that these things are just as vital as calories and nutrients during this time.

“The focus should be on the quality of nutrients instead of the numbers on the scale. Foods like bajra gond laddoos, when eaten in moderation, support maternal energy and fetal growth without risking health,” said Dr Chandak.

Traditional foods, when prepared thoughtfully and eaten

in appropriate amounts, can be both nourishing and comforting. “Pregnancy nutrition doesn't have to be limiting—it should be supportive, balanced, and tailored to individual needs.” Bajra offers iron, fibres, and slow-releasing energy, which helps manage fatigue. Gond (edible gum) is traditionally used to support strength, joint health, and tissue recovery. “When mixed with healthy fats and nuts, these laddoos provide lasting nourishment instead of a quick sugar rush,” said Dr Chandak. While generally safe, controlling portions is essential. “Women with gestational diabetes, excessive weight gain, or digestive issues should adjust the quantities and ingredients. It's best to tailor traditional foods to individual medical needs,” said Dr Chandak.

The black coffee reset: This is what happens to the body when you ditch dairy



Are there any immediate changes people notice after switching from milk coffee to its black coffee? Stating that one of the first changes is a reduction in daily calorie intake, Dr Amreen Sheikh, chief dietitian, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, said: “Milk coffee, especially with sugar, adds hidden calories from milk fat and lactose. Black coffee, in contrast, is almost calorie-free. Many people also report feeling lighter and less bloated within a few weeks, especially if they were sensitive to dairy.”

Does this switch affect weight management?

Yes, it can, affirmed Sheikh. “Over six months, cutting out milk and sugar from coffee can create a small but steady calorie deficit. While black coffee alone won't cause weight loss, it can help with weight management when combined with balanced meals and physical activity. Additionally, caffeine may slightly increase metabolism and improve fat use during exercise.”

How does black coffee affect digestion compared to milk coffee?

Sheikh said that black coffee stimulates gastric acid production, which may help digestion for some people. “However, those prone to acidity or acid reflux might experience discomfort if they drink it on an empty stomach. Milk often reduces acidity, so skipping it may mean timing black coffee for after meals rather than in the morning,” she told indianexpress.com.

Are there benefits for blood sugar control?

According to Sheikh, switching to black coffee helps avoid sugar spikes from sweetened milk coffee. “For people with insulin resistance or prediabetes, this change can sup-

port better blood sugar control. Over time, improved insulin sensitivity may also be seen when overall sugar intake is lowered,” Sheikh said.

Does black coffee affect energy levels differently?

Many people feel a cleaner energy boost with black coffee. “Without milk and sugar, energy levels tend to stay stable, with fewer crashes. This is because black coffee does not cause rapid changes in blood sugar.”

Are there any nutritional downsides to removing milk from coffee?

Sheikh said that milk provides calcium and protein, so when you remove it, those nutrients need to come from other foods like yoghurt, paneer, nuts, seeds, or leafy greens. “Black coffee itself contains antioxidants, which support heart and metabolic health when consumed in moderation,” said Sheikh.

Is black coffee suitable for everyone?

People with gastritis, anxiety disorders, or sleep issues should limit their intake. “Ideally, black coffee should be consumed in moderation — 1 to 2 cups a day — and not late in the evening,” Sheikh said.

Antelopes to tigers: Animal species that can never be domesticated

Domestication goes far beyond just taming an animal or keeping it in captivity. It is a long process that takes many generations of selective breeding, focusing on traits such as friendliness toward people, reduced aggression, and the ability to live in managed environments. While lots of animals can be trained or tamed for a while, very few have actually been domesticated. For most, their natural instincts and behaviours make true domestication almost impossible. Zebras Even though zebras are closely related to horses and donkeys, people have never been able to domesticate them. Zebras are unpredictable, can be aggressive, and have a strong bite. Unlike horses, they grew up in places with many predators, so they are always on alert and hard to control. Their natural reaction is to run away or fight, not to give in, which is why they remain wild.

Big cats like tigers may be raised in captivity, but they are never domesticated. Tigers retain strong territorial instincts, unpredictable hunting behaviours, and immense physical strength. Even individuals raised by humans from

birth can revert to instinctive aggression, especially as they mature. Domestication requires behavioural consistency across generations — something large predators simply do not offer.

Octopuses Exceptionally intelligent but entirely unsuited to domestication, octopuses are solitary, short-lived, and highly sensitive to stress. They require complex, changing environments to remain healthy and stimulated. Attempts to keep them in controlled settings often result in escapes or self-harm, highlighting how incompatible they are with domestic life. Many antelope species have been experimented with for domestication due to their grazing habits. However, most are prone to panic, injury, and extreme stress when confined. Unlike cattle or sheep, antelopes lack the herd structures and behavioural traits that make domestication viable. Their nervous systems are finely tuned for escape, not enclosure. Wolverines Known for their ferocity and independence, wolverines are solitary animals with vast territorial ranges.

Why Laxman Sivaramakrishnan is pained: ‘Because of my dark skin, people dismissed me... I wanted to forget, forget, forget’



He was 17 when he made his Test debut, 19 when he dazzled with his spin. Yet, Sivaramakrishnan, once hailed as India's most naturally gifted cricketer, nursed deep wounds. Days after he quit the BCCI commentary panel alleging discrimination,

He doesn't have a single photograph from his playing days. No shirts, no trophies, no bats. Not even the Man of the Series award from India-England, 1984-85. A man who took 12 wickets in a Test match at 19, who stumped Imran Khan in Sharjah while the crowd chanted his name and Javed Miandad at MCG, who was called India's most naturally gifted cricketer alongside Kapil Dev — and his house in Abhirampuram, Chennai, is clean of all evidence that any of it happened. "There is nothing at home connected to cricket. I want to keep away from my playing days. I have given everything to somebody or the other," says former India leg spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan. The memories he tried to give away too. They didn't go. The first scar came at 14. Sivaramakrishnan, still in school, was a net bowler for the Indian team at Chepauk. Still in uniform, as he rushed straight to change in a small room at the stadium, a senior India batsman called out to him, "Hey. Hey." Sivaramakrishnan looked up. The player allegedly asked him to come and clean his shoes. "I just looked at him and said, 'That's none of my business, you just do what you need to do.'" The senior cricketer, he says, had mistaken him for ground staff. "I didn't know what racism or colour discrimination was. I was just wondering why this man had to react like this."

That was the first instance. It would not be the last. Indian bowler Laxman Sivaramakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan (back row, second from right) was part of the India team that won the 1985 Benson & Hedges World Championship of Cricket in Australia. In the Tamil Nadu team, prominent players called him "karupa (dark-skinned)". When he fielded on the boundary in Bombay, Chandigarh, Jalandhar — "generally north of India" — the crowds chanted "Kalia, tera kya hoga". At a hotel in Mumbai, now the Trident at Nariman Point, a gatekeeper allegedly refused to let him back in after he had stepped out. He was then part of the Indian team and was staying in Mumbai for a training camp ahead of the Pakistan tour. He didn't have his key. The gatekeeper allegedly looked at him and refused to believe he could be an India cricketer. He says he waited an hour for a teammate to come out and vouch for him. "After that, I realised I should take the keys with me. But I would be trembling when I got near the gate for the fear of being rejected and kicked out again." He was 16. He carried the trembling for decades. Indian bowler Laxman Sivaramakrishnan Sivaramakrishnan made his Test debut at 17 years.

He talks of other instances. How, on his 17th birthday, with the Indian team in Pakistan, Sunil Gavaskar, the captain, ordered a cake. The team assembled. Then, a teammate spoke. "Hey Sunny, you ordered the right colour cake. Such a dark chocolate cake for a dark boy."

"I started crying and refused to cut the cake. Sunil Gavaskar had to pacify me and then I cut the cake with tears in my eyes. He was 17, 'the baby of the squad'. He had just been given a birthday cake by his captain. And a teammate had turned it into a joke about his skin. For a month, the Pakistan crowds had their own version. 'Kalia, Kalia, Kalia...' Even the umpire, Shakur Rana, gave him a hard time while bowling. Gavaskar, he says, confronted Rana after lunch, in front of the boy. "You don't talk to any of my bowlers. If you have an issue, you come and talk to me." Sivaramakrishnan's best performances always came under Gavaskar. "Because of my dark skin, people would dismiss me. There was a sense of hurt every time this happened. I always wanted to forget, forget, forget but deep down, it's always rooted and it comes out. All these things put me in a position where I had very low self-esteem at a tender age... it is very hard to build confidence."

In the West Indies, everything was different. "Everybody's skin colour was on the darker side. They were very happy people." Malcolm Marshall and Desmond Haynes took him out almost every evening during the Test series. They showed him Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados. They went to Marshall's house and watched old West Indies matches — Colin Croft bowling, the old footage crackling. Gordon Greenidge, who rarely spoke to anyone, not even his own teammates, opened up to him. "He told me, 'This is what I went through in England and that's why I just mind my business, play my cricket and just go.'" Two dark-skinned cricketers from different hemispheres, finding each other through the same wound. Indian bowler Laxman Sivaramakrishnan BCCI commentators (from left) Danny Morrison, Harsha Bhogle, Sunil Gavaskar, Sivaramakrishnan and Ravi Shastri. Sivaramakrishnan spent most of his time in the West Indies dressing room. During lunch, he would walk in, say hello to Clive Lloyd — who would simply nod — and sit with Haynes or Holding or Andy Roberts. He was 17. He was happier in the opposition's dressing room than in his own. The cricket, briefly, silenced everything. In January 1985, at Bombay, Sivaramakrishnan took 12 wickets against England in only his second Test. He was 19. The ball drifted, dipped, turned. Batsmen reached for deliveries that weren't there. Air India put up a hoarding on Mount Road in Madras: "Siva Rama Krishna, give us a break at Chepauk." Two months later, in the World Championship of Cricket final against Pakistan in Melbourne, Sivaramakrishnan dismissed Saleem Malik. Then came the ball directed at Miandad. Miandad, one of the finest players of spin the game has known, was drawn out not by a reckless charge but by the mesmerising loop and dip — the flight enticed him into an off drive, his hands reached out and met thin air as the ball winked past him. Sadanand Viswanath completed the stumping in a flash. Miandad stood there looking like a novice. That was what the boy could do when the ball was listening to him. Three for 35. India won the tournament. In Sharjah, against Pakistan again, the crowd chanted "Sheeva, Sheeva" as he ran in. He bowled Imran Khan a generously flighted googly. Imran stretched out in defence. Not long after, Imran jumped out decisively, but

the ball did its handler's bidding and passed him in a fizzy blur. Stumped. Pakistan crashed to 87. Ravi Shastri would later call him "probably India's most naturally gifted cricketer along with Kapil Dev in the '80s."

Indian bowler Laxman Sivaramakrishnan Laxman Sivaramakrishnan was called India's most naturally gifted cricketer alongside Kapil Dev. Between age 16 and 19, Sivaramakrishnan grew two and a half inches, but his release point didn't change. The ball that used to land on a good length now landed full. He began bowling full toss after full toss. "If anybody at that point, with their experience, had told me that I had to change my point of release, I would have probably done that. But nobody did. It became a habit. The full tosses became more and more and more." In the 1980s, all India had for support staff was an administrative manager. No analyst. No biomechanics expert. No qualified physio. When Sivaramakrishnan injured his shoulder throwing from the boundary in Australia, he was given ice packs and painkillers. Nobody diagnosed it. He kept bowling. It went from bad to worse.

The labels arrived swiftly. Success has gone to his head, some said. Others said he was drinking, on drugs. "People love to spread bad things. My tours happened between 16 and 19 years. How would people serve me alcohol in a hotel when I am underage? I have never done drugs in my life. I have had a few beers later in my life. I don't say no to that. But imagine a 19-year-old being called an alcohol addict, a drug addict." "Pretending becomes a habit... Actually, you are trying to prevent further damage. When you are being attacked from all sides, you need to push them away. And when you try to push them away, it looks like arrogance." He pauses. "I was living a story like Jekyll and Hyde. Two different personalities in one man."

His parents placed a matrimonial advertisement — Test cricketer, owns a flat, looking for a bride. They gave a post box number. Two weeks later, when they opened the box, there was not a single application. "Which meant people had made my reputation so terrible that nobody wanted to even let their daughter get married to me." A day after he returned home from playing in the 1987 World Cup, the Tamil Nadu selectors called him in. They allegedly told him he didn't have a place in the team. "They asked me to tell the press that I was unfit. I said I won't. I will not make things easy for you. If you want, you drop me." He was dropped. He joined a Chennai-based company and played for its cricket team. He worked in the accounts department. He would leave home at 6.45 in the morning, ride a Kinetic Honda scooter 14 km to the factory, crunch numbers until 2.30 pm, then drive 8 km to the nets. His salary was Rs 8,000. He swapped his Maruti 800 for the scooter because he couldn't afford the fuel. Then came leptospirosis. During a tournament in Hubli, he had chased a ball hit into a swamp, picked it up and carried on playing. Two days later, his temperature was 105°F. The bacteria, he says, attacked his liver and kidneys. "I was on a salt-free diet for six months." He survived. Not all at once. Not cleanly. He married Harini in 1995. She knew what she was signing up for. He had told her everything. His daughter Hamsini is now studying psychology — a choice he encouraged wholeheartedly. In 1998, ahead of a home series against Australia, Sachin Tendulkar called him. He wanted Sivaramakrishnan to bowl at him in preparation for Shane Warne. The greatest batsman of his generation knew whose wrist to call when he needed to face the greatest spinner. That was validation the system never gave him.

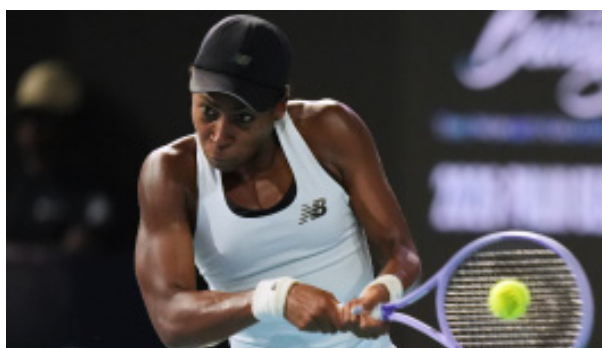
In 2000, he became a commentator. First for Doordarshan, then WorldTel, then the BCCI panel. He spent evenings picking the brains of Ian Chappell and Tony Greig, but resolved not to drink. His wife put him through enunciation exercises. They switched to speaking only English at home, for the sake of his career. He spent 23 years behind the microphone. But even there, the old wound followed. "I've never done a toss or a presentation. I asked one of the producers why. He said, 'We have been instructed by our bosses not to put you.'" They said it is to do with me not being presentable." Sivaramakrishnan pauses. "The most charismatic and the best in the business is Vijay Amritraj. Is he not dark?"

The colourism that met him at Chepauk when he was 14 was waiting for him in the commentary box at 60. Different room, same wound. The mind broke in stages. During the IPL in the UAE, the quarantine years, it got bad. "I was down completely and I didn't want to see myself in the mirror. I would have a couple of drinks and go to sleep because I could not bear anything. Whenever I was awake, I thought I was going to die." He would close the curtains. He didn't know whether it was day or night. He wanted to sleep it off. Alcohol was the only thing that brought sleep. "Sometimes when we were travelling in Dubai, there's no speed limit. If the vehicle went very fast, something in my mind would tell me to just open the door and jump out. Somehow, something stopped me from doing anything silly."

The hallucinations came at night. "You close your eyes, you see images that you can't imagine. All very frightening. You open your eyes, there's nothing. But you're so tired that you want to sleep. You close your eyes for a while, then again, open your eyes. So there goes your sleep." The drinking made the depression worse. The depression made the drinking worse. "Every time, you manage to tangle yourself tighter and tighter. And you have the whole world outside saying, 'See, I told you. Liquor is the reason. I told you.'" He couldn't go to the bar with other commentators. They would say he was drinking. So he ordered drinks to the room. When he returned home mid-way, the old stories resurfaced — he's become an alcoholic, he missed a match by sleeping in. Nobody knew what he was battling. Then, days ahead of the IPL that starts on March 28, came calls from the BCCI broadcast team, checking on his well-being through friends. "It created a false hope. Why call my friends? I used to wait for calls. It is what I had faced during my cricketing career. A sponge can only soak up to a level, after that it will break. How much more can I — and should I — take?"

He put out a tweet saying he was retiring from commentary. While there was no official word from the BCCI on Sivaramakrishnan's allegation, an official from the Board told The Indian Express, "The BCCI has never and will never discriminate against any player, former player, commentator because of their skin colour. As far as Laxman Sivaramakrishnan is concerned, we respect his contribution as a cricketer and as a commentator. The Indian board has never discriminated against anybody." "From the age of 15 to 60 — 45 years. I have been traumatised by all these things. The players referring to me by my colour, the crowd chanting... Over and over again. Even when you sleep, suddenly you wake up and the first thing you think of is all the insults and names that you were called." He says he has had enough. "Life is not all about money. I have been in the BCCI fold from schooldays to now. I now want to be in a space where my spiritual life, golf, and good health go well." He spends his days on the golf course now. The hands that once spun a googly past Imran Khan grip a seven-iron instead. The silence is chosen this time.

Coco Gauff opens up on dealing with imposter syndrome: ‘My coaches have been reminding me to remember who you are’



2-time Grand Slam winning tennis star Coco Gauff recently opened up about dealing with 'imposter syndrome' where she doubts her position as one of the best and feels her achievements are not real. "I think I have to believe that I belong where I am. Sometimes I can get imposter syndrome," she said in a press conference in the Miami Open. "Even when they're saying my accomplishments when I walk, or during the warm-up, it doesn't feel like me. And I'm like, 'Oh, actually, I do have a good career. But it doesn't feel like that sometimes in the moment, because you're working on things. My serve, it just

feels like I don't know that I shouldn't be where I am, but tennis doesn't lie. The ball doesn't lie. So I just have to believe in myself. My coaches have been reminding me to remember who you are, and you're a good player. I think they've been putting that into my head. And, at moments, I believe it, and at moments I don't. So I'm just trying to believe it more," she added.

On Tuesday, Gauff battled past Switzerland's Belinda Bencic in three sets to take a 6-3 1-6 6-3 win. With the win, world-number-four Gauff reached the semi-finals in Miami for the first time in her career, after failing to make it past the fourth round in her previous six attempts. According to Aishwarya Raj, Clinical Psychologist, practising in Delhi NCR, who spoke to the Indian Express, "Imposter syndrome is also called perceived fraudulence. It involves feelings of self-doubt and personal incompetence that persist despite a person's education, experience, and accomplishments." The expert highlighted that many people with imposter syndrome grew up in families that stressed success and achievements. To counter these feelings, they might end up working harder and holding themselves to ever higher standards. To overcome this feeling, Raj suggested decreasing your inability to realistically assess your competence and skills.

Why Michael Vaughan is ‘staggered’ that England head coach Brendon McCullum arrives in country just 5 days before 1st NZ Test on June 4

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan said that post the heavy defeat to Australia in the Ashes, he found it staggering that head coach Brendon McCullum wasn't in the country already in order to watch county cricket and scout talents from there in preparation for the New Zealand test series, set to start in June.

"Now we are told there will be a greater emphasis on attention to detail. If that is the case, then Brendon should be here early this summer watching county cricket and meeting people face-to-face to rebuild bridges because a lot of people in the county system were more than happy to see England get royally beaten in Australia and that cannot be right," Vaughan wrote for his column in The Telegraph.

"McCullum is the highest-paid international coach in the world so expecting him to arrive in England earlier than five days before the first Test is surely the bare minimum. Instead he is having a Zoom call with the county directors of cricket this week and I'm staggered he is not arriving in England until May 30 when the first Test against New Zealand starts at Lord's on June 4. That is not good enough and already suggests attention to detail is just words," he added. The New Zealander faced stern scrutiny over his position after a disastrous Ashes campaign in which England lost 4-1 to Australia. McCullum's case was further undermined by reports of off-field incidents. Following the horrendous Ashes, the ECB launched a review process



of the team. Vaughan said that McCullum not coming to England to take stock of the county cricket does not bode well for his image with the fans as well. "Every now and then optics are important. Just to go on a Zoom call from New Zealand with county chiefs is not the right message. Fans need to see him out and about in county cricket. It would show that times are changing. People in the game in England think Baz does not care about anything other than his bubble in his team. That stems from the people he picks and his backroom staff. It is important he changes that. His stock cannot be so high that he can ignore those things," Vaughan said.

Cristiano Ronaldo's son trains with Real Madrid academy amid potential move



Cristiano Ronaldo's eldest son took another step in his football development this week, training with Real Madrid's academy as he eyes a potential move into the club's youth system. A report in The Athletic said that the 15-year-old forward joined Madrid's under-16 squad for a session on Tuesday, offering an early glimpse of what could be the next chapter in his progression. Ronaldo Jr currently plays within the academy setup at Saudi Pro League side Al Nassr, the club his father joined in December 2022. Operating primarily as a striker, he has already experienced a range of elite youth environments despite his young age. Prior to his time in Saudi Arabia, he spent periods developing in the youth systems of

Manchester United and Juventus — two clubs where Ronaldo also enjoyed highly successful spells.

A move to Real Madrid would carry particular significance given his father's iconic legacy at the club. Ronaldo played for Los Blancos between 2009 and 2018 and finished as Madrid's all-time leading goalscorer, having scored 450 goals in 438 appearances. His time in the capital was marked by sustained success, including four UEFA Champions League titles, two La Liga triumphs and two Copa del Rey victories.

While Ronaldo Jr's club future continues to take shape, his international pathway is already underway. Despite being born in the United States, he has committed to Portugal at the youth level. He received his first call-up in May last year, featuring for the under-15 side and making his debut against Japan at the Vlatko Markovic International Tournament. Since then, he has continued to rise through the national ranks, earning opportunities with the under-17 squad as part of his ongoing development. After leaving Real Madrid, Ronaldo had stints at Juventus and Manchester United before he moved to Saudi Arabia. Internationally, the 41-year-old looks set to play in his sixth FIFA World Cup later in June after Portugal qualified for the marquee event in September last year. Ronaldo, however, would miss the upcoming friendlies against Mexico and the USA due to an injury.

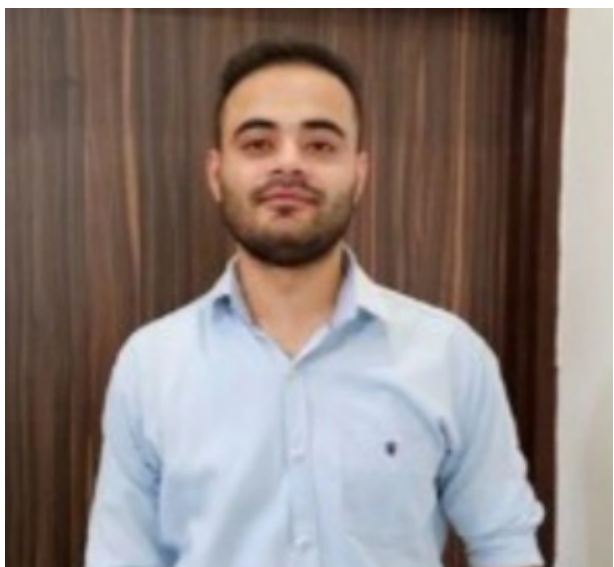
‘Fascinated to see him up close’: Delhi Capitals coach opens up about working with KL Rahul in IPL 2026

Former England batter Ian Bell has said that he was looking forward to working with Indian batter KL Rahul during his stint as the assistant coach of the Delhi Capitals in the upcoming IPL 2026. The 43-year-old said he is keen to build relationships with domestic players in the DC setup and would not focus on tinkering techniques. "He is a classy player. I'm fascinated to see him up close. The key is making sure you build those relationships." "Unlike county or international setups, where you have more time. I don't think technique is the first thing you go to with the international players. And I don't teach players to bat like I did. In my view, a good way of working with players is to help them find the best version of themselves." Bell told The Guardian. Bell revealed that he did not land the role because he was friends with anyone in the DC coaching staff, adding that he had to go through a proper process before getting picked for the role. "I have built up a good relationship with Hemang and [director of cricket] Venugopal Rao in those other roles. But it was a proper process. I certainly wasn't given it because of, you know, being mates ... or mates of mates. I could probably shout about my coaching more, but it's not really in my nature. I've just tried to get my head down and earn my stripes," he said. The former England batter



said that in his mind, he always wished to become a coach since he wanted to be more involved with the "rollercoaster of being emotionally invested." "In my head, I always wanted to coach. Some of the people I have admired most in the game — guys like Andy Flower and Graham Gooch, two of the best — made me want to follow them into it. I tried a bit of media work, but I always left the ground a bit ... I wanted just more involvement, that rollercoaster of being emotionally invested. I felt it was important to get away from Warwickshire and build up new experiences.

‘Why just a photo?’: How a Punjab government doctor landed a role in Ranveer Singh’s *Dhurandhar 2* after an on-set emergency



track. “There was panic as it seemed Arjun would need scans and hospitalisation. However, the injury was not serious. I checked his reflexes. All were happy that he was okay,” Dr Ashok told Tribune. Just days later, Dr Ashok was called back to the sets, at Shahnewal Airport, where a new schedule was underway. He then asked Ranveer Singh for a photo and that led him to a cameo in the film. “I asked Ranveer for a photo, at which he put his arm around my shoulder and said, ‘Brother, why just a photo, we will take you in the movie,’” Dr Ashok said, admitting he initially thought it was a joke.

When Aditya Dhar congratulated Dr Ashok but it wasn’t. Director Aditya Dhar soon stepped in and explained that the film required a scene where an injured character, played by Ranveer Singh, receives medical attention. Dr Ashok was cast for the role on the spot. “That’s my scene in the movie, though it is a split second. Dhar congratulated me for acting natural, saying I never looked into the camera and behaved exactly as a doctor would when seeing an injured Indian hero de-boarding a plane,” Dr Ashok said. *Dhurandhar 2* cameo makes him a local celebrity

The cameo has turned him into a local celebrity. Friends quickly spotted him in circulating clips, and the news spread across WhatsApp groups, drawing attention from colleagues, neighbours, and residents of Pakhowal. Dr Ashok described the film’s stars as warm and approachable. “All the film crew, and especially Ranveer and Arjun Rampal, were very down to earth and friendly,” he said. As it turns out, this isn’t the first time the Ashok family has found itself brushing shoulders with Hindi cinema royalty. Dr Ashok’s father, Dr Devinder Ashok, shared a personal friendship with the legendary actor Dharmendra and has several photos with the actor. *Dhurandhar 2* box office report. Meanwhile, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* is doing wonders at the box office. The Ranveer Singh-starrer has collected more than Rs 900 crore worldwide, while the domestic box office collection has reached Rs 695.59 crore, according to Sacnilk.

What are the odds that showing up to treat a film star’s injury earns you a spot in the movie itself? For a government doctor from a small town in Ludhiana district, those odds turned out into reality. Dr Sunny Ashok, a medical officer posted at the government health facility in Kalakh village under Pakhowal in Punjab, now has a cameo in *Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge* in a scene featuring Ranveer Singh. The Aditya Dhar film was extensively shot across Punjab, including locations such as a railway track near Ludhiana and Shahnewal Airport.

How treating an on set injury led to a cameo in *Dhurandhar 2*. On July 8, 2025, Dr Ashok was called to the film’s set after actor Arjun Rampal sustained a head injury during a high-intensity chase sequence near the railway

‘There were just 40–50 people’: *Dhurandhar 2*’s Uzair Baloch aka Danish Pandor recalls prequel’s ‘heartbreaking’ start, calls ‘propaganda’ debate ‘subjective’

Just days before *Dhurandhar* released on December 5, the film was hit by a series of setbacks. Media and celebrity screenings were abruptly cancelled, as were premieres in countries like Australia and New Zealand, reportedly due to “technical issues.” The negative buzz that followed cast a shadow over the film’s box office prospects. Actor Danish Pandor, who plays Uzair Baloch (Akshay Khanna’s younger brother) in the film, recalled how deeply it affected him. “There were just 40–50 people to watch the film on its release day,” he said, describing the moment as “heartbreaking.” The situation, however, echoed the journeys of classics like *Zanjeer* and *Sholay*, which also faced early hurdles and lukewarm starts before going on to become iconic.

“Too much negative publicity around *Dhurandhar*” Speaking to *abplive.com*, Danish reflected on the atmosphere leading up to the release: “It’s all about the audience. I remember the film released on Friday after the screening got cancelled on Thursday. I was completely heartbroken. I couldn’t understand what was happening. I kept thinking, ‘It is such a great film, why is this happening?’ And on top of that, there was too much negative publicity around it.”

His anxiety only grew when he witnessed the initial turnout. “When the film finally released on Friday, I went for the 2:30 pm show. There were barely 40–50 people in the theatre. I kept wondering — we have made such a beautiful film, and there are no viewers.” But the tide turned quickly.

“From 8 pm onwards, reviews started pouring in. Suddenly people began watching it and talking about it on social media. It picked up so well that there was no looking back,” he said. Reflecting on the dramatic turnaround, Danish added, “The reality is, no matter how much negativity surrounds a film, when audiences decide to show their love,



nobody can stop them. That’s what matters most. *Dhurandhar* is a testament to the love people have for the film, its characters, and every department.”

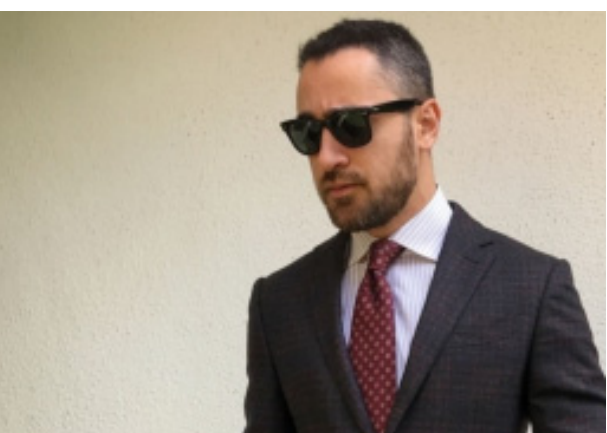
On *Dhurandhar 2* being called a ‘propaganda’ Addressing allegations of propaganda, he remained measured: “It is very subjective. People are very sharp. Filmmaking is about storytelling — you’re not forcing any message. You present something as a visual experience, and it’s up to the audience how they interpret it.” Speaking about the film’s sequel, the actor shared: “Despite all the negativity, I am struggling to find tickets now — that says a lot.” *Dhurandhar 2* box office According to Sacnilk, the Ranveer Singh-starrer has crossed the Rs 900 crore mark worldwide within just six days of release and is on track to surpass its predecessor’s lifetime haul of Rs 1,300 crore. *Dhurandhar 2* has reportedly earned Rs 919 crore globally so far, with India net collections at Rs 575.67 crore. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the film also stars Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Rakesh Bedi, and Sara Arjun, among others.

Amid *Dhurandhar 2*’s success, Imran Khan says won’t ever play ‘hairy, angry men covered in blood’: ‘Disturbed by these films’

Amid the massive success of *Dhurandhar 2*, actor Imran Khan’s latest AMA session has grabbed attention online. While several actors have openly backed the film and spoken in its favour, Imran, without naming any particular title, said he was “disturbed by the way these films coddle every violent tantrum.” The actor recently hosted an AMA on Reddit, where fans flooded him with questions. One user asked, “Please don’t transition to the macho roles that are so popular right now... how would you feel about starring in an LGBTQ drama?”

Responding candidly, Imran said, “Yeah, no interest in playing a hairy, angry man covered in blood. I think that genre is generously represented.” Expanding on his stance in another reply, he wrote, “I have noticed this trend, and I’m disturbed by the way these films coddle every violent tantrum thrown by emotionally immature man-children who can’t conceive of a valid reason that a woman might spurn their advances.” He added, “It’s important to note there’s a significant difference between portraying violence and toxicity, and validating them. I see this as people chasing a trend without consideration. My own sensibilities wouldn’t permit me to be part of a narrative I consider irresponsible.”

His remarks come at a time when films like *Animal*, *KGF*, and *Dhurandhar* — featuring intense, hyper-masculine protagonists — continue to dominate the box office. Meanwhile, *Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Adults* is also gearing up for a theatrical release on June 4. Not everyone agreed with Imran’s take. Some users on X mocked the actor, calling him “insecure” and pushing back against his criticism. Despite the debate, *Dhurandhar 2* continues its box office rampage. The film has recorded housefull shows across multiple theatres over the weekend in Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu, and has



Responding candidly, Imran said, “Yeah, no interest in playing a hairy, angry man covered in blood. I think that genre is generously represented.” Expanding on his stance in another reply, he wrote, “I have noticed this trend, and I’m disturbed by the way these films coddle every violent tantrum thrown by emotionally immature man-children who can’t conceive of a valid reason that a woman might spurn their advances.”

already crossed Rs 900 crore worldwide within just six days — surpassing the lifetime earnings of Ranbir Kapoor’s *Animal*. Meanwhile, Imran made his Bollywood comeback with a cameo in Vir Das’ *Happy Patel*: Khatarnak Jasoo.

Dhurandhar 2 slammed as ‘too violent’ by international critics: ‘Hard to fathom why audiences are flocking to see all this horror’



277,000 votes. On Rotten Tomatoes, however, the film has a 45% score from just 13 reviews, with most international critics expressing reservations.

What people in India think about *Dhurandhar 2*

In India, the film has also sparked debate. Several political figures, along with actors like Divya Spandana and Prakash Raj, have called out its alleged “propaganda.” YouTuber Dhruv Rathee, who had earlier described the first film as “well-made propaganda,” doubled down on his criticism. “I called Aditya Dhar a BJP propagandist three months ago. Now everyone will see it. It was subtle in the previous film, but he went so blatant this time in overconfidence. Remember how I said well-made propaganda is more dangerous? Ab toh well-made bhi nahi raha (now it’s not even well-made),” he said.

Divya Spandana, also known as Ramya, shared a strongly worded note on X, writing, “*Dhurandhar 2* is a huge disappointment. Ranveer, you’re better than this. Aditya Dhar — jingoism and propaganda is so passé. Get over it.” In a subsequent post, she expressed concern over the film’s use of the Bhagavad Gita, arguing that it reduces a deeply philosophical text into a justification for external conflict. Referring to the shloka cited at the beginning of the film — “Karmanye vadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana” — she wrote that the “battlefield” in the Gita is symbolic, representing an internal struggle rather than a call to external conflict. “My biggest issue with how films interpret the Bhagavad Gita is how they reduce something deeply philosophical into a justification for external conflict or propaganda. When Krishna speaks of a battlefield, it isn’t just a physical war. The ‘enemy’ is not another person or group — it is the restless mind, ignorance, ego, desire, attachment, negative thoughts,” she wrote. *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* is on a box office rampage, with its six-day worldwide collection already surpassing the lifetime earnings of Ranbir Kapoor’s *Animal*. The film is now poised to overtake its own prequel, which had crossed Rs 1,300 crore during its nearly two-month theatrical run. Going by its current momentum, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* could even challenge the benchmark set by Allu Arjun’s *Pushpa 2*, which boasts a massive lifetime collection of Rs 1,742 crore worldwide. *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* currently stands at Rs 919 crore worldwide. The film, alone in North America, has earned Rs 131 crore, according to Bollywood Hungama report. Meanwhile, its overseas collections stands at Rs 231.57 crore excluding the Gulf countries. This article provides a factual analysis of current cinematic trends and critical reception. The views and reviews expressed are those of the respective critics and authors and do not constitute a recommendation or a substitute for personal judgment.

When *Dhurandhar* first released on December 5, it drew a divided response — widely praised by some, while others labelled it “well-made propaganda.” However, with *Dhurandhar 2* hitting theatres on March 19 (along with special paid previews on March 18), a section of viewers — including members of the international media — have criticised the film for its brutality, violence, and graphic imagery.

International media against *Dhurandhar 2*

The New York Times noted, “The first installment’s critics might think this sequel further desensitizes viewers to violence along national or religious lines. It’s a movie of the current moment, which isn’t exactly a comfort.” Meanwhile, *movieswetextedfor.com* wrote, “When you have an entire cinema wincing and covering their eyes at violence upon violence, your movie is too much.” The publication added, “There is so little enjoyment to be found in *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* that it’s hard to fathom why audiences are flocking to see all this horror.” Meanwhile, *Culture Mix* wrote: “‘*Dhurandhar: The Revenge*’ starts off intriguing in the first 30 minutes, but then it merely becomes ‘checklist’ exploitative violence, just for the sake of trying to be as shocking and nauseating as possible.” It tries to pass itself off as a patriotic movie, but the toxic and barbaric nationalism on display is caustic, not cathartic. “Despite the criticism abroad, the film has largely received a strong response in India. It currently holds an IMDb rating of 8.7/10, while BookMyShow users have rated it 9.5/10 based on over

Farah Khan told Vidya Balan she ‘can’t dance’; actor practised 35–40 days for *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* to prove her wrong, recalls Priyadarshan

As filmmaker Priyadarshan gears up for the release of his new horror-comedy film *Bhooth Bangla*, one film that instantly comes to mind is his iconic 2007 film *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*. The film had many moments that have become a part of meme culture, but one of the most crucial remains its first climax sequence, showing Vidya Balan dancing to “Mere Dholna.” However, not many know that Vidya was once schooled by Farah Khan for her dancing skills.

In a recent interaction with *Variety India*, Priyadarshan recalled Vidya sharing how Farah had dismissed her dancing abilities, even declaring that she “can’t dance,” but the actor took it as a challenge. Sharing the same, he said, “This is very interesting because there was a time when people used to think that Vidya (Balan) cannot dance. And she told me I will take it as a big challenge. Vidya practised for 35–40 days just to do this song.”

Vidya worked so hard for the dance sequence that Farah had to eat her words and ended up appreciating the actor. “And the one who is dancing with her is Vineeth Radhakrishnan, who is one of the finest classical dancers of the country. But she matched his energy. And one day Vidya came and told me I will never forget this song in my life because someone who once told me I cannot dance, Farah Khan, has appreciated me for it. And Shobhana was also called and praised. She said I will never be able to repeat it but this is the best thing you have done for me. So this is something I remember very well,” he recalled.



Bhool Bhulaiyaa was one of the biggest hits of 2007. It also starred Akshay Kumar, Shiney Ahuja, and Ameesha Patel, alongside Paresh Rawal, Rajpal Yadav, Manoj Joshi, Asrani, and Vikram Gokhale in key roles. Many of the actors who worked with Priyadarshan earlier are reuniting with him in *Bhooth Bangla*, including Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, and Rajpal Yadav. The film also marks one of the posthumous appearances of Asrani. It is set to release on April 10.

‘Toh kya hai?’: Akshay Kumar on romancing Wamiqa Gabbi in *Bhooth Bangla* despite their 26-year age-difference

Age-gap romances have long been a part of Hindi cinema, but in recent years conversation around it started growing and it resurfaces every time with a new on-screen pairing. The debate is back in focus with Akshay Kumar’s upcoming film *Bhooth Bangla*, where the 58-year-old actor is paired opposite 32-year-old Wamiqa Gabbi. Addressing the debate, Akshay questions why such pairings are even considered controversial. In a conversation with *News18*, he said, “Toh kya hai? Humne pehle dekha nahi hai kya kabhi? (So what? Haven’t we seen this before?) It happens in Hollywood as well. Sometimes, it’s the requirement of the script. (In real life too), so many people get married to partners older or younger than them.” Priyadarshan on age-gap between actors

Director Priyadarshan said the focus should be on how actors embody their characters rather than their real-life ages. “There’s something that people like MGR and NTR used to say... that there’s a big difference between chronological age and screen age. An actor’s screen age may not be his real age, but people accept you for your screen age too. I don’t see any issue there,” he said. He further added that what matters most is how the pair appears on screen, not their age difference.

“When I shoot, I may look at a pair and feel like it isn’t the right pair (and that may have nothing to do with their age gap). When I shoot with Akshay or Tabu, I never feel (an issue) looking at them. And once audiences watch the film, I notice that they don’t feel that issue either. That’s because of their characters and their screen age.”

Akshay Kumar praises Wamiqa Akshay also spoke warmly about working with Wamiqa Gabbi, praising her dedication and approach to her craft. “I first met Wamiqa when we were shooting for *Bhooth Bangla*. She works very differently. She keeps reading her scenes and rehearsing for them. She gets very serious. Tabu is more serious than her. Vidya, who I’m working with in Anees Bazmee ji’s film, on the other hand, believes in being a free actor,” he shares. “Woh itni serious nahi hai. Pata bhi nahi chalta kab usne apna scene kar di. I pick up different things from their style. When I, especially, work with a newcomer, I observe them a lot to understand their style,” he adds.

When Salman-Aamir were asked about age gap

Earlier on the premiere episode of their celebrity chat show *Two Much* on Prime Video India, Kajol and Twinkle Khanna raised the same issue with Salman Khan and Aamir Khan. In response, Salman and Aamir attributed it largely to storytelling trends, noting that fewer scripts are written with older female leads. Salman also cited the idea of “freshness” as one of the reasons behind his on-screen pairings with younger actresses. Last year, Salman Khan also spoke about his age gap with co-star Rashmika Mandanna in *Sikandar*. Addressing the criticism, he said, “Then they say there’s a 31-year age gap between the heroine and me. But if the heroine has no problem, and even her father has no issue, why do you have a problem, brother? When she gets married and has a daughter, I will work with her daughter, too. Her mother’s permission will be sorted.”