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Several shops gutted in Nizampet blaze

Hyderabad: Several shops were gutted in a major fire at Nizampet in Kukatpally on Tuesday late evening. On being alerted, the fire tenders reached the spot and started firefighting operations. It is learnt the fire started at a furniture shop and soon spread to the other shops. The firemen are trying to extinguish the blaze. The local police have also reached the spot. Further details are awaited.

Minor girl goes missing in Bhadrachalam; case registered

Kothagudem: A minor girl reportedly went missing under Bhadrachalam police station limits in the district. The girl from Aswapuram works as a trainee nurse in the Bhadrachalam Government Area Hospital. She attended her duty on March 1 night and did not return home the next morning. The girl's family members, worried over her disappearance, enquired with relatives and friends but could not find her whereabouts.

Israeli troops enter Lebanon; US Embassy struck



Israel sent troops into southern Lebanon on Tuesday and warned residents of more than 80 villages to evacuate as the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group said it was ready for an "open war" with Israel in the wake of the US-Israeli war on Iran.

As the war in West Asia intensified, US President Donald Trump said the US had "the capability to go far longer" than its projected four-five-week time frame for its military operations against Iran and didn't rule out the possibility of putting troops on the ground.

Israel sent additional troops into southern Lebanon on Tuesday and ordered residents of more than 80 villages to evacuate as the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group said it was ready for an open war. Across Tehran, the sound of explosions rang out through the night and into the early morning hours on Tuesday, as the US and Israel have continued to pound Iran since killing its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday.

Tehran and its allies have hit back against Israel, neighbouring Gulf states, and targets critical to the world's production of oil and natural gas.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society said the US-Israeli operation has killed at least 555 people. In Israel, where several locations were hit by Iranian missiles, 11 people were killed. Israel's retaliatory strikes against Hezbollah killed 52 people in Lebanon. Iranian state TV said strikes caused two explosions early Tuesday at a broadcasting facility in Tehran, but said no one was injured.

Responding to queries on sending ground troops, Trump said, "Like every President says 'there will be no boots on the ground', I don't say it. Ground troops will probably not be necessary, but can be used, if required." "Boots on the ground" is a military expression for deploying combat troops on foreign soil rather than relying solely

on airstrikes, drones, or naval forces.

Trump defined the primary US objectives as the total destruction of Iran's missile, naval and nuclear capabilities, alongside the permanent cessation of its support for regional armed groups.

The assertions came a day after France, Germany and the UK announced to "work together" with the US in the region. The US has also found support from Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. All the countries have issued a joint statement condemning Iran and calling its actions "reckless and destabilising".

As Trump said operations were likely to last four to five weeks, Washington urged Americans to leave major parts of West Asia immediately, warning of "serious safety risks" as tensions continued to escalate across the region. The advisory covers Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Iranian news agency Tasnim said US-Israeli fighters struck central Tehran on the fourth day of the war.

Saudi authorities said two drones hit the US Embassy in Riyadh, causing a limited fire and minor damage. Trump has vowed retaliation for the attack on the embassy and for the death of six US service members since the military action started on Saturday.

Iran has struck energy infrastructure across the Gulf, sending global oil and gas prices sharply higher. Qatar's state-owned petroleum company has suspended all LNG production after two of its facilities were hit.

Also, Iran hit sites across Israel, with the Israeli military reporting missile interceptions over West Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Eilat.

Indian students in Tehran relocated to safer places

India has relocated students from the Iranian capital, Tehran, to safer locations outside the city even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken with leaders of several West Asian countries to ensure the safety of nearly one crore Indians in the region.

The Indian Embassy in Iran said, "Due to the heightened risk perception in Tehran, most Indian students who were in the city have been relocated to safer locations."

The Embassy has arranged transportation, food and accommodation for them. Only a small number of students who declined the offer remained in Tehran. Around 9,000 Indians including students are learnt to be stuck in Iran. The exact number of Indian students in Iran is not immediately known.

Meanwhile, PM Modi spoke with key leaders from the Gulf region this afternoon. He held a phone call with the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tariq, and also spoke with the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaleid. During both discussions, the PM expressed concern over the attacks in the respective countries and discussed the security of the Indian community residing there.

PM Modi also spoke with the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. He condemned the attacks on Qatar and thanked the Amir for the support extended to the Indian community.



In the last 48 hours, the PM has spoken with leaders of the UAE, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Indian embassies and consulates in the affected countries remained in close contact with Indian nationals, issuing regular advisories as required. They had extended all possible assistance to those stranded by the conflict.

The Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi advised Indian nationals to avoid unnecessary travel, remain vigilant and follow safety guidelines and advisories issued by the UAE authorities and the Embassy.



China help sought to trace device used in Pahalgam

A Special NIA Court in Jammu has issued a Letter Rogatory to the competent judicial authority in China seeking "assistance in tracing the buyer, end user and associated technical records" of a "GoPro Hero 12" black camera linked to last year's Pahalgam attack, in which 26 persons were killed.

An order issued by a Special Judge under the NIA Act in Jammu on Monday said Deputy Inspector General, NIA, Sandeep Choudhary, had filed an application under Section 112 of the BNSS for issuance of the Letter Rogatory to the competent judicial authority in China.

The order said the application stated that during the probe into the Pahalgam case, various "material objects and electronic devices connected with the conspiracy and execution of the terrorist attack have been examined".

One such crucial electronic device is a "GoPro Hero 12" black camera, which is relevant for "establishing pre-attack reconnaissance, movement and operational preparation of the terrorist module involved in the Pahalgam attack," the order said.

It said a lawful notice had been issued to the manufacturer. However, the manufacturer, in its response, said the camera was supplied to AE Group International Limited, a distributor based in China, and that it was activated on January 30, 2024, in Dongguan, China.

The application stated that the manufacturer further clarified that it "does not possess downstream transaction

details or end-user records of the said device".

"The activation, initial use and commercial trail of the said device lie within the territorial jurisdiction of China, and the information necessary to trace the buyer, end-user and associated technical records can only be obtained through judicial assistance of the Chinese authorities," it said.

The court noted that India and China were not signatories to any mutual legal assistance treaty/agreement on the subject. Therefore, such assistance can be sought under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), as both nations had ratified it.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs has given concurrence for issuance of the Letter Rogatory to China for seeking legal assistance in investigation of the case...", the court said.

The judge said, "The information sought is very important for establishing the chain of custody, user, attribution and evidentiary linkage of the seized device, i.e. the GoPro camera supplied to AE Group International Limited, a distributor based in the People's Republic of China."

He added, "I allow the application, and the Letter Rogatory is issued to the competent judicial authority of the People's Republic of China for seeking assistance and tracing the purchaser, end user and associated technical records to unearth the larger conspiracy."

Opposition in bind after Sule pitches father Pawar for Maha RS seat

In a position to win only one of the seven Rajya Sabha seats falling vacant in Maharashtra, the Opposition INDIA bloc is facing a peculiar dilemma.

At the heart of this dilemma is veteran Maratha leader and NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, who has thrown his hat in the ring for the March 16 Rajya Sabha election from the state.

Sharad Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule said her father should be in the upper House. This claim has put other bloc partners, Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT), in a bind as the two were hoping for a run at Rajya Sabha this time, given Sharad Pawar's advancing age (85) and health.

Citing the highest number of MLAs in the Opposition camp, the Congress is learnt to have laid the claim to the lone seat that the Maha Vikas Aghadi can win in Maharashtra, provided it stays united. In the present cycle of Rajya Sabha elections, each candidate needs to poll 37 first preference votes to win in Maharashtra Assembly of 288 MLAs.

The combined Opposition has 46 MLAs (Congress 20, Shiv Sena (UBT) 16 and NCP (SP) 10). The Maha Vikas Aghadi can win one seat if they stay together. But Sharad Pawar's claim to the seat has queered the pitch with no one ready to bell the cat. Opposition sources said if Sharad Pawar wants to contest it would be difficult for anyone to say no.

"NCP (SP) leaders Supriya Sule and Jayant Patil met Uddhav Thackeray at Matoshri today. No decision has been made on the Rajya Sabha seat yet, but will be made soon. All MVA partners will be together for discussions on the seat and the political alignments," Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aadiya Thackeray said on X.

Meanwhile, the NCP has named late Ajit Pawar's son Parth as candidate from its quota of one seat from the ruling NDA camp in the state. Earlier, Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra became Deputy CM in place of the late leader. She's currently Rajya Sabha MP from Maharashtra with her term ending this month. March 5 is the last date for filing nominations.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

AI fury batters IT stocks

The disruptive power of artificial intelligence technologies is nothing new. But what happened to the global IT stocks around the world last week mirrored far deeper fears of the industry. A set of new AI tools released by Anthropic, a US-based AI company, sent tremors through America, Europe and Asia, wiping billions of dollars off the software and IT services firms' stock prices as their shares fell sharply. Anthropic, the creator of Claude chatbot, released 11 open-source plugins for its 'Claude Cowork' agent aimed at automating tasks across legal, sales, marketing and data analysis functions. The worry is that these automation tools, which can handle a wide range of customer service tasks, could replace many traditional software and IT outsourcing services. The scale of the meltdown was so massive that some analysts described the market reaction as a "SaaSocalypse," meaning a severe downturn for software-as-a-service (SaaS) companies. The new plugins will lead to automation of tasks such as legal document review, compliance, sales workflows, marketing support and data analysis. Indian IT stocks too came under sustained pressure with their shares plunging by up to 8% and wiping out roughly Rs 2 lakh crore in market value amid fears that automating coding, legal review, sales workflows and other enterprise functions could erode the high-margin application services revenues that account for 40-70% of Indian IT companies' business. Analysts estimate that 9%-12% of industry revenues could be at risk over the next four years as clients pivot to AI-led efficiency over traditional service providers.

A key takeaway for the Indian IT sector from Anthropic's disruption is that it should move from traditional outsourcing to becoming AI implementation partners. As Indian enterprises integrate Claude for critical coding workflows, dependency on large vendor teams may decline, squeezing billable hours and margins. Anthropic's advanced AI systems also threaten the entry-level talent pool at Indian IT firms by replacing routine development and testing tasks. However, the doomsday predictions are highly exaggerated. A closer look reveals that the scale of legacy software embedded in global enterprises is of the order of \$20-25 trillion across the US and Europe — with annual technology spending of \$1.2-1.75 trillion. Such installed bases cannot be replaced or automated away overnight by plugging in a new AI tool. Most global enterprises continue to use AI selectively, particularly in research, discovery and limited productivity use cases. Comprehensive AI-led transformation of core operations remains at an early stage. Tools like Claude may directly apply to roughly 25-30% of total work in application development and related services. While application services form a significant share of revenues for large IT firms, the nature of work within that bucket varies widely. Large-scale system integration, legacy modernisation, database consolidation, testing, governance and compliance layers are not easily automated. The AI represents a powerful productivity accelerator, but not an overnight structural wipe-out.

Sai Teja Degree College to Host Mega Job Mela on March 5

Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 3. "Employment Opportunities for SSC to Degree Students at Kagaznagar Job Fair" Sai Teja Degree College, Kagaznagar, will organize a Job Mela on March 5, according to Principal Janagama Sudhakar. "Students who have completed SSC (10th Class), Intermediate, Degree, ITI, Diploma, and B.Pharmacy are eligible to apply and participate in the job fair." The Principal stated that employment opportunities will be offered in reputed companies including Tata Fives, Apollo Pharmacy, Empowerment, AU Small Finance Bank, Mahindra Auto, and other organizations. "Interested candidates are advised to contact 9000742092 or 8333862939 for further details."

Grand Holi Fest Organized by ABVP at Ramanthapur Polytechnic College – BJP Senior Leader Vallapu Jagan Yadav Participates

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 3 (Indian Chronicle): "A grand Holi Fest was organized under the leadership of ABVP Uppal at the premises of Ramanthapur Polytechnic College. The Holi celebrations were conducted with great enthusiasm and grandeur, with hundreds of students participating in the vibrant festivities. The event was organized under the leadership of ABVP leaders and organizers Burra Akhil, Bhanu Prakash, and Abhiram. BJP senior leader Vallapu Jagan Yadav attended the Holi Fest as a special guest and was warmly felicitated on the occasion. Speaking at the event, Vallapu Jagan Yadav said that Holi, which symbolizes love and unity, should fill every family with happiness. He expressed confidence



that if the people of the country stand united and move forward with harmony, India will emerge as a guiding nation for the world. "Hundreds of students enthusiastically participated in the Holi celebrations, making the event a grand success."

Holi celebrations were held at the District Police Headquarters in Jagityal

Jagitial Staff Reporter, March 3 (Indian Chronicle): "People, employees, and officials celebrated Holi by splashing colors on each other in Jagityal district on Tuesday. The festival was celebrated in a peaceful atmosphere in Jagityal town, Korutla, Metpalli, Dharmapuri, Raikal, Medipalli, Malyal, Buggaram, Sarangapur, and other areas. "Leaders and employees visited the residence of former minister Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy at Indira Bhavan in Jagityal and celebrated the festival by applying colors to him. Children like Akshareddy, Anshul, and Ayansh, Aadhi and 22 ward municipal Counciller Arava Laxmi Raju celebrated Holi in a pleasant atmosphere, applying colors to each other and enjoying the festival. "Holi celebrations were held at the District Police Headquarters. District SP Ashok Kumar celebrated Holi with police officers and staff with great enthusiasm and joy. On the occasion of Holi, the SP wished everyone in the district a happy Holi, hoping the festival brings happiness, new enthusiasm, and light to everyone's life. "DSPs Venkataramana, Raghu Chander, and Ramulu, CIs Karunakara, Ram Narasimha Reddy, and Ravi, Reserve Inspectors Venu and Saidulu, SIs Naresh, Satish, Anil, Satish, Geeta, Supriya, Sridhar Reddy, Umasagar, Uday Kumar, Sandeep, and Kiran, and police personnel participated in the celebrations."



"Thank You Revanth Anna" –Rs 13.30 Crore Sanctioned Once Again for Uppal Bhagayath

Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 3 (Indian Chronicle): "The allocation of funds for various development works in the Uppal Bhagayath HMDA Layout is continuing steadily. "With the efforts of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the special initiative of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, and the support of former Corporator Mandamula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, development works are being undertaken in a planned manner in Bhagayath. "Parameshwar Reddy announced that ₹13.30 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of a Community Hall and roads in the Uppal Bhagayath HMDA Layout. Out of this, ₹3.50 crore will be spent on the construction of a Community Hall, and ₹9.80 crore will be utilized for road development works, which will commence shortly. "He stated that continuous efforts are being made to secure necessary funds to transform Uppal Bhagayath Layout into a model residential area and to ensure comprehensive development. "The residents of Uppal Bhagayath expressed their special gratitude to Parameshwar Reddy and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for sanctioning the funds."



Cheques Distributed to MBBS Students Under the Leadership of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy by Former Minister Harish Rao



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 3 (Indian Chronicle): "Under the leadership of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, cheques were distributed to seven MBBS students at the residence of former minister Harish Rao. "Harish Rao congratulated the initiative and stated that distributing cheques to medical students under the aegis of the BLR Charitable Trust is highly commendable. He mentioned that in the current academic year alone, financial assistance has been provided to a total of 122 medical students to support their educational expenses. "He emphasized that this support should not be viewed merely as charity, but as an investment in the future healthcare system. The primary objective of the program, he said, is to empower talented youth from underprivileged sections by encouraging them through education. "Harish Rao further stated that under the visionary leadership of former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, the establishment of medical colleges in every district of Telangana has led to a "White Coat Revolution," expanding medical education opportunities and strengthening government healthcare services across the state. Former corporators Devender Reddy and Prabhudas, along with BRS party state leader Praveen Mudiraj, party leaders Mahesh Goud, Vanjari Praveen, Pilli Nagaraju, Bosani Pavan Kumar, Dayakar Reddy, Shravan, Raghuvaran, Nani, Rajesh Goud, Kadige Shekhar, and other BRS leaders and party workers participated in the program."

State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj Inspects CC Road Works in Beerappa Gadda, Chilkanagar Division



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 3 (Indian Chronicle): "State leader of the BRS Party, Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, inspected the newly constructed CC (Cement Concrete) road works in Tulasi Doctor Street and Bucchi Reddy Street of Beerappa Gadda area under Chilkanaagar Division. "Speaking on the occasion, Praveen Mudiraj stated that CC road works sanctioned in various parts of the division are being completed phase-wise. He assured that the remaining pending and yet-to-be-sanctioned works will also be completed with the support of MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. "He instructed that during the road construction, contractors must strictly adhere to all the conditions mentioned in the work order copy. He emphasized that the roads should be constructed with a width of 4.5 meters without compromise. In places where such width is not feasible, the length of the road should be extended accordingly. He further stressed that quality standards must be maintained throughout the construction process. "He also directed that the road works be completed at the earliest without causing inconvenience to the residents of the colony. Additionally, he urged GHMC Engineering Department officials to ensure proper supervision during the construction works. The program was attended by Work Inspector Kedar, senior leaders Kokkonda Jagan, Tirupati Yadav, Edulla Kondal Reddy, Vanjari Nursing Rao, Pandla Kishan, Banti Goud, Muddham Srinivas Yadav, Shyam, Balu Ravi, Suresh, and local residents Yadamma, Krupa, Srikanth Reddy, among others."

Sri Rama Navami celebrations begin in Bhadrachalam

Krantikumar Dasari | Bhadrachalam Constancy | March 03 | Indian Chronicle: The temple town of Bhadrachalam is gearing up for the annual Sri Rama Navami celebrations, with the ceremonial Ankuraraman celebrations on Wednesday officially beginning. The ritual marks the beginning of one of the most revered annual events in the region, the Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Divine Marriage Ceremony. Along with the Phalgun Pournami, Vasantotsavam is celebrated with traditional fervor, kicking off a series of pre-wedding rituals filled with temple rituals. The Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Devasthanam authorities have made elaborate arrangements to ensure smooth conduct of the celebrations and participation of devotees. Preparations are underway at



the Mithila Stadium for the preparation of the sacred Talambas, which are crucial in the divine marriage ceremony. Temple officials said they expect to prepare around 200 quintals of Talambas this year. On the opening day, around 20 quintals are prepared using turmeric and saffron. Hand-peeled sacred rice grains - a highlight of the celebrations. Devotees believe that sprinkling these grains on themselves brings health, prosperity and marital harmony. Many pilgrims bring hand-measured grains from their homes, which are then used to make sacred talambas. Including these grains in wedding ceremonies at home is widely believed to strengthen marital bonds. Meanwhile, devotees from across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are reaching Bhadrachalam on foot to participate in the rituals. Chanting the name of Lord Rama, the pilgrims created a festive and devotional atmosphere in the temple town ahead of the grand Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam

"Young woman commits suicide over unwillingness to marry"

Jagityal Town / Boragalla Lavanya, March 3 (Indian Chronicle): A 25-year-old woman, Mulasthan Pranavi, from Pochamawada in Jagityal town, committed suicide by hanging herself on Tuesday as she was unwilling to marry. The Jagityal town police reported that Pranavi, a B.Tech graduate, was staying at home and wanted to go abroad. Her father told her that marriage proposals were coming and he would get her married. However, Pranavi was not willing to marry and was depressed. She hanged herself from a ceiling fan with a saree when no one was at home. Her family members took her to the government hospital, where doctors declared her dead. The police have registered a case based on a complaint filed by Pranavi's father, Mulasthan Ganesh, and are investigating the matter."

Bhadrachalam temple closed temporarily in view of the partial lunar eclipse

Krantikumar Dasari | Bhadrachalam Constancy | March 03 | Indian Chronicle: The Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple at Bhadrachalam, revered as the Dakshina Ayodhya, was temporarily closed on Tuesday in view of the partial lunar eclipse. Temple au-



thorities performed dwara bandhanam at 8.30 a.m., suspending darshan for devotees in accordance with established religious practice observed during eclipse periods. Following the conclusion of the eclipse, the temple was reopened at 7 p.m. Ritual purification ceremonies, including samprokshanam and shanti homams, were conducted in accordance with agama traditions. Amid traditional music, priests ceremonially brought sacred water from the Godavari river in a special vessel and carried out purification rites within the temple premises. Devotees were allowed darshan from 8.39 p.m. onwards after completion of the rituals. Officials of the Devasthanam said similar purification and samprokshanam ceremonies were conducted at affiliated and subsidiary temples under its administration. The entire process was carried out smoothly under the supervision of temple authorities, they added.

Panchayat Secretary Battling for Life

****Kranthikumar Dasari | Bhadrachalam Constancy | March 03 | Indian chronicle : A government employee from Bhadrachalam district is battling for her life following a series of personal tragedies and a critical heart condition that has left her financially and emotionally shattered. Bekkanti Madhavi, Panchayat Secretary of Dantenam village in Dummugudem mandal, requires urgent heart surgery estimated to cost over Rs 20 lakh. Doctors have diagnosed her with a severe cardiac condition affecting three major portions of her heart and have advised immediate surgical intervention to save her life. Madhavi's ordeal follows immense personal loss. Her father, Bekkanti Srinivas, a Mandal Parishad Development Officer known for his integrity, reportedly faced financial strain after standing surety for others. Amid mounting pressures, Madhavi's mother passed away due to a brain stroke on July 25, 2024. Unable to cope with the grief, Srinivas died just thirteen days later. In a desperate attempt to save her parents, Madhavi is said to have exhausted her savings and sold her jewellery to cover medical expenses, leaving her financially drained. Even before she could recover from the emotional trauma, she began suffering from severe breathlessness. Medical tests later revealed a serious heart ailment requiring urgent surgery. Owing to her deteriorating health, Madhavi has been unable to attend work, resulting in loss of salary. With no financial resources remaining and the medical emergency intensifying, her family has appealed to the public for assistance. Colleagues in the Panchayat department have extended support to the best of their ability, but the amount required for the surgery far exceeds the funds collected so far. The family is now seeking help from generous donors to facilitate the life-saving procedure. Those willing to contribute may contact P. Srinivasa Rao at 9398516470.



Holi Turns Tragic. Two Go Missing in Godavari at Manuguru



****Kranthikumar Dasari | Bhadrachalam Constancy | March 03 | Indian chronicle : Two persons were reported missing after they entered the Godavari river for a bath on the occasion of Holi near the Singareni water tank area at Mallepalli in Manuguru on Tuesday. The missing individuals have been identified as Gundi Nageswara Rao (40) and Paddam Prasad (35), both residents of Padmagudem village in Manuguru mandal. Prasad is said to be an employee of Singareni Collieries Company Limited. According to preliminary information, the duo had gone to the river as part of Holi celebrations when

they reportedly ventured into deeper waters and went missing. Local residents alerted the police after they failed to resurface. Manuguru Sub-Inspector Shrayan Kumar, along with police personnel, rushed to the spot and initiated search operations. Efforts are underway to trace the missing persons, with the assistance of local swimmers and rescue teams. The incident has cast a shadow over the festive spirit in the area, leaving family members and villagers in deep distress as search operations continue.

Tungaturthi Ravi Extends Birthday Wishes to BC Cooperative Finance Corporation Chairman Srikanth Goud



****NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):****On the occasion of the birthday of Telangana State BC Cooperative Finance Corporation Limited Chairman Nuthi Srikanth Goud, Peerzadiguda Congress Party President and R.V. Foundation Chairman Tungaturthi Ravi met him and conveyed his greetings. Speaking on the occasion,

Ravi wished Srikanth Goud a healthy and successful life and expressed hope that he would achieve greater political heights in the future while continuing his service to the people. Pawan Goud, Ranganna Goud, Vikram, Sangram, Patil, Bittu and others were present and extended their birthday wishes to Srikanth Goud.

Byri Srinivas Goud Meets Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy and Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah, Extends Holi Greetings



****NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):****Byri Srinivas Goud, Founder and President of Green Peace Environment & Water Harvesting Foundation, met Telangana State Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy and conveyed Holi festival greetings. During the meeting, Srinivas Goud exchanged festive wishes and discussed various environmental and water conservation initiatives undertaken by the foundation. The interaction took place in a cordial atmosphere. Jangaon Constituency In-charge Kommuri Pratap Reddy, Jangaon Municipal Chairman, and municipal councillors were also present on the occasion. Later, Byri Srinivas Goud met Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru Constituency MLA Beerla Ilaiah at the Ministers' Quarters and extended Holi greetings. He briefed the MLA about the foundation's activities related to environmental protection and water harvesting initiatives. The meetings highlighted the foundation's continued engagement with public representatives to promote environmental awareness and sustainable water management practices.

Government Whip Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilaiah visited canals in Golanukonda area of Aleru mandal

“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... March 3):- Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilaiah inspected the canals in Sarajipet and Golanukonda areas of Aleru mandal. He personally inspected the condition of the canals coming from Ashwaraopalli. He advised the officials to take necessary steps to fill the tanks of Sarajipet and Golanukonda villages. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the government is giving top priority to the development of irrigation facilities in rural areas. He said that by repairing the canals in two or three places, the water flow will be regular. He said that the repairs should be taken up immediately and the canals should be restored.”He said that by doing this, the tanks of Sarajipet and Golanukonda villages will be filled and the farmers will get irrigation water. He clarified that immediate action is being taken as per the request of local public representatives and farmers, and that the government is committed to the welfare of farmers.



Retired employee loses Rs 2 lakh in cyber fraud in Bhadrachalam

****Kranthikumar Dasari | Bhadrachalam Constancy | March 03 | Indian chronicle : A retired employee from Bhadrachalam in Bhadrachalam district was allegedly duped of Rs 2 lakh by cyber fraudsters posing as bank officials. According to police, the victim received a phone call from an unidentified person who claimed to be calling from the main branch of the State Bank of India. The caller informed him that there was a technical issue with his YONO mobile banking application and warned that his bank account would be blocked if the problem was not resolved immediately. The fraudster then persuaded the victim to download and install a “special file” through a link sent to his mobile phone, claiming it was necessary to rectify the issue. Believing the caller to be a genuine bank representative, the retired employee followed the instructions. Shortly after installing the file, the victim began receiving transaction alerts indicating

that a total of Rs 2 lakh had been debited from his account in multiple transactions. Realising that he had been cheated, he approached the police and lodged a complaint. Based on the complaint, a case has been registered and an investigation is underway. Police suspect that the fraudsters gained remote access to the victim's mobile phone through the malicious file and extracted confidential banking information to carry out the unauthorised transactions. Issuing an advisory to the public, police urged citizens not to download files or click on links sent by unknown persons. They also cautioned against sharing bank account details, passwords, or one-time passwords with anyone. In case of suspicious transactions, customers have been advised to immediately inform their respective banks and contact cybercrime authorities. With such cyber fraud cases on the rise, police have appealed to the public to remain vigilant and exercise caution while handling digital banking services.

Former TJAC Members from Uppal Meet M. Kodandaram, Seek Justice for Telangana Activists

****NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):****A delegation of former Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) members from Uppal constituency met senior Telangana movement leader M. Kodandaram at his residence to discuss issues concerning activists who participated in the Telangana statehood movement. The delegation recalled the collective struggle that led to the formation of Telangana under the leadership of the TJAC. They emphasized the need to protect the dignity and rights of those who actively participated in the movement. The members urged that genuine activists be given priority in the proposed state government sub-committee being formed to address issues related to Telangana movement participants. They specifically requested strong representation to ensure full implementation of the government's assurances, including allocation of 250 square yards of house sites to activists without FIR records, pension benefits, and issuance of self-respect identity cards. Responding to the concerns, Kodandaram stated that he would make sincere efforts to ensure that the commitments made to Telangana activists are implemented in full. The meeting was attended by former TJAC members from Uppal constituency, including Enugu Sitaram Reddy, Tadoori Gagan Kumar, Vidyasagar Chari, Dubba Kishan Mudiraj, Bairi Bhaskar Goud, Ravinder Rao Marata, Barmaju Venkata Chari, Pawan Vajja, Srinivas Reddy CH, Varun Pagidipalli, Linga Reddy and others.



Holi Celebrations in Boduppal – MP Etela Rajender's Greetings Conveyed by Gandipalli Raju

****NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):****Boduppal: On the occasion of Holi, Member of Parliament Etela Rajender extended warm greetings to the people of Boduppal. His message was conveyed to the public by BJP senior leader Gandipalli Raju of GHMC Boduppal Circle, 12th Division. In his message, Etela Rajender stated that Holi symbolizes harmony, joy, and unity among people. He expressed hope that the festival of colors would fill every home with happiness and prosperity, and strengthen the spirit of brotherhood in society. Speaking on the occasion, Gandipalli Raju said Holi reflects the cultural vibrancy of the nation and brings communities together beyond social differences. He urged residents of Boduppal to celebrate the festival with enthusiasm while ensuring safety and mutual respect. He also called upon the public to maintain peace and communal harmony during the celebrations, making the festival a memorable and joyful occasion for all.



Free Mega Medical Camp Held at Sai Priya Colony - Leetha Charitable Trust and Ashrayam Hand of Hope Organize Health Initiative



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):“A mega free medical camp was organized at Road No. 05, Sai Priya Colony, Parvathapur, under Boduppall Circle of the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation. The camp was jointly conducted by Leetha Charitable Trust and Ashrayam Hand of Hope. Dr. Chiranjeevi and Dr. Kamala Chiranjeevi of Leetha Charitable Trust attended the event. Tunga Turthi Ravi, President of Peerzadiguda Congress Party and Chairman of RV Foundation, participated as the chief guest. Around 300 people benefited from the camp. Free

services included blood pressure and blood sugar tests, blood investigations, dental check-ups, eye examinations, X-rays, ECG tests, and special medical consultations for pregnant women and children. Speaking on the occasion, Tunga Turthi Ravi appreciated the efforts of Leetha Charitable Trust and Ashrayam Hand of Hope for organizing the medical camp with a spirit of social service. He encouraged the organizers to continue conducting such welfare initiatives in the future. Local leaders, foundation members, and residents participated in large numbers, contributing to the success of the event.

Thummala fans pray for the safe return of Thummala;



““Flight services suspended in Dubai due to war in Iran” Thummala went to Dubai after son-in-law Shekhar suffered a brain stroke.” Thummala stopped there due to cancellation of flights.” Thummala fans pray for the safe return of Thummala.”“ Former Sarpanch's son Narlapati Rajasekhara”“Ashwaraopet, March 3:“Telangana State Agriculture Minister Thummala Nageswara Rao's son-in-law Shekhar was in a meeting with doctors in Dubai when Rajasekhara suffered a brain stroke and was admitted to the hospital after the meeting. After learning about this, Minister Thummala rushed to Dubai three days ago along with his family members. In this context, America declared war on Iran. Due to this, Thummala's flight to return was stopped. Travel from that country was stopped. In this order, Thummala's flight, which was supposed to return home on Monday morning, was stopped in Dubai. However, officials revealed that the minister was being careful there.”“Meanwhile, Narlapati Rajasekhara, a fan of Minister Thummala from Ashwaraopet town and the son of a former sarpanch, prayed in several temples for the safe return of his favorite leader. Narlapati Rajasekhara stated that no harm will come to Thummala, a man of the people, and he will return home safely.

Son Goes Missing After Being Reprimanded by Father



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):“Medipally: A 23-year-old man reportedly went missing after being reprimanded by his father in Medipally police station limits. According to police, Ram Shetty Srinu (45), a resident of Satyanarayana Puram Colony in Medipally, runs a local water plant business. His son, Ram Shetty Mahesh (23), had allegedly developed certain bad habits. Srinu reportedly scolded him over the issue. On the night of February 27, Mahesh left the house without informing anyone and has not returned since. Despite searching in various places, the family has been unable to trace his whereabouts. Srinu lodged a complaint at Medipally Police Station. Police registered a case and initiated an investigation.

Residential Permit Misused for Commercial Building - Allegations of Inaction Against Kapra Circle Town Planning Officials

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 3, (Indian chronicle):“Dr. A.S. Rao Nagar: Allegations of illegal constructions are surfacing in GR Reddy Nagar under AS Rao Nagar Division of Kapra Circle. Local residents have expressed strong resentment over a building that was reportedly permitted as a residential structure but is being used entirely for commercial purposes. The building, located near the NTR statue at GR Reddy Nagar crossroads in the Jammigadda area, has been constructed on approximately 200 square yards. According to the sanctioned plan, the permission was granted for a residential building, with the ground floor designated for parking and one floor shown under mortgage. However, residents allege that the ground floor has been converted into commercial shops, while the first, second, and third floors have been rented out for commercial use. Residents further claim that the building was constructed without maintaining the required setbacks, raising serious safety concerns. They warn that the absence of proper setbacks could pose significant risks during emergencies such as fire accidents. Despite repeated complaints to the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation authorities, no action has reportedly been taken. Questions are also being raised over the alleged release of the mortgage for the building, as rules prohibit mortgage clearance for structures that violate sanctioned plans. Tadoori Gagan Kumar, Convener of the Information Rights Protection Committee, alleged that while strict conditions are imposed at the time of granting building permissions, there is negligence in enforcement. He urged the Kapra Deputy Commissioner to conduct a special drive to verify whether constructions across the circle comply with approved plans. Residents demanded immediate action against unauthorized constructions and suggested that imposing penalties as per law would not only curb violations but also increase government revenue.



New Short Film Launched Under Mande's Book Production Special Prayers Offered at Boppana Cheruvu Katta Maisamma Temple, Uppal

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 3 (Indian Chronicle):“A new short film under the banner of Mande's Book Production was formally launched with a script pooja ceremony at the Goppala Cheruvu Katta Maisamma Temple located in HMDA Layout, Bhagayath, Uppal. The film commenced with traditional rituals at the temple. Shamirpet Vinod Reddy switched on the camera, while Uppal BRS senior leader Bashapalli Niranjan Chary directed the first shot. On this occasion, Producer Anand Narasimhareddy handed over the script to Director Nagireddy. He also conveyed his best wishes to Hero Akhil, Heroine Deepti Reddy, and Cameraman Ramesh.”“The launch ceremony was attended by members of the film unit and well-wishers, marking a grand beginning for the project.



Khammam Press Club Celebrates 24th Anniversary in a Grand Manner Symbol of Journalists' Unity - Celebration Beyond Union Lines



“Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Report March 3, (Indian Chronicle):“The 24th anniversary celebrations of the Khammam Press Club were held grandly on Tuesday at the Press Club premises in Khammam. Senior and junior journalists, along with leaders from various journalists' unions across the district, attended the event in large numbers and made it a success.”“The program began with floral tributes to the portrait of senior journalist and founding organizer Motukuri Venkateswarlu. The homage was led by Press Club President Anthoti Srinivas.”“As part of the celebrations, a massive 5-kilogram cake was cut and shared among the journalists. The event was conducted in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, reflecting the family spirit of the Press Club. Speakers recalled the achievements of the Press Club over its 24-year journey and remembered the services of senior journalists.”“During the meeting, IJU Press Club President Nama Purushottam, T.J.F. Press Club General Secretary Korakoppula Rambabu, TWJF Press Club (H-2843) President Anthoti Srinivas, and General Secretary Mallela Shilpa shared their views. They described the Press Club as a temple for journalists and emphasized its key role in bringing the problems of journalists to the attention of authorities and finding solutions. They also stressed the need for unity beyond union affiliations in fighting for journalists' rights, including house site allocations and other entitlements. TWJF District President Santosh Chakravarthy, District Secretary Nanabala Ramakrishna, District Treasurer Arvapalli Nagesh, along with several other journalists including Gentela Kumar, Elugoti Venkat, Kappala Madhu, Nalla Rakesh, Jillella Mallela, Shaik Sonia, Chinnamshetty Rambabu, Burra Srinivas Kalyanam, Pragani Gopichand, Shaik Nagul Meera, Velpula Jyothi, Sheelam Karunakar Reddy, Gauravarapu Jagadish Srinivas, Mogili Nageswara Rao, Dunaka Srinivasa Rao, Maddela Chinni, T. Biksham, Neerudu Rambabu, Paga Yona, and Kondala Rao participated in the event.”“A lunch banquet was arranged for the members following the program.

WJI Representatives Visit Senior Journalist Jabishetty Kutumba Rao

“Arvapalli Nagesh khammam Staff Report March 3, (Indian Chronicle):“Leaders of the WJI Khammam district unit visited senior journalist Jabishetty Kutumba Rao at his residence on Tuesday. He recently underwent an eye surgery and is currently recovering at home. Upon learning about his health condition, union representatives went to



his house in Khammam to inquire about his well-being. They wished him a speedy recovery and expressed their support during his recuperation. Those who visited Kutumba Rao included WJI State Secretary Nara Subrahmanyeswara Rao (N.S. Rao), Khammam District Convener Gantela Anand, Co-convener Yennaboyina Srinivasa Rao and Amaraneni Ramakrishna, Khammam Constituency Convener K. Kalyan Chakravarthy, and district leaders Kattakola China Narasayya and Bodduppalli Ravinder, among others.

Late-night drive, temple visit: Bengaluru car crash victims gave different reasons at home to step out

BENGALURUGNS News Agency, March 3

Five youths, including two teenagers, died in a road accident involving a car and a KSRTC bus near Jindal Aluminium in Anchepalya on Tumakuru Road on the outskirts of Bengaluru around 11.45pm Saturday. According to police, the accident occurred when



a Tata Indica, travelling from Nelamangala to Bengaluru, reportedly crashed into the road divider after entering the flyover on the national highway, jumped into the opposite lane, toppled multiple times and collided head-on with a KSRTC bus.

The impact of the collision was severe, leaving the car completely mangled and causing extensive damage to its front and top portions.

Based on the preliminary investigation, police suspect overspeeding to be the main reason for the accident. The deceased have been identified as Danush, 17; Keshava, 19; Durga Prasad, 20; Harshith, 20; and Lalith Kumar, 23, all residents of different areas in Doddaballapura in Bengaluru Rural district. Police said Keshava was driving the car. Joint commissioner of police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy inspected the spot, though the accident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Madanayakanahalli Police station (law and order).

He confirmed to TOI that all five occupants of the car died in the crash. Blood samples of the deceased have been collected and sent to FSL to ascertain whether they were driving under the influence of alcohol. Police are verifying the antecedents of the deceased. The accident spot is not under CCTV surveillance, and instructions have been given to check cameras in surrounding buildings. Bus driver Kemparaju said, "I saw the car cross the divider and crash into our bus.

The windscreen shattered, and shards of glass pierced my face. I managed to apply the brakes in time, preventing further damage. There were 43 passengers on board, and a few sustained minor injuries. The impact was loud as the car was travelling at high speed, and the front portion of the bus was damaged. Injured bus passengers were treated and discharged. The car belonged to Lalith, who had purchased a used vehicle. An officer said the youths were reportedly on a late night drive and had given different reasons at home for stepping out. While some told their families they were visiting a

temple, others said they would return shortly. Divider height only 6 inches: Police found that the road divider was barely six inches high and lacked a metal crash barrier. An officer said authorities would be informed about the need to install a proper barrier, and if the divider fails to meet standards, a notice may be issued to the officials concerned. Families in shock Harshith was a second-year BCom student at a private college in Rajanukunte, while Lalith worked as a CCTV technician. "A grown-up son has left us," said Roopa, recalling that Lalith had breakfast at home before telling the family he was going to a temple and would return late. Danush's mother, Sunitha, said they learnt about the accident around 6am Sunday. "He took me and my younger son to a bakery and bought us snacks. After we returned, he said he would step out for 10 minutes. We didn't know he had gone out with friends in a car," she said, adding that she knew only two of the other boys.

Gym trainer alleges friend used his bank accounts for Rs 16 lakh fraudulent transactions in Bengaluru

BENGALURU:GNS News Agency, March 3

A 25-year-old gym trainer has approached police, alleging that his bank account was misused to channel cyber fraud proceeds after he started receiving repeated alerts from his bank about suspicious transactions. K Solomon Robin, a resident of Williams Town near Benson Town and trainer at a fitness centre in RT Nagar, told police his colleague Waseem Akram introduced him in April 2024 to a man named Umar, described as a businessman. Umar, who frequently visited the gym, later sought Robin's help to open two bank accounts, claiming he needed them for business transactions to avoid tax liabilities. Trusting Waseem and Umar, Robin agreed and, along with his friend Shailesh, submitted ID proofs to open accounts at a bank in Banaswadi.

Umar allegedly paid them Rs 5,000 each and took

custody of the linked mobile phone and sim card, along with debit cards, passbooks and cheque books. Robin said he initially assumed the accounts were being used for legitimate business transactions, but grew concerned after receiving bank notices seeking details of suspicious transfers. When he contacted Waseem, he was allegedly advised to ignore and discard the notices.

Matters escalated when Robin's personal bank account was frozen. Recently, East Cyber Crime police questioned him and informed him that Rs 16 lakh had been routed through his account within a month of its opening. Waseem has been taken into custody, while Umar is believed to have travelled to Dubai. Police suspect multiple mule accounts were created and are probing the wider network.

timing, and schedule. External agencies also informed police that no such robbery took place during the period under review. According to police sources, Patil complained to Nashik police on Jan 1, 2026, alleging kidnapping, assault and threats to his life. In his complaint, Patil claimed the looting incident took place on Oct 22, 2025, in the Chorla Ghat area of Belagavi district, along the Maharashtra-Karnataka border. The complaint alleges Rs 400 crore was being transported from Goa to an ashram in Ahmedabad via Karnataka in two containers.

These containers were allegedly intercepted at Chorla Ghat, where the cash was looted. Patil further claimed that he was abducted and assaulted on suspicion that he knew about the alleged operation. The Maharashtra SIT conducted a probe for nearly a month. Nashik police sought cooperation of Belagavi police in the investigation in collecting detailed information about the alleged incident. On Saturday, the court acquitted Kishore Sawala, Virat Gandhi, Jayesh Kadam, Vishal Naidu, Sunil Dhumal, Machhindra Madhavi, and Janardhan Dhaygude, citing lack of concrete evidence. The court passed the order after examining the sequence of events and digital evidence, and the failure of the prosecution to establish the allegations against the accused. Now, attention has shifted to likely legal action against Patil for his complaint that kept police machinery engaged for nearly a month.

tance to the family, including coordination with local authorities and arrangements for the repatriation of mortal remains to India at the earliest. Our consular officers are in direct contact with the family and will support them with all required formalities and services," Consulate General of India added.

When contacted by TOI around 7pm, Saketh's father Sreenivasaiah said he had not received any official communication — from MEA, US Embassy or from Karnataka govt — confirming his son's death. "Without asking us to confirm, how can we believe the post on X," he said. Asked about the developments, Sreenivasaiah said the last communication he received was on Feb 14 from the Consulate General of India in San Francisco. "They sent a WhatsApp message saying they are trying to find my son. That, too, was not anything official," he said, declining to comment further on possible delays, stating he understood procedures had to be followed.



operation, the case fell flat after technical investigations found major discrepancies in his version. Following submission of evidence before the Igatpuri court in Maharashtra's Nashik on Saturday, the complaint filed by Nashik resident Sandeep Patil was found to be false, leading to the acquittal of all seven arrested suspects. Police probe found inconsistencies in the alleged incident's location, travel route, call detail records,

US confirms death of Karnataka's Saketh Sreenivasaiah; father says no official info yet

BENGALURUGNS News Agency, March 3

: Three days after Saketh Sreenivasaiah was first reported missing from Berkeley in California, the Consulate General of India in San Francisco has confirmed the 22-year-old student's death through a post on X.

As of late Sunday, the boy's family in Karnataka was awaiting a formal communication. In a post on X at 5.12am on Feb 15, the Consulate General of India said: "The Consulate deeply regrets to inform that local police confirmed the recovery of the body of Saketh."

Saketh was pursuing a postgraduate degree in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. According to reports, he was last seen in the 1700 block of Dwight Way earlier this week before being reported missing.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones during this profoundly difficult time. The Consulate stands ready to provide all necessary assis-

Two more Vande Bharat Sleeper rakes to be ready by next month

Bengaluru: GNS News Agency, March 3

While anticipation over the country's second Vande Bharat sleeper service continues, two more rakes are set to be ready by next month. This rollout from the city-based public sector undertaking (PSU), Bharat Earth Movers Ltd (BEML), will enable the second service to be flagged off. As per BEML's original agreement with the integral coach factory (ICF) in Chennai, a total of 10 sleeper rakes with 16 coaches each were supposed to be delivered to the Indian Railways by March 31. However, sources at ICF state the deadline will be missed. "We expect the third and fourth rakes of Vande Bharat to be delivered before the end of March. For the six remaining rakes, we are trying to make sure to provide a rake every month from then on," an ICF official told TOI. "As of now, a new tentative deadline for the initial batch of 10 coaches could be August. Even if it is delivered from Bengaluru, they will go through trials, testing and approvals, so there is no point in hurrying or rushing," the

official added. With demand for more Vande Bharat sleeper trains, especially from Karnataka, the railway ministry officially announced plans to manufacture 260 more rakes in the future. Answering a Lok Sabha question last week, Union minister for railways Ashwini Vaishnaw stated: "Vande Bharat sleeper train manufacturing programme is being executed in a phased manner through prototype development, trials and series production by BEML & Integral Coach Factory, Chennai and technology partners.

"According to ICF, the project is only in the design stage and will only be taken up following the completion of the initial batch of 10 rakes. A BEML spokesperson confirmed that no such order was undertaken by the PSU as of now. Though there are official plans for the manufacture of 260 Vande Bharat sleeper rakes, sources within the ICF confirmed that 50 more rakes will be manufactured by the factory independently. These rakes, contrary to the rest, will have 24 coaches along with pantry cars.

E-commerce website fined Rs 5 lakh for 'toying' around with unsafe listings

Bengaluru: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on Feb 13 imposed a penalty of Rs 5 lakh on e-commerce platform Snapdeal for facilitating the sale of toys without mandatory quality certification. The action followed the CCPA taking suo motu cognisance against Snapdeal (Ace Vector Limited) for the sale of toys on its platform that did not conform to the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms under the Toys (Quality Control) Order, 2020. The authority noted that the sale of such toys can be hazardous and may cause injury or harm to consumers.

It found that despite the Quality Control Order (QCO), 2020 coming into effect on Jan 1, 2021, the platform had failed to exercise due diligence. It also observed that sellers' contact details, including address, phone number and email ID, were not visible on the platform. As per BIS, toys that do not conform to compulsory standards are liable to be treated as defective. In its defence, Snapdeal stated that it operates as an "intermediary" and a "marketplace e-commerce entity", providing a digital platform to facilitate transactions between independent third-party sellers and buyers.

It argued that under the Information Technology Act, an intermediary is not liable for third-party information or content hosted on its platform. Snapdeal submitted that all activities related to listing and sale are carried out by independent sellers, who are responsible for uploading product listings.

It said it does not handle physical products, does not take possession of goods, and does not hold legal title to

inventory sold by third-party sellers.

Deliveries, it added, are handled by independent logistics providers with no corporate relationship with the company. However, CCPA found that Snapdeal hosted a number of sellers with inaccurate or unverifiable addresses, hindering regulatory oversight. It also noted that the company earned Rs 41,032 in fees from the sale of non-compliant toys, indicating commercial benefit from products sold in violation of quality standards. The consumer authority further observed that toys without the BIS mark continued to be listed, advertised, and offered for sale on the platform as recently as Dec 2025. It held that this could mislead consumers by creating a false impression of quality and safety. Misleading advertisements CCPA stated that after promoting products through labels such as "deal of the day" or "toofan sales" and describing them as high quality at competitive prices, the platform could not claim to be a neutral intermediary.

Such representations, while selling non-compliant toys, amounted to misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the authority observed. A bench comprising chief commissioner Nidhi Khare and commissioner Anupam Mishra imposed the penalty of Rs 5 lakh and directed Snapdeal to ensure that no non-compliant toy is listed or sold on its platform without full compliance and mandatory disclosures. It also directed the company to prominently display its contact number, email address, and the details of its grievance officer.

Thousands celebrate Shivaratri with Sri Sri in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: Thousands of devotees gathered on Maha Shivaratri for a night of meditation, music, and rituals, led by spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at the Art of Living International Centre on Kanakapura Road, Sunday evening. The celebrations featured guided meditations, bhajans, and Vedic ceremonies, with the highlight being the Rudra Puja dedicated to Lord Shiva. Similar pujas were organised at around 150 locations in India and abroad.

Addressing devotees, Ravi Shankar said Maha Shivaratri signifies the mind rising beyond the material realm and described Shiva as the essence of consciousness, devotion, and service. Saying that participating in the festival with faith brings fulfilment and joy, he said Mahakaal "shines as the light within the hearts of yogis". Devotees at the ashram also had darshan of relics believed to be from the original Somnath Jyotirlinga, said to have been destroyed during the 1026 CE raid by Mahmud of Ghazni. Visitors from about 50 countries joined in chanting Rudram verses, singing, and meditation, with many describing the atmosphere as festive and spiritually uplifting.



Newlywed couple injured in gas leak explosion in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: A newlywed couple sustained burn injuries after a gas leak from a cylinder triggered an explosion at their rented house in Kondappa Layout, near Yelahanka, in the early hours of Sunday.

The injured — Krishnaveni, 25, and Raju, 26 — are undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital. According to preliminary investigation, the explosion occurred between 6am and 6.30am. The two are natives of Bagepalli in Chikkaballapur district, and got married three months ago. Raju works at a private firm.

Police said the couple was unaware of the gas leak. When Krishnaveni either switched on the light or attempted to light the gas stove, the accumulated gas ignited, triggering a sudden explosion and fire.

The impact damaged part of the house wall. Krishnaveni sustained serious burn injuries, while Raju also suffered burns. Police and fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control. A senior officer said the cylinder was intact. A case of accidental fire has been registered at Yelahanka police station and a probe is on. Fire at store in a separate incident, an accidental fire broke out at a furniture store in Canara Bank Colony, Moodalapalya, in west Bengaluru around midnight Saturday. The fire started on the ground floor of a multi-storied building. No casualties were reported, though two trees in front of the building also caught fire. Fire and emergency personnel doused the blaze. The shop belongs to a person identified as Murali.

Summer checks in early, parts of K'taka on heat alert

Bengaluru: When Percy Bysshe Shelley famously wrote 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind', in his 'Ode to the West Wind', it was an invocation to the West Wind to emerge as a powerful vehicle of change and rejuvenation.

However, on Saturday, as mid-Feb maximum temperatures in parts of Karnataka saw an abnormal surge, triggering heatwave alerts in northern Karnataka and the coastal areas, it was perhaps time to pen an 'Ode to the East Wind' as meteorologists cited an absence of moisture-laden winds "sweeping in from the Bay of Bengal" as the reason behind this unusual spike in heat. So, "if spring comes with such a scorcher, can a torturous summer be far behind", is the question to ask!

On Saturday, Bengaluru logged a maximum of 31.4

degrees Celsius, the highest so far this year — and we're not even into the summer months — while areas around the city's airport touched 32 degrees.

Coastal and north-interior regions also saw elevated readings: 32.75 degrees in Udipi, 32.6 degrees in Mundgod and 32.4 degrees in Haliyal. The maximum average temperature for Feb in Bengaluru is around 29 degrees Celsius, while for the rest of the state it's between 29 and 31 degrees. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an Orange Alert for Uttara Kannada, where temperatures are likely to hover between 33 and 34 degrees over the next two days. A Yellow Alert has been sounded for adjoining Udipi district, warning of possible heatwave conditions. In Bengaluru, maximum temperatures are expected to remain between 29 and 31 degrees over the next two days.

Youth's claims of attack on train found untrue: Cops

Kharagpur:GNS News Agency, March 3

A 24-year-old Beldanga resident was handed over to his family after his sensational claims that two men had pushed him off a moving train near West Midnapore's Bakhrabad station were found to be inconsistent.

The youth, his family said, was battling psychological disorder. Sk Manarul, who reached Belda police station on Sunday morning, had told police that two men asked him about his citizenship and sought his Aadhaar and PAN cards. Manarul said that the duo then pushed him off the express train, calling him a Bangladeshi.

Manarul said the fall left him with severe injuries. A medical examination at Belda Superspecialty Hospital, revealed no injury marks on his body.

Investigators also found that Manarul had changed three trains and was fined by a TTE. They suspect that he jumped off the train upon seeing a TTE. Manarul's father Azad Sheikh and cousin Piarul Sheikh arrived at Kharagpur after being informed by cops. Confirming that Manarul was battling a mental disorder, Piarul said "Manarul works as a mason in Bengaluru. He got off the train at Visakhapatnam and boarded the Humsafar Express. He called to say he did not feel good and got off a Bakhrabad. There was no attack on him."

BJP calls Yuva Sathi 'dole for votes', starts Modi rally prep

Kolkata: BJP on Sunday called the state govt's Yuva Sathi scheme "dole in exchange for votes" even as the party's Bengal unit started preparations for PM Narendra Modi's March rally at Brigade Parade Grounds.

The unit has been tasked with reaching out to at least 150 key assembly constituencies with the message of industrialisation and building a narrative around joblessness. The saffron party, which has consistently criticised Trinamool's social welfare schemes, called Yuva Sathi — a scheme to provide financial assistance to unemployed youth — "drama" and a replica of Trinamool's promise of 17 lakh jobs in 2013. "What happened to the 17 lakh job applications in 2013," asked leader of opposition Suwendu Adhikari.

He also questioned why state govt was not accepting Yuva Sathi applications online. Adhikari said that while youth can fill in forms, this govt cannot give them jobs. "They will get jobs only after the BJP is voted to office," he added. Adhikari further said the scheme followed the same pattern as the 2021 Duare Sarkar scheme. "They simply want to create a show out of normal official procedure. It is the same thing we saw with Amader Para Amader Samadhan, which was a flop show," Adhikari added.

BJP's Bengal election co-in-charge Biplab Deb said the BJP govt in Tripura had raised social welfare payments to Rs 2,000 back in 2022. "We did that four years ago in a small state like Tripura. Trinamool is bragging after giving Rs 1,500 for Lakshmir Bhandar in 2026. This is nothing but an attempt to fool people," he said. Sources in Bengal BJP said the PM is likely to visit Kolkata in March once the higher secondary exams are over. The rally will be preceded by a rath yatra across the state after Holi. Party workers have been tasked with reaching out to households to seek opinions from people before coming out with the party's election manifesto.



Mamata Banerjee dials Tarique Rahman; Bengal sweets, flowers reach BNP chief in Bangladesh

KOLKATA: CM Mamata Banerjee, who had earlier congratulated Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chief Tarique Rahman on his poll victory, sent sweets and flowers to him on Saturday. The package also contained a note for Rahman. The Dhaka Tribune reported that BNP media cell member Atiqur Rahman Ruman received the flowers and sweets at the party chairman's political office in Dhaka's Gulshan. Special officer Mehedul Islam Mehedi was also present. While there has been no official statement, BNP sources said Banerjee and Rahman also had a chat over the phone. On Friday, Banerjee posted on X: "I congratulate Tarique bhai, his party and other political parties for this massive victory."



I always hope that Bengal continues to have a cordial relationship with Bangladesh." Her message was posted hours after the election results were out. Rahman, who will be sworn in as the next PM of Bangladesh on Feb 17, will have to address a number of bilateral issues involving Bengal, feel experts. "Teesta water sharing treaty is one of the crucial areas which Rahman will address. The BNP manifesto clearly mentioned that the party would take effective measures to secure Bangladesh's fair share of water," a BNP neta told TOI.

Banerjee has always opposed Teesta water-shar-

ing, saying that the river did not have enough water to be shared and any sharing of its waters would deprive farmers of north Bengal. While the interim govt in Bangladesh even spoke about approaching international forums to resolve the issue, Banerjee sending gifts is being seen as an effort to smoothen out wrinkles in bilateral relationship, said sources. In Dec, Banerjee sent her condolences following death of Rahman's mother and former Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia. Banerjee is known for her close ties with former Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina, who has often referred to Banerjee as her sister. Hasina and Banerjee often exchanged gifts — including Hilsa and sweets.

PM 2.5, PM 10 improve over 4 years: Survey

Kolkata: The city's air quality improved modestly between 2022 and 2025, with the city-wide average PM2.5 level falling from 50 µg/m³ to 45 µg/m³ and PM10 declining from 102 µg/m³ to 89 µg/m³, according to CAAQMS data analysed by Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

However, the figures remained above the National Ambient Air Quality Standard of 40 µg/m³. Some monitoring stations reported worrying spikes, and progress remained uneven. Rabindra Sarobar emerged as the cleanest station in 2025 while Jadavpur recorded the sharpest PM2.5 spike at 59 µg/m³. The most significant long-term improvement was at Rabindra Bharati University, where PM2.5 levels dropped from 65 µg/m³ in 2022 to 38 µg/m³ in 2024, before inching up slightly to 40 µg/m³ in 2025.

Rabindra Sarobar consistently recorded the lowest PM2.5 levels, maintaining 39 µg/m³ between 2022 and 2024, and improving to 33 µg/m³ in 2025 — the only station to fall well below the national standard last year. But some locations bucked the overall trend. Jadavpur saw PM2.5 rising to 59 µg/m³ in 2025 from 45 µg/m³ in 2024. Fort William and Victoria registered increases in 2025 after improvements in 2024.

The trend for PM10 showed a clearer downward movement city-wide. Kolkata's annual average PM10 concentration fell from 102 µg/m³ in 2022 to 89 µg/m³ in 2025. Bidhannagar recorded one of the steepest PM10 declines, from 97 µg/m³ in 2022 to 76 µg/m³ in 2025. Rabindra Sarobar again emerged as the cleanest location, with PM10 levels dropping from 83 µg/m³ in 2022 to 66 µg/m³ in 2025. RBU saw a fall from 135 µg/m³ in 2022 to 88 µg/m³ in 2025 — nearly a 35% reduction over four years. Yet, some stations showed a reversal of gains. Jadavpur's PM10 rose sharply to 109 µg/m³ in 2025 after three consecutive years of decline. Fort William and Victoria also recorded higher levels in 2025 compared to

2024, indicating that dust control and emission management measures were not uniformly effective. CREA analyst Manoj Kumar said, "The data point to gradual progress in controlling particulate pollution across Kolkata, particularly in reducing PM10. However, the stagnation of citywide PM2.5 levels since 2024 and the spike at specific stations highlight the need for targeted interventions."

Man loses 1.9L in credit card fraud

Kolkata: A 53-year-old Rajarhat resident has alleged nearly Rs 2 lakh was fraudulently debited using his SBI credit card through two unauthorised transactions in favour of an online shopping retailer.

A case has been registered at Bidhannagar Cyber Crime Police Station. Cops said the resident of a Rajarhat high-rise complex lodged a written complaint stating he received two SMS alerts around 6.27 pm and 6.28 pm on Jan 27, informing him of transactions amounting to Rs 98,564 and Rs 98,463, respectively.

Kolkata: 10,000cr NEP Loss, Tea Garden Owners Eye Real Estate, SIM Box Bust & More

The total amount allegedly siphoned was Rs 1,97,027. On getting the alerts, he contacted the credit card department and requested his card be blocked. He also sent a transaction dispute form to the bank and lodged a complaint on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal. The complainant received the transaction IDs from the bank after around 15 days.

In a first, 2 from state win Ramanujan prize

Kolkata: Two Bengal academics, Supra Mukherjee and Mrinmoy Pramanick, won the A K Ramanujan Prize for translating the works of Dalit woman poet Kalyani Thakur Charal into English.

They also became the first Bengalis to win the honour awarded by the Association for Asian Studies for the translated volume 'I Belong to Nowhere'. While Mukherjee is a professor of English at West Bengal State University, Pramanick is an associate professor of comparative literature, who recently joined Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) from Calcutta University.

The book is an anthology of 30 poems, curated from five of Kalyani's anthologies penned over decades.

Charal calls herself a humanist. "The book highlights a South Asian woman's voice that is found in Bengali language," Pramanick said. "We are among only a few Indians to win this award," said Pramanick. "Until now, those who received the award mainly got it for translating either classical texts or famous texts from one language to another. Ours is neither a classical text nor a famous one," he added. "I am delighted and grateful that Kalyani trusted us," said Mukherjee.

Walkathon focus on cancer & thalassaemia awareness

Kolkata: The BDM International Alumni Association, in collaboration with Rotary Club of Calcutta Endeavour, organised Walkathon 2026, to spread awareness on thalassaemia and cervical cancer recently.

The walkathon had commenced from Ruby General Hospital at 7 am on Feb 1 and concluded at Hilland Park Mall the same day. Over 400 alumni, educators, healthcare professionals, students, parents, rotarians and citizens united by a shared commitment to preventive healthcare and social responsibility participated in the event. Madhumita Sengupta, principal of BDM International, had emphasized the vital role of educational institutions in shaping socially-conscious and responsible citizens in her address to the participants.

The event was graced by Ramendu Homchaudhuri, district governor, RID 3291, as the chief guest. In his address, he highlighted Rotary's sustained commitment to community health, awareness, and preventive action. Medical perspectives were shared by Kamal K Dutta, CMD, Ruby General Hospital. SL Gupta, CEO of BDM

International, also graced the occasion. The dignitaries



were felicitated by Subhomoy Samanta, president, along with the core committee members of the BDM International Alumni Association, and Nabaneet Moita, president of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Endeavour.



4 bohurupi fraudsters from Anand arrested

Kolkata: Four men from Gujarat's Anand district were arrested for allegedly posing as bohurupis resembling Hindu gods and stealing wallets and mobile phones from unsuspecting pedestrians across the city, police said on Saturday. The accused — Anil Ramju Salat, Dhiru Kalovai Salat, Samirbhai Salat and Raju Kumar — were picked up from the Hastings area and are currently in the custody of the watch section following a complaint lodged at Jorasanko Police Station.

Police said the group dressed up as deities such as Goddess Kali and Lord Shiva and approached people waiting at traffic signals or walking along busy roads, seeking alms. While engaging targets in conversation and appealing to religious sentiments, members of the group allegedly stole wallets and mobile phones. The arrests were made following leads that emerged during the inter-

rogation of two other accused — Mohammad Shahnawaz and Mohammad Samir — who were arrested from the Park Street area in connection with a mobile phone theft case registered at Girish Park Police Station. During questioning, investigators received specific inputs that led them to the four men operating under religious disguises. Acting on the information, a team tracked them down in Hastings and detained them.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the group was not operating in Kolkata alone but carried out similar thefts in other cities using the same modus operandi. Police said that further investigation is underway to determine the full extent of the network and whether more individuals are involved. The cops are also examining the possible inter-city links and prior cases that may be connected to the accused.

Oil lamp lit for Shivratri sparks fire at Tollygunge apartment

Kolkata: An oil lamp lit on the occasion of Shivratri sparked a fire inside an empty fifth-floor apartment at Diamond City South in Tollygunge on Sunday morning, triggering panic across multiple floors of the high-rise before firefighters brought the blaze under control within an hour and a half. The fire broke out in flat 5B of Tower 2 around 10.40 am, shortly after resident Anju Minda and her husband stepped out to offer prayers at a temple located within the complex premises. Residents said thick black smoke was seen billowing out of the apartment windows, prompting immediate alarm in the block.

Electricity to the tower was swiftly switched off as a precautionary measure, forcing residents of the 4th, 5th and 6th floors to evacuate via staircases.

Many rushed out in haste, fearing the flames could spread through the building's internal shafts. The complex's in-house fire management team initiated the first response, attempting to contain the flames and evacuate residents before alerting the state fire services. Fire officials said 5 fire tenders were pressed into service after the call was received. "Our fire management team quickly took over to evacuate those in need and contain the fire as much as possible till the firemen reached and assumed charge," said Pushpa Sinha, president of the Residents' Welfare Association (RWA).

"Thankfully, the family had just stepped out for puja when the fire started. No one was inside the apartment, or it could have resulted in serious injuries." Firefighters said dense smoke accumulated inside the flat, making ventilation critical. "We had to break open multiple glass panes to let the trapped smoke escape and prevent it



from spreading to adjacent units," a fire official at the spot said. The blaze was brought under control by around 12 noon. While no residents were injured, a maintenance staff member sustained minor burns and scratches while assisting in evacuating occupants from the affected floors. He was given first aid on site and did not need to be taken to a hospital, RWA members said. Officials added that the cooking gas pipeline supply to the tower was shut off immediately after the fire was detected. Both electricity and gas connections were restored only after clearance from the fire department. The upscale gated complex is home to several prominent personalities, including actors Nusrat Jahan, Yash Dasgupta and Sayantika Banerjee.

Fresh snowfall hits Jammu's Baderwah; authorities issue advisory

BHADERWAH: Fresh snowfall in the Baderwah Valley on Sunday disrupted daily life after three days of sunshine, leading to a sharp drop in temperature and traffic disruptions. The sudden change in weather affected commuters and daily wage earners the most. Authorities issued an advisory asking residents to remain cautious, as snowfall made roads slippery and unsafe for travel. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Baderwah, Sunil Kumar Butyal, said an advisory had been issued in view of the prevailing weather conditions. "The authorities have issued an advisory. We request that all Baderwah residents stay in their homes unless it's an emergency and avoid driving unless necessary, as roads are slippery due to snowfall," he said.

He also said efforts were underway to restore essential services, especially the electricity supply, which had been disrupted due to the snowfall. "Our people are currently working to restore the disrupted power supply. People should use heating appliances and wood with caution to avoid fire and other incidents," Butyal added. Earlier, the Border Roads Organisation carried out a high-altitude rescue and road restoration operation at Jammu and Kashmir's Chatergala Pass, located at an altitude of 10,500 feet, on the Baderwah-Chatergala axis.

The operation followed heavy snowfall that disrupted connectivity in the area. The rescue and clearance work was undertaken by the 118 Road Construction Company of the 35 Border Roads Task Force under Project Sampark of the BRO. According to the BRO, "The snow-clearance operation commenced at 0630 hrs on January



24 and continued for nearly 40 hours, clearing approximately 38 km of road buried under 5-6 feet of snow.

The route was opened by 7:30 pm on January 25, enabling the safe evacuation of 40 troops of 4 Rashtriya Rifles along with weapons and stores, and 20 stranded civilians. "The organisation said the mission concluded successfully without any casualties. The rescue mission was completed by 02:30 am on 26 January 2026 with zero casualties, highlighting the professionalism and dedication of BRO personnel working under extreme winter conditions. The operation was executed in close coordination with the Indian Army, restoring critical connectivity in the region," the BRO said.

Chillai Kalan ends, but more snowfall in store for J&K

Srinagar: Chillai Kalan, the harshest 40-day phase of winter in Kashmir, ended on Friday, but the valley is likely to witness more snowfall and light rain from Sunday, with IMD forecasting possible avalanches in snow-bound areas and advising locals to halt farming operations for seven days. Snowfall and light rain are likely in higher reaches for three days from Sunday. Thunderstorms with gusty winds are also expected at several places on Sunday, IMD Srinagar centre director Mukhtar Ahmad said on Saturday.

Clouds will envelop the region from Wednesday to Saturday, and snowfall and light rain will resume Saturday, the weather forecaster said. Srinagar experienced a breather from freezing temperature which settled at the minimum of 1.3 degrees Celsius on Friday night.



However, higher-altitude areas continued to reel under intense cold conditions. Sonamarg recorded the lowest temperature at minus 10.6 degrees Celsius, while Gulmarg saw a low of minus 9, Pahalgam minus 5.3. Chillai Kalan, which affected road and air transport, revived Kashmir's tourism hit by Pahalgam

terror attack last year. BRO restores J&K-HP lifeline in record time, clears 10 feet snow. Jammu: BRO on Saturday restored a 112-km stretch of an inter-state surface lifeline connecting J&K's Doda and Kishtwar belt with Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti region by clearing 8-10 feet deep snow accumulated

on the road last week.

Defence spokesperson Lt Col Suneel Bartwal said, "BRO restored the connectivity in record time under Project Sampark... BRO teams are also engaged in snow clearance operations on an alternative highway, known as the Mughal Road, which connects Poonch and Rajouri districts with Kashmir valley."

Fresh gunfight breaks out after contact established for fourth time in 2 weeks with JeM terrorists in Kishtwar



Jammu: A fresh contact was established early Saturday morning between security forces and a group of terrorists on the 14th day of an ongoing search operation, codenamed Trashi-I, triggering an encounter in a forest area in Chatroo subdivision of J&K's Kishtwar district. This is the fourth time in the past two weeks that a contact was established with the terrorists. Officials said intelligence from multiple credible sources had been coordinated to plan the operation on the ground.

"During the ongoing joint Operation TRASHI-I, contact with terrorists was re-established in the early hours in the general area of Dolgam by troops of White Knight Corps, J&K Police and CRPF," the Army's White Knight Corps, based in Jammu's Nagrota, said in a post on X.

"A cordon has been established and operations are in progress," it added. The Northern Army Commander, Lt-Gen Pratik Sharma, visited Kishtwar on Saturday to review the counter-terrorism grid, and commended the troops for their unwavering resolve in the ongoing anti-terror operation. The operation was launched on Jan 18 to track down and neutralise a group of two to three Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists holed up in the snowbound

Chatroo belt.

After the initial gunfight in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpura on Jan 18, in which one trooper was killed and several others were injured, two more encounters took place on Jan 22 and Jan 25 in the general forest area of Mali Dana Top in Chatroo and the Jansseer-Kandiwar forest area, respectively.

The forces had on Jan 19-20 busted a terrorist hideout and found a huge quantity of assorted ration and other consumable items including Maggie packets, utensils and an LPG cylinder. Security forces have intensified the search, with multiple teams comprising Army, police and paramilitary personnel, backed by drones and sniffer dogs, combing the hilly terrain to track the fleeing terrorists. Mobile internet services were temporarily suspended on Friday within a six-km radius covering Singhpura, Chingam and Chatroo to prevent any misuse by anti-national elements during the ongoing operation. Security forces also have launched a search operation following the sighting of a suspected Pakistani drone along the International Border (IB) in Jammu's Samba district on Saturday. The drone briefly hovered over the Indian territory along the IB near Chillyari village before retreating, officials said.

Searches continue in Kishtwar after fresh gunfight



JAMMU: Amid heavy snowfall, a joint team of security forces has been combing the dense forests of J&K's Kishtwar district for the past two days, following a fresh gunfight with a group of Pakistani terrorists late Sunday — the third encounter in Chatroo belt over the past week. Operation Trashi-I, launched Jan 18, entered its 10th day Tuesday. The first fire exchange between troops and terrorists occurred in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpura on Jan 18, in which eight security personnel were injured, one of whom eventually succumbed. On Jan 22, another gunfight broke out with holed-up ultras in Singhpura. Yet another firefight followed on Jan 24, in which a Pakistani Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist was shot dead.

"The latest gun battle began around 10.20pm when a joint search team comprising personnel of the Army, Para (Special Forces), and J&K Police's SOG came under fire from holed-up ultras in the forests of Jansseer-Kandiwar late Sunday. After trading bullets for some time, the terrorists — believed to be two or three — escaped under the cover of darkness," an official said. Despite heavy snowfall in Chatroo belt, the troops have persisted

in their pursuit of terrorists, trudging through more than two feet of snow.

Officials said the area of operation has been expanded to new locations along Kishtwar-Sinthan road, with the Army deploying unmanned aerial vehicles and drones, along with sniffer dog units, to track the fleeing terrorists. Additional deployments have been arranged to seal potential escape routes and prevent ultras from slipping into neighbouring forested zones. The situation remains under close watch, and operations would continue in the region until it was fully cleared of terrorist presence, official sources said. Operation Trashi-I was launched on Jan 18, two days after security forces busted three terrorist hideouts in Kathua district on Jan 16. The fleeing ultras, however, managed to give troops the slip during encounters in Kamad Nallah, Kalaban, and Dhanu Parole areas. Recoveries included food items, utensils, cooking gas cylinder, empty M4 cartridges, logistical material, etc. Three suspects were detained for questioning in Kathua after Pakistani mobile numbers were detected in their cellphones.

Bus crash in J&K's Udhampur kills 4, CRPF jawan among dead

JAMMU: Four persons, including a CRPF jawan, were killed on Tuesday when a bus rammed into a parked load carrier and a motorcycle in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. The accident occurred around 11 am near the Jakhani-Chenani area on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway. Officials said the bus, which was travelling from Doda to Jammu, lost control and first hit a motorcycle before colliding with a load carrier that had developed a mechanical fault and was being repaired by a mechanic at the roadside. The mechanic and the load carrier driver died on the spot, while two passengers travelling in the bus were thrown out through an emergency window and succumbed to their injuries on the way to hospital, officials said.



Omar Abdullah's aide submits resolution in Assembly against NMC's decision to withdraw nod to Jammu medical college

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) legislator and party chief spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq has submitted a resolution in the J&K Legislative Assembly, seeking a review of recent decision of the National Medical Council (NMC) to withdraw permission to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) to run MBBS course. According to party sources, Sadiq's private member's resolution urges the central government and the NMC to reconsider the move, stating that no educational institution should be denied approval on the basis of the religion of its students. NC insiders said the resolution seeks to convey the sense of the House and raises concerns over the NMC's decision to withdraw permission within four months of granting approval for the MBBS course to the SMVDIME.

It calls for a fair assessment of the whole issue, stating the SMVDIME was established to meet the healthcare and medical education needs of Jammu and Kashmir and was developed with substantial public funding and infrastructure support. The governing party expects the resolution to be passed by a majority vote. Sadiq is a close aide of CM Omar Abdullah and has previously served as his political adviser. He is also known as his marathon-running companion.

The Assembly's 27-day session is due to begin on Feb 2 with the Lieutenant Governor's address to the House. On Jan 6, the NMC withdrew permission for the college to admit 50 MBBS students



for the 2025-26 academic year, the institute's first batch, citing major deficiencies in faculty, clinical material and infrastructure. The council said students admitted during counselling for 2025-26 would be accommodated in other government medical colleges of the UT. CM Abdullah strongly reacted to the decision. On Jan 7, he said that while people across the country agitate and struggle to get a medical college in their area, a medical college in Jammu was shut down after protests on religious grounds. He described the decision as unprecedented and deeply troubling. The controversy erupted in November last year after the college admitted students strictly on the basis of NEET merit.

Of the 50 seats, 42 were allotted to Muslim students, mostly from Kashmir, along with one Sikh candidate, while eight Hindu students from Jammu were selected. This triggered protests by the Jammu-based Sangharsh Samiti, a coalition of around 60 religious and civil society groups, supported by the Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. The groups argued that an institution funded by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board should give preference to Hindu students and those who have faith in Mata Vaishno Devi. The BJP also sided with the protesters. BJP's Sunil Sharma submitted a memorandum to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, who heads the shrine board, seeking a review of the admission policy and arguing that "astha" on Shri Mata Vaishno Devi should be a criteria for admission to a college run on donations of Hindus.

Rules versus RSS in Karnataka



Days after the RSS held 100 patha sanchalana (route marches) and events across Bengaluru on October 11, to mark its centenary, the Karnataka government issued an order to regulate the use of state-owned properties by private organisations. On October 4, IT/BT and Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge wrote to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeking a ban on the activities of the Sangh on the premises of government-run institutions as they are "contrary to India's unity and the spirit of the Constitution." The government order on October 18 did not directly mention the RSS. It sought to put riders on a broad spectrum of "private organisations/societies/trusts/clubs or any other entity registered/unregistered" using public spaces. In essence, it reiterated and consolidated existing rules. Mr. Siddaramaiah has been at pains to explain that the rules do not singularly target the RSS and that similar rules had been put in place during the BJP regime in 2013. However, the timing and sequence of events have made it difficult to delink the order from the Sangh.

Is the Siddaramaiah-led Congress govt using the govt order to target the RSS?

October 18 was also marked by tension in Chittapur, Mr. Kharge's constituency, as the Kalaburagi district administration denied permission for an RSS patha sanchalana the next day, citing law and order issues. The Bhim Army and the Bharatiya Dalit Panthers too had sought permission for marches along the same route the same day. Over the previous two days, Dalit groups had held protests in support of Mr. Kharge, who had been receiving abusive calls and threats from self-proclaimed "sanatanis" over his letter to the Chief Minister. The RSS has now rescheduled its march to November 2 and approached the High Court. Amid the cacophony that included the suspension of two government employees for taking part in the RSS marches, one detail has gone under the radar — Mr. Siddaramaiah's instruction to the Karnataka Chief Secretary to study the measures taken by the Tamil Nadu government to restrict the RSS's activities. There are, in fact, no specific "rules" in place in

Tamil Nadu to curb RSS activities; rather, the Dravidian, anti-Brahmin movement has historically made it hard for the RSS to penetrate that region. This, in turn, has made it easier for the government to impose restrictions, despite a constant push back. On the other hand, Karnataka has been fertile ground for the RSS ideology for a long time. In independent India, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh got vote shares of 2-5% in the elections as early as the 1950s, unlike Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, or Kerala, where Dravidian and communist currents held greater sway over society. It was only logical that the BJP formed its first government in south India in Karnataka. Though shrewd negotiations and realpolitik manoeuvres by B.S. Yediyurappa made this happen, it could not have occurred in an ideological vacuum. While the Sangh Parivar has ideologically captured coastal Karnataka for some time now, and has historically had a stronger base in the Mumbai-Karnataka region too, it is now gaining ground in Old Mysore districts such as Mandya, made easier by the BJP's alliance with the JD(S), a regional party with a strong base in the region. On the cultural front, a major current of Kannada sub-nationalism, which ran parallel to the freedom movement, was strongly influenced by Hindutva ideology, articulated by reinvigorating the Vijayanagar empire as a "Hindu kingdom." Recently, International Booker Prize awardee Banu Mushtaq's statement — that linking Kannada identity so closely with Hindu religious iconography is "exclusionary" — kicked up a storm. The RSS in Karnataka enjoys far greater cultural acceptance for its "discipline", "selfless work", and other such virtues attributed to its cadre, making its penetration into educational institutions go unchallenged. What has fuelled this is also the ideological ambivalence or the non-confrontationist attitude of most Congress leaders to the RSS ideology. While a handful, including Mr. Siddaramaiah and Mr. Kharge, remain its bitter critics, others fall in a spectrum — from those who half-heartedly oppose it, to those who keep off it entirely, to those who can sound close to the RSS in

Why are young women in India facing reduced ovarian reserves?

For some years now, fertility issues among young couples have been flagged by experts. Of late, however, doctors are also beginning to notice another trend: diminished ovarian reserve among young women in India. Diminished ovarian reserve is a condition when a woman has fewer eggs in her ovaries compared to what is considered normal for that age group. The condition, also known as low egg count, can make it difficult to get pregnant. Women are born with all the eggs they will ever produce. While, with age, the number of eggs decreases, some factors lead to women having fewer eggs than they should at a particular age. A 2023 study, published in the Journal of Human Reproductive Sciences conducted at JIPER, Puducherry that looked at 166 women aged over 21 and under 35, found that 40% of the women showed poor ovarian reserve. Of these, 62% were between the ages of 31 and 35.

Even 10 years ago, says Ranjit Chakraborty, head, department of gynaecology and obstetrics, Woodlands Hospital, Kolkata, this was not an issue. "Many young couples now increasingly live away from home, and one of the issues with this is extremely unhealthy diets with fast foods being predominant. Add to this environmental, chemical, and lifestyle factors, and this has also created a crisis of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) in over 50% of young women, which directly impacts ovulation," he says. Dr. Chakraborty said that at least 30% of the patients he sees are young women with various fertility issues, including poor ovarian reserves. He added that tests in young women aged between 18-20 also show unnaturally low ovarian reserves which lead to fertility and pregnancy issues in their future. "Our lives are becoming increasingly sedentary, which is adding to the issue". He explained that endometriosis, as well as obesity, smoking, drinking, and other lifestyle factors could also contribute to diminishing ovarian reserve in young women.

Experts point out that there seems to be an urban element to this: there are increased issues of premature ovarian failures and ovarian insufficiencies amongst younger patients in urban areas. However, medical professionals also note that urban women get tested more frequently and seek treatment for fertility issues, which perhaps may be a reason behind the increased detection in urban areas. The same issue in rural women may remain underreported due to lack of awareness and intervention, they note.

"Over the past five to seven years, we have seen a rise in the poor ovarian reserves in women between the ages of 31-35 years. The age of marriage has gone up, and many are now, and taking time to plan families. While there is a natural decline in ovarian reserve with age, environmental and lifestyle factors are exacerbating the issue," says Aaheli Maiti, fertility specialist at Birla Fertility and IVF, Kolkata. Dr. Maiti also highlighted the need for far more research in this area, about just how and why women in India are experiencing poor ovarian reserve issues. "We are constantly being exposed to endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) which can be found in 90% of the things that we use daily including food, pesticides, make-up products, fabrics etc. If we keep getting exposed to these chemicals at high amounts daily, then there is a



change they could damage primordial follicles, disrupt the growth of new follicles, and negatively impact hormone production," Dr Maiti added. Doctors stress the importance of focusing on both physical and mental health and for the need to make better lifestyle choices in order to help stave off issues such as diminished ovarian reserves. A focus on physical exercise and healthy balanced diets, reducing the amount of fast food and ultra-processed food is important for those with sedentary jobs, they point out. Experts also note the need for women to go for early fertility checks in order to better understand their ovarian reserves and take steps if needed as early as possible, as well as to be able to explore options such as egg freezing if and when necessary.

Trump claims India to 'almost stop' buying Russian oil by year-end

Washington: US President Donald Trump has reiterated his claim that India has agreed to "stop" buying oil from Russia and would bring them down to "almost nothing" by the end of the year. However, he said, it is a process and will take some time.

Trump also said that he would try to persuade China to do the same. China and India are the two biggest buyers of Russian crude oil. "India, as you know, has told me they are going to stop (buying Russian oil)... It's a process. You can't just stop... By the end of the year, they'll be down to almost nothing, almost 40 per cent of the oil. India, they've been great. Spoke to Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi yesterday. They've been absolutely great," the president told reporters at White House on Wednesday. Trump has been claiming for the past few days that India has assured him that it will significantly reduce its oil imports from Russia. According to the US, India is helping Putin to finance the war through its purchase of Russian crude oil. The relations between New Delhi and Washington have been reeling under severe stress after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent, including a 25 per cent additional duty for India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

Shock, horror, terror: how Dalit stories are stirring the literary world

Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (translated into English by Jerry Pinto in 2015) stirred the literary world, beginning the tradition of Dalit autobiographies that are equal parts communal and personal. Published in Marathi in 1978, it shed light on the lives of Mahars in Maharashtra, letting the readers in on the oppression that they are a part of. The shock, the horror, the terror — it showed the lives of untouchables of the Mahar-wada with deep honesty and grave intensity. In 1986, Baby Kamble became the first Mahar woman to publish her autobiography, *The Prisons We Broke* (translated into English by Maya Pandit in 2008). She dived into the doubly oppressed lives of Mahar women by caste and patriarchy, describing the domestic lives of women in great detail with a focus on the ritualistic celebration of various festivals and weddings. Mahars of Goa

These seminal autobiographies of the community alone have set the stage where readers today are aware of the oppression and atrocities of the caste system against Mahars in Maharashtra. However, a lot remains unsaid today on the Mahars of the neighbouring State, Goa. Ever since Dadu Mandrekar became aware of the caste system in his youth, he worked towards making the lives and sufferings of the Mahars, his people, in Goa and the Konkani region visible. He undertook the mapping of various customs and rituals practised in various Mahar-wadas set on the outskirts of villages. With every visit to such Dalit vastis, he was enraged as well as disappointed. In *Untouchable Goa*, published in Marathi in 1997 and translated posthumously by Nikhil Baisane in 2025, this Ambedkarite-journalist records the terrifying traditions practised by the impoverished untouchables in Lush Goa. Pawar states, "The Mahar men worked as hamaals or labourers. Some worked in the mills and factories. None of the women observed purdah. How could they? They worked harder than men. They scavenged scraps of paper, rags, broken glass and iron from the streets, sorted them out and then sold them each morning." Kamble also details the various roles bestowed on women during festivals in the systematic absence of education and awareness. Both look at the lack of dignity in the lives lived in poverty as a result of the caste system.

Rituals with the dead To highlight this further, Mandrekar begins with macabre tales of the arrival of spring marked by Shigmotsav in villages of Dicholi Taluka. Central to the celebration in this area is the custom of Gade wherein the remains of the dead, mostly women, are "exhumed, tied to long sticks, and paraded in a grotesque dance in a massive courtyard before the village deity." They are later discarded with indifference. He elaborates in detail the funeral practices designed to outcast women even in their death, practices that are closely related to menstruation. He questions followers of Manusmriti for such treatment of women, who are life-



givers. In another taluka, he looks at communal graves. Mahars don't have assigned land for themselves where they can bury their dead. So, they dig two ditches, one for men and the other for women. The dead are tossed on top of each other, sometimes by removing bodies of people who have died before. Mandrekar's heart breaks at such lack of dignity. His questions at the system and people at large linger even as he tries to find possible solutions.

Inhuman practices This mapping is filled with myths and legends that form the basis of various superstitious practices aimed at the exploitation of Mahars. Such as, in any celebration or puja in the temple, it is the untouchables who have to perform with the dhol for free. Sometimes they have to slash their thighs and dance throughout the event. In certain villages, it is a tradition for Mahar women to beg for leftovers after Diwali, and prepare food with it that will last for weeks. Mandrekar notices caste markers such as the briny scent for Koli settlements, bamboo poles for Mahars or Buruds, leather scraps for chambhars, and brooms for bhangis. The settlements of these untouchables seem discarded in their setting away from the villages that they were a part of. They are tied to age-old superstitious practices in the absence of education, but how has education helped in eradicating the caste system anyway? It reiterates Kamble's words when she says, "Educated Dalits occupy top positions in the government. Their children enjoy the good life. They are not bothered about what's happening to poor people. Whatever they do, they do only for themselves. The poor Dalits are left where they were." Mandrekar's prose contains the past (myths and legends), the present (lived realities) and the future (introspective speculation). In the tradition of Dalit writing, he describes the atrocities of Dalits and the beautiful landscape of the place, sometimes one after the other in a matter-of-fact manner. It leaves the readers in shock to orient their mind to the co-existence of nature and the lack of nurture. Despite being written in the 1990s, one knows intuitively that this continues to be true for many villages in the smallest State in India.

The challenges posed by the TTP to Pakistan

During the last two weeks, Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan worsened with border clashes. Though the two have reached an agreement in Doha, Pakistan believes that the primary problem between the two countries is the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), with the Afghan Taliban giving safe haven to the group.

Pakistan's primary challenge with respect to the TTP is the high level of violence and terrorism in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. According to media reports referring to data sourced from think tanks and Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), 2024 had the worst violence in the last decade. More than 1,600 people were killed last year; around 680 of them security personnel. There were more than 59,770 military operations in 2024, during which around 900 militants were killed. While the two provinces — KP and Balochistan — together witnessed 94% of the casualties in 2024, the former, where the TTP has a significant presence accounted for 63%. Thus, there has been a steady increase in violence since 2021, especially in KP, after a decline during 2016-20. Data published by Pakistan's Centre for Research and Security Studies and the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies runs contrary to the once-held general Pakistani belief, that once the U.S. leaves Afghanistan, militancy will decline. Taliban's return to Kabul has not brought peace to Pakistan's tribal regions. Then there are the demands of the TTP. The Pakistan Taliban wants the demerger of tribal regions from the rest of the KP province; removal of security forces; and the imposition of Shariah law. The TTP seeks to rule the tribal areas — the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that the British created. In 2018, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N) government, through the 25th constitutional amendment, removed FATA's special status and merged it with KP, thereby providing representation of the FATA in the provincial Assembly and allowing the jurisdiction of the courts in the region. The TTP wants to undo the above and impose its writ. Provincial issues

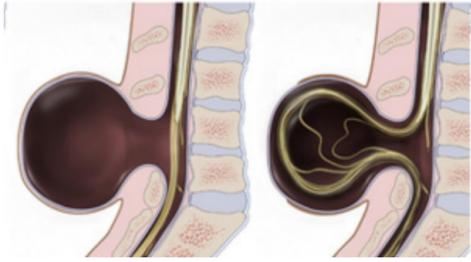
There are complex issues plaguing the KP region. First is its colonial legacy and the federal writ in the tribal regions. The British found it useful to create a buffer region between its India empire and Afghanistan, and thus created the FATA and used the Frontier Crime Regulation (FCR) to administer the seven tribal areas separately. Independent Pakistan followed this British policy for the next seven decades, and never imposed its writ. It was directly administered by Islamabad and Rawalpindi (mainly by the latter); and democratic institutions and administrations were not allowed in these seven tribal regions, as it suited Pakistan's myopic approach of controlling Kabul. Second is the civil-military imbalance in Pakistan, and the country's search for strategic depth in Afghanistan. During the two external invasions of Afghanistan (by the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the U.S. in 2000s and 2010s) and internal Afghan instability (during the 1990s), the Establishment (Pakistan military) saw the tribal region as a strategic board to pursue its interests in Kabul. With such an aim in mind, the presence of political parties, local administration, provincial elections and representation in the KP (then the North-West Frontier Province) provincial assembly, and access to courts by the FATA were seen as a liability for Pakistan's pursuit of strategic depth. However, the above vacuum provided space for the TTP's emergence. While political and military establishments see the TTP as a post-2001 development, it ignores the inherent reasons which allowed the TTP to thrive. That is, while Pakistan's primary accusation that the Afghan Taliban has a TTP connection is a valid point, what Pakistan ignores is how such a connection came about.

Third is the rise of the Afghan Taliban and the U.S.-

led war on terrorism in Afghanistan. The TTP came into existence in the tribal regions, especially in two areas — the Mehsud and Wazir led North and South Waziristan — when the Afghan Taliban along with the al-Qaeda moved into the tribal region when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan. Both wanted safe havens and local support to fight against the U.S.-led forces across the Durand Line. The TTP came into existence to provide that support. Pakistan's political and military establishments were aware of the link, and even tried to make multiple deals with the TTP and its different factions between 2005 and 2015.

The Afghan Taliban found an ally in the TTP, and some TTP factions even fought along with the Afghan Taliban. The Establishment in Pakistan was aware of this linkage and wanted to believe that they would remain focused west of the Durand Line. There was even a naive belief, that once the U.S. leaves, the Afghan Taliban would sever its links with the TTP. However, that was not the case as data proves. After the U.S. withdrawal in 2021, the Afghan Taliban did not give up on the TTP, and there has been a multi-fold increase in violence within Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban, despite global pressure, did not give up the relationship with al-Qaeda either. Expecting it to give up the TTP now is a tough call. Besides, Afghan Taliban sees the Daesh (ISIS) as the primary threat inside Afghanistan. There have been reports of TTP splinter groups joining the Daesh; for Kabul that would be a bigger internal threat. Fourth is the lack of a consistent approach towards the TTP by Pakistan. The first serious TTP debate in Pakistan came only in December 2014, after the attack on the Army Public School (APS) at Peshawar, that killed more than 150, mostly students. Before this, the TTP's attacks were primarily concentrated in the tribal region, which the Establishment dealt with through a series of military operations and peace deals. However, after the APS attack in December 2014, Pakistan announced a "National Action Plan" that included a policy shift in addressing the militant threat. It included political, military and institutional measures such as reforming religious seminaries, creating institutions and military course to deal with terrorism and extremism. But within a few years, there was again a U-turn, from the military resolve to crush the TTP to engaging with it. During 2020-22, there were dialogues, ceasefires and extensions. It was during this phase that Pakistan expected the Taliban to force the TTP to disarm. While the Establishment blamed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for talking to the TTP, the initial response of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) during 2022, led by the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) also focused on the same. Moreover, the PPP-PML government would not have negotiated with the TTP without the Establishment's approval. The fifth issue is the missing social/political players in the tribal regions, where the TTP has a presence. Pakistan has failed to encourage alternative political players in the tribal areas that could collect and express the local sentiments, especially the youth. In fact, the state has suppressed all alternate options. The existing religious political parties in the region are the two factions of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) which have monopolised the political space. However, both represent only the old guard, while the tribal youth are looking for new narratives. The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) could have become a primary social and political party representing the new generation, especially in Waziristan, where the TTP has its base. PTM leaders such as Manzoor Pashteen, Ali Wazir, and Mohsin Dawar are from Waziristan; and some of them were elected to Parliament. Instead of promoting the PTM, Pakistan decided to ban it. Sixth, blaming the TTP threat on Afghanistan and India.

The urgent need to bring stroke rehabilitation into the mainstream



A patient surviving a stroke has only won half the battle. The road to recovery after treatment is often exhausting, marked by physical limitations, emotional turmoil, and financial strain. For many Indian families, the relief of survival soon turns into uncertainty -- not knowing if their loved one will ever walk, talk, or work again. In India, stroke cases are estimated at a staggering 1.8 million new incidences each year, making it one of the leading causes of adult disability. While treatment facilities and awareness about early warning signs have improved, the country continues to lag behind in rehabilitation -- a crucial component for helping patients regain independence. Ideally, rehabilitation should begin within 24 to 48 hours of a stroke, involving coordinated efforts by physiotherapists, speech and occupational therapists, and psychologists, as highlighted by World Health Organization data from 2023. However, less than 20% of stroke survivors in India receive structured rehabilitation, according to a 2018 report in Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Most patients return home with limited mobility, speech difficulties, or cognitive decline. Without follow-up therapy, these conditions can deteriorate further. The economic burden of stroke care is significant. The acute treatment phase -- including imaging, clot-busting medication, mechanical thrombectomy, and other interventions if required, typically costs between ₹2 lakh and ₹8 lakh. But the real challenge begins with post-stroke rehabilitation, which costs ₹10,000-₹30,000 per month, depending on the intensity of therapy. For many Indian families, this represents a heavy financial burden. Since

rehabilitation is rarely covered by insurance, expenses are often paid out of pocket, pushing families into debt. Those living in smaller towns and rural areas face additional challenges -- a lack of rehabilitation centres, limited access to trained professionals, and overdependence on informal caregiving. The emotional and social fallout

Behind every stroke survivor is a caregiver whose life changes overnight. The sudden shift into a full-time caregiving role can lead to emotional exhaustion, financial stress and social isolation. Studies show that over 60% of caregivers of stroke patients experience depression or anxiety within the first six months. Yet, in India, formal support systems for caregivers remain almost non-existent. In many households, the loss of income from both the survivor and the caregiver worsens financial instability. Emotional fatigue, combined with inadequate professional support, traps families in a cycle of debt and distress. Rehabilitation is not an optional service -- it is an essential part of stroke recovery. Unfortunately, India's healthcare system still prioritises acute treatment over long-term rehabilitation. Rehabilitation units are mostly confined to large hospitals in metro cities, leaving a vast majority of survivors without access to post-stroke care. Going forward, multidisciplinary rehabilitation units must be integrated into district and tertiary hospitals. Insurance coverage should be expanded to include long-term rehabilitation, and greater investment is needed to train physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists. Technology can also bridge accessibility gaps. Telerehabilitation platforms, AI-assisted recovery tools, and community-based rehabilitation networks can make quality post-stroke care more affordable and accessible beyond urban centres. However, such efforts require policy-level support and stronger public awareness. India's stroke response must evolve from saving lives to restoring them. Public health messaging should extend beyond recognising stroke symptoms to emphasising the rehabilitation window -- the crucial first few months when recovery potential is highest. Timely and consistent rehabilitation can determine whether a person walks again, regains speech, or returns to work. Stroke care should also be about restoring the quality of life.

SBI Mutual Fund invests Rs 100 cr in Lenskart in pre-IPO round

New Delhi: SBI Mutual Fund has invested Rs 100 crore in eyewear retailer Lenskart Solutions in a pre-IPO (initial public offering) funding round. As part of the transaction, Neha Bansal, one of the promoters, transferred 24.87 lakh equity shares at Rs 402 apiece to SBI Optimal Equity Fund (AIF) and SBI Emergent Fund AIF, Lenskart said in a public announcement on Wednesday. After the transaction, Bansal's stake in the eyewear firm would come down to 7.46 per cent from 7.61 per cent earlier. Last week, Radhakishan Damani, founder of Avenue Supermarts (DMart), invested around Rs 90 crore in Lenskart through a pre-IPO transaction. Damani picked up shares from Nehal Bansal, the sister of founder and CEO Peyush Bansal.

The share sale does not form part of the IPO's Offer-for-Sale. The latest investment comes ahead of Lenskart's Rs 7,278 crore initial share-sale, which is scheduled to open for public subscription on October 31. The company has fixed a price band of Rs 382 to Rs 402 per share for its IPO, giving it a valuation of over Rs 69,700 crore at the upper end. Lenskart's maiden public offering comprises a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 2,150 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 12.75 crore equity shares by promoters and investors. As a part of the OFS, promoters -- Peyush Bansal, Neha Bansal, Amit Chaudhary and Sumeet Kapahi; and investors -- SVF II Lightbulb (Cayman) Ltd, Schroders Capital Private Equity Asia Mauritius Ltd, PI Opportunities Fund -- II, Macritchie Investments Pte. Ltd, Kedaara Capital Fund II LLP, and Alpha Wave Ventures LP -- would offload shares. Lenskart proposes to utilise



the proceeds from the IPO for various strategic initiatives, including capital expenditure for setting up new company-operated, company-owned (CoCo) stores in India; payments related to lease, rent, and license agreements for these CoCo stores; investments in technology and cloud infrastructure; brand marketing and business promotion to enhance brand awareness; potential unidentified inorganic acquisitions; and general corporate purposes. The company, one of India's largest omnichannel eyewear retailers, offers a wide range of affordable and fashionable prescription eyeglasses, sunglasses, and contact lenses through its online platform and extensive retail network. Founded in 2008, Lenskart started as an online eyewear platform in 2010 and opened its first physical store in New Delhi in 2013. Over the years, it has evolved into one of the country's most prominent consumer brands in eyewear.

Field studies in Kozhikode to identify reasons for surge in amoebic meningoencephalitis in Kerala

The Kerala Health department and scientists at the ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), Chennai, have initiated field studies in Kozhikode to look into the reasons for the surge in amoebic meningoencephalitis in Kerala. Following an explosion of amoebic infections in the State in the past two years, with cases and deaths occurring at regular intervals and triggering much panic amongst the people, the Health department has initiated several studies on the epidemiological links, microbiological and patient profiles as well as genomic sequencing studies on amoebic encephalitis.

The Health department and the NIE team will continue field studies in Malappuram, Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts too, which account for a significant number of the amoebic infections reported in 2024 as well as 2025. This year, Kerala has reported 144 cases of amoebic meningoencephalitis infections and 30 deaths till October 25. A press release issued by Health Minister Veena George said that the State has initiated a couple of studies on amoebic meningoencephalitis, as a follow-up to the technical workshop that the Health department had conducted in August 2024, with the participation of the ICMR; Institute of Advanced Virology (IAV); Advanced Virology Institute, Pondicherry; the Indian Institute of Science; and the State Pollution Control Board. Saving lives

Following the spate of cases reported last year, the Health department had issued a protocol that in all cases of acute encephalitis syndrome of unknown etiologies, the samples be tested for the presence of amoeba. With clinicians testing aggressively, the State has been detecting many cases of amoebic infection. Early detection and treatment initiation have been saving lives, doctors say. However, with amoebic meningoencephalitis being detected in many people with atypical symptoms, mild infections, no known epidemiological links, and with random cases being picked up by neurologists, the Health department has been finding it quite difficult to convince people that the State was not facing an enhanced public health threat. Public health experts have been consistently pointing to the increasing pollution of the State's waterbodies, including domestic wells, and the high E.coli



contamination as the primary reasons for the increased amoebic density in these water sources. The Health department states that the Microbiology departments in all its medical colleges have the facility to detect amoeba and that the State Public Health lab and the IAV have the facility for identification of five species of amoeba known to be toxic to humans -- Naegleria fowleri, Acanthamoeba sp., Vermamoeba vermiformis, Balamuthia mandrillaris, Paravahlkampfia francinae -- through molecular diagnosis.

Apart from coordinated activities with other departments for the cleaning and chlorination of waterbodies and wells, the Health department is continuously monitoring the situation, officials said. The Health department's guidelines to the public for preventive measures to be adopted against amoebic infection now specifies that only sterilised water be used for nasal irrigation -- for religious purposes or for clearing the sinuses. The latest addition in the guidelines also stresses that people with various immunocompromising conditions should make sure that skin wounds are cleaned/washed with only sterilised/treated water as in such persons, Acanthamoeba can enter the blood stream through skin wounds and cause central nervous system infections.

Trump praises PM Modi as 'tough' leader, says going to have trade deal with India



U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday claimed that he is "doing a trade deal with India" and lavished praise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "nicest-looking guy" while describing him as a "father" but also calling him "a killer" and "tough as hell". While delivering his keynote remarks at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEOs Luncheon in Gyeongju, South Korea, the U.S. President also reiterated his disputed claim of personally averting a "nuclear war" between India and Pakistan in May. Mr. Trump asserted that his intervention helped de-escalate tensions between the two nuclear-armed nations, claiming that seven planes were shot down during the conflict. He said he personally contacted both PM Modi and Pakistan's leadership to halt the hostilities, linking the resolution to trade negotiations. "I'm doing a trade deal with India, and I have great respect and love for Prime Minister Modi. We have a great relationship. Likewise, the Prime Minister of Pakistan is a great guy. They have a field marshal. You know why he's a field marshal? He's a great fighter. And I know them all. I'm reading that seven planes were shot down. These are two nuclear

nations. And they're really going at it," Mr. Trump said.

"And I called Prime Minister Modi and said, 'We can't make a trade deal with you... You're starting a war with Pakistan. We're not going to do it.' And then I called Pakistan and said, 'We're not going to do trade with you because you're fighting with India.' They said, 'No, no, you should let us fight.' They both said that. They're strong people. Prime Minister Modi is the nicest-looking guy. He looks like you'd like to have your father, but he's a killer. He's tough as hell. 'No, we will fight,' [PM Modi said]. I said, '...this is the same man that I know,'" he added. The U.S. President also compared his handling of the situation to that of former U.S. President Joe Biden, questioning whether Mr. Biden could have achieved similar results. After literally two days, they called up, and they said, 'We understand,' and they stopped fighting. How is that? Isn't that amazing? Now, do you think Biden would have done that? I don't think so," he concluded. Mr. Trump's comments on the India-Pakistan conflict refer to the escalation in May following Operation Sindoor, a series of precision strikes on nine terrorist camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir that killed 26 civilians.

The U.S. President had been repeating his claims of playing a key role in helping de-escalate tensions between India and Pakistan, arguing that trade and tariffs were instrumental to the U.S. in preventing conflicts. India has consistently refuted Mr. Trump's claims, stating that the ceasefire was achieved bilaterally through the Director Generals of Military Operations, without third-party involvement. India has also reiterated its long-standing position that any issues with Pakistan, including those related to Jammu and Kashmir, are to be resolved bilaterally between the two countries.

T.N. government denies allegations that building project within Pallikaranai marshland was given nod illegally

The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday denied allegations that environmental clearance and plan approval were illegally granted for a multi-storeyed building project within the Pallikaranai marshland, a designated Ramsar Site since 2022. It said the land in question falls outside the notified reserve forest area and the delineation of the Ramsar Site boundaries was yet to be finalised. In a statement, the Environment, Climate Change and Forest Department, said the Pallikaranai region comprises three distinct classifications -- the reserve forest, the Ramsar Site, and the wetland -- and that these terms cannot be used interchangeably. An extent of about 698 hectares in the area has been notified as the Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest under the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882, and no construction permissions have been granted within this protected area.

The Ramsar Site includes the existing 698 hectares of the reserve forest and an additional 550 hectares yet to be delineated through a legal process. The "ground truthing" to identify specific survey numbers and boundaries has not been completed. The survey numbers mentioned in media reports and the complaint, the government said, pertained to private patta lands as per revenue records. The clarification comes after the non-governmental organisation, Arappor Iyakkam, recently alleged illegal environmental clearance and plan approval were issued for the Brigade Morgan Heights project in Perumbakkam, claiming it fell within the Ramsar Site boundary and could increase risk of floods in the area.

The government also said the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) had been entrusted with delineating the site boundaries, preparing an Integrated Management Plan, and conducting field-based mapping of the area since November 2024. Quoting the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, the Department said Ramsar Sites should be formally notified through a process involving public consultation and notification of precise survey boundaries. This



process, it said, was still under way and would only take effect after the delineation and notification were completed. "Since the notification of the site as per the Wetland Rules is yet to be finalised and the survey numbers mentioned in the petition are patta lands, the allegations mentioned in the newspaper articles are not correct," the statement said. The department said approvals had been granted only for lands outside the existing Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest boundaries, and that no violations of environmental or forest regulations had occurred. The government reiterated that the Ramsar Site's boundaries would come into force only after the ongoing delineation and public consultation process were completed. Responding to the government's statement, Arappor Iyakkam said as per the government's own records, only 698 hectares of the Pallikaranai Marsh were under the Forest Department. It questioned why it included another 550 hectares -- many now privately owned land -- in the Ramsar site, expanding it to 1,247 hectares in April 2022. The group said these lands were originally part of the marsh but were illegally issued pattas over time. The organisation said the government must revoke the environmental clearance and plan approval granted to Brigade Morgan Heights without delay, and take strict action against those responsible for these violations.

How Kerala's Messi dream faded amid stadium row | Explained

The Story So Far: Kerala Sports Minister V. Abdurahiman sent the football-loving public of the State -- known for its passionate support of Latin American football powerhouses Argentina and Brazil -- into a frenzy when he announced in November 2024 that the World Cup champions Argentina, led by Lionel Messi, would play in Kerala in 2025. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan added further credibility with a post on X stating, "Kerala is set to make history as FIFA World Cup Champions Argentina are expected to visit next year." What followed was a rollercoaster ride. The proposed tour, reportedly sponsored by Reporter Broadcasting Corporation (RBC), was declared on and off multiple times between May and October this year. In September, it was announced that the Jawaharlal Nehru International Stadium at Kaloor in Kochi, owned by the Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA), would host an international friendly match between Argentina and Australia on November 17. Hector Daniel Cabrera, venue manager of the Argentina Football Association (AFA), even visited the stadium. However, the match now stands called off after the November itinerary released by AFA and Australia Football (AF) did not include Kochi. The issue has since snowballed into a controversy, with the Opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) accusing the Kerala government of being complicit in a "shady business deal" aimed at helping a private company take control of the State's flagship international stadium.

What was the dilly-dallying about?

The initial flip-flop occurred in May when AFA's itinerary excluded the whole of India. Mr. Abdurahiman initially placed the responsibility on RBC to explain the omission. In June, he revived public hopes with a Facebook post stating "Messi is coming," only to retract it in August. This time, he blamed AFA, accusing it of reneging on a promise to visit Kerala in October after accepting payment. Soon after, RBC managing director Anto Augustine held a press conference claiming that AFA had not officially declined the tour during the October-November window. He even threatened legal action against AFA for breach of contract, asserting that RBC had already paid 130 crore for the tour, which was to include two matches

and a fan meet. In August, Mr. Abdurahiman again shifted his stance, confirming that Argentina would play in Kerala in November while sharing a screenshot of AFA's international friendly schedule.

When did suspicions arise over Messi's visit? Doubts intensified in mid-October when Argentine journalist Gastón Edul, known to be close to Messi, posted on X that the India tour had fallen through. Augustine, however, maintained that the tour was still on and claimed that RBC was investing ₹70 crore to renovate the Kochi stadium to meet FIFA standards. On October 25, after AFA and Australia released their final November itineraries without mentioning Kochi, Augustine admitted the November 17 match had been called off. He attributed the cancellation to the stadium's failure to secure FIFA approval in time but claimed that the match would be rescheduled during FIFA's March window, for which an application had already been submitted. What were the allegations raised by the Opposition? Ernakulam MP Hibi Eden described the entire episode as a "shady business deal" disguised as a sporting event and questioned whether the Chief Minister and the Sports Minister were involved. He wrote to GCDA chairperson K. Chandran Pillai, raising eight specific questions about the alleged irregular allocation of the stadium to a private company for renovation. He also requested a copy of any agreement signed for the same. The UDF district leadership went a step further, demanding Mr. Pillai's resignation. In response, GCDA issued a clarification stating that the stadium had been handed over to the Sports Kerala Foundation (SKF) -- a non-profit company under the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs -- from September 26 to November 30. SKF, in turn, handed it over to RBC for renovation. Two committees comprising representatives from SKF, GCDA, and RBC were formed to approve, quantify, and monitor the renovation works. Despite a growing demand, the authorities are yet to release the reported agreement between SKF and RBC in the public domain. Despite RBC's claim that renovation works will be completed and the stadium returned to GCDA by November 30, concerns persist over whether the venue will be ready in time for the Indian Super League (ISL) matches expected to begin in December.

A quip that stings but also inspires



Many have now formed their opinions about the 2025 Nobel Economics Prize and how its focus signals to the world, the criticality of the economics of innovation and growth. However, what was also curious was the quip by the 2025 Laureate Joel Mokyr (one of the three winners) that 'economic historians don't win the prize'. The discipline often undervalues the slow, evidentiary craft of archival work. Yet, when the world grows noisy, amid disruptions by Artificial Intelligence, inequality, fiscal overhangs and geopolitical shocks, policy debates turn to long-run narratives that economic historians assemble. Growth as social technology first

Mokyr's central lesson, sharpened by the pedagogy of scholars such as Carnegie Mellon economic historian David Hounshell, is that modern growth is a social technology before it is a mechanical one. The achievement of the Industrial Enlightenment did not rest on a single genius or gadget; it relied on civic machinery that made useful knowledge travel — printers, coffee houses, learned societies, dissenting congregations and guilds that were sometimes cartels but often repositories of tacit know-how. Apprenticeships, shop-floor heuristics and rule-of-thumb engineering formed the codebase of progress. Where guilds faced contestable markets and porous cities, they incubated capability. Where they ossified, they throttled entry. In sum, Schumpeter's creative destruction works only when the social plumbing allows new ideas to displace entrenched privilege. This is where the contributions of Mokyr's fellow Laureates, Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt, complement rather than contradict Mokyr's narrative. Their Schumpeterian growth framework provides dynamic microfoundations: innovation rents attract entrepreneurs; incumbents litigate and lobby; and policy can either harden moats or protect the process that makes churn productive. The engine misfires when experimentation is costly and entry blocked; it hums when institutions tilt toward contestability and diffusion. Mokyr shows how societies built a working engine. Aghion and Howitt show how to keep tuning it under pressure. The quip about Nobels persists because the field sometimes treats history (in fact the economics Nobel itself was an afterthought) as an anecdote rather than a mechanism. Archival material can, however, illuminate incentives more vividly than elaborate regressions adorned with robustness checks and identification strategies. And as a literal claim, Mokyr's line is likely to be wrong. Other scholars have won the prize building on economic history. Douglass North and Robert Fogel were honoured for placing institutions and counterfactuals at

the core of economics. Claudia Goldin received the prize for a sweeping historical account of women's labour markets. Simon Kuznets' national accounting was inseparable from historical measurement. Their work demonstrates that economic history is no sideshow. It is the lab where rules, culture and technology are tested as drivers (or brakes) on growth. What grips the world now? Consider three current anxieties. First, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and jobs. Mokyr's work cautions that technology shocks rarely act as one-for-one job killers. They reprice competencies and reorganise tasks. The social question is transition management: who bears the cost of moving from old tasks to new ones? Here the Aghion-Howitt injunction to protect process rather than incumbents becomes policy-relevant fast. Portable benefits, credible skills bridges, interoperability and data portability in digital markets. All of these protect workers and entry, not the last generation of firms.

Second, high public debt. History also sobers exuberance and fatalism alike. The Dutch and British states that populate Mokyr's studies did not become credible borrowers through austerity alone. They built civic capacity — tax systems, representative institutions, enforceable contracts — that enabled a rollover of obligations and the financing of long projects. In an era of swollen balance sheets, that lesson is not antiquarian. Fiscal sustainability is institutional, not merely arithmetic. Third, inequality. Guild history also clarifies how privilege often hides behind claims of quality control and safety. The counter is not iconoclasm but contestability. Lower the costs of entry and diffusion so insiders' rents are bid down by capability, not pedigree. In digital markets, this maps to pro-competitive procurement, open standards, and limits on self-preferencing. These are perhaps modern analogues of the coffee house and the cheap pamphlet. Digitisation itself invites a reality check. Sussex economic historian Nick Crafts' revisions to the British Industrial Revolution show that general purpose technologies (steam, ICT, AI) appear late in macro data because they require complementary investments and firm reorganisation. Meanwhile, Jared Diamond's wider lens (geography, ecology, diffusion barriers) offers a further reminder — technology is embedded in landscapes and path dependencies. Together, the history bench is a vaccine against both euphoria and despair. It directs attention to institutions, complementarities, and time. Why, then, does Mokyr's quip still feel true? Because prizes, like productivity statistics, are lagging indicators. The frontier of research may periodically swing toward identification strategies, but the problems that preoccupy the public (automation, debt, social mobility, geopolitical realignment) are historical in essence. They demand causal stories that unfold over decades, with actors who learn, bargain, and sometimes entrench. That is economic history's comparative advantage. It documents how societies learn to argue productively and build forums and rules where better ideas defeat old power. The deeper point, therefore, is not about medals but about machinery. The question is whether societies are protecting the engine — the open, critical, experimental process that moves ideas from discovery to diffusion — or leaning toward merely the owners of the last engine.

All you need to know about: spina bifida

October is designated as Spina Bifida Awareness Month in order to create awareness about this lifelong condition. If you don't know what Spina Bifida is, here's a quick read that answers your questions and tells you all you need to know about it. What is Spina Bifida?

Spina Bifida is a birth disorder that occurs when the spine and spinal cord of a foetus do not fully develop during the embryonic period. The condition occurs during early pregnancy, and can range from mild to severe. Early during a pregnancy, a structure called the neural tube is formed. The neural tube eventually becomes the baby's brain and spinal cord. This tube generally closes at about four weeks or 28 days of pregnancy. When the tube does not close fully, it can leave a gap in the spine, affecting the vertebrae, spinal cord and nearby nerves. This condition is known as Spina Bifida, meaning "split spine". It falls under the category of neural tube defects. Types of Spina Bifida

There are three main types of spina bifida. The most serious form of the condition is myelomeningocele or open spina bifida. In this type, part of the spinal cord and nerves are exposed through a sac at the opening of the gap in the spine. The second type, meningocele, is a less common type of spina bifida that occurs when the meninges, or the protective membranes around the spinal cord, push out through the opening in a fluid-filled sac. Usually, in this type, the spinal cord has developed normally and the nerves are not affected. The third type of the condition is known as spina bifida occulta or 'hidden' spina bifida. This is the mildest form of the condition in which one or more of the vertebrae not forming properly, resulting in a small gap. It usually does not cause any symptoms and many people with the condition are not aware that they have it. The exact cause of spina bifida is not known. Genetic, environmental and nutritional factors are believed to play a role. There are however certain risk factors. These include: not getting enough folic acid during the pregnancy, taking certain antiseizure medications, uncontrolled diabetes, and a family history of neural tube defects. Obesity and increased body temperature early in the pregnancy may also be risk factors. Signs and symptoms Spina Bifida symptoms depend on the type of condition it is, where the opening or gap in the spine is and how big it is. In mild cases, there may be no noticeable symptoms. In more severe cases, symptoms may include: bowel and bladder issues, back pain, weakness or lack of movement in the legs and loss of sensation in the legs. Many children may also develop hydrocephalus, which is a building up of fluid in the brain that can exert pressure on brain tissue.

How is it diagnosed and treated?

Spina bifida can generally be detected during pregnancy. Prenatal diagnosis usually happens at ultrasounds taken during the first or second trimester of the pregnancy. The second trimester ultrasound exam is important to rule out conditions that may be present at birth. In other cases, blood tests may be carried out to check for elevated levels of a certain protein that could indicate spina bifida. However, in the case of blood tests, further evaluation may still be needed to confirm the diagnosis. Amniocentesis is another test that involves taking a sample of amniotic fluid to test for genetic disorders. Treatment for spina bifida depends on how serious the condition is. There is no cure for the condition; however, treatment options are available to manage symptoms. Surgery is one treatment option available. Surgery may be done before birth, while the baby is still in the womb, or just after birth, for severe cases of myelomeningocele. This is done in order to close the gap in the spine and protect the developing spinal cord from being exposed. Surgery while the baby is in the womb has risks for both mother and



baby, but some researchers believe it can lead to better outcomes for the baby and decrease disability. Babies with hydrocephalus may need a surgery to help drain the fluid out. Some may also require surgery for tethered spinal cords -- a condition, where the spinal cord, instead of floating freely, is attached to the spinal canal. Surgery apart, treatment options include medication and physical and occupational therapy. Medications may be prescribed for bladder and bowel management and routine tests and evaluations may be needed. Regular care is important. Physical and occupational therapy may help improve independence. Some persons may require assistive devices and mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, crutches or braces. With the correct treatment and support, many children with spina bifida can survive well into adulthood and live active, productive lives.

What is the Indian scenario?

A 2024 meta-analysis, 'Burden of neural tube defects in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis', in Child's Nervous System, found that the prevalence of neural tube defects was 9.46 per 1,000 births. Another 2024 paper in the Journal of Neurosurgery, 'Spina bifida transition care in India: strengths amidst challenges', noted that limited surveillance studies in India suggest the prevalence of spina bifida is approximately 40 to 50 per 10,000 births. This paper also stated that it was unknown how many children survive to adulthood, but recent improvements in healthcare and education have resulted in a larger population of adults living with this condition. The first paper notes that "there is an urgent need for comprehensive prevention strategies such as advocacy and awareness, antenatal screening for NTDs, folic acid supplementation, and food fortification." It also highlighted the need for more research for identification and implementation of target-based region-specific interventions.

BRICS' quiet challenge to the dollar

As geopolitical tensions rise, substantial changes are quietly reshaping the world's monetary system. A classic example is the US imposing high tariffs on several Indian products in August because of India's oil trade with Russia. Developments like this show how politics and trade are now intricately linked, slowly changing how global finance works.

For decades, the US dollar has reigned supreme as the world's reserve currency, facilitating seamless international trade and payments. However, the BRICS bloc — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa —, which has now expanded to include five more new members, is increasingly challenging this dollar hegemony by promoting trade in local or national currencies and exploring alternatives.

As SIR expands, questions on Election Commission's power to conduct exercise, verify citizenship still pending in Supreme Court



The Election Commission of India's authority to conduct the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls remains under question in the Supreme Court, even as the poll body announced the SIR's second phase which will cover 51 crore voters in 12 States and Union Territories, including Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, and Puducherry. The Supreme Court, in a July 10 order, had highlighted the basic questions posed by petitioners challenging the first phase of the SIR exercise in Bihar. These primarily included whether the Election Commission (EC) has the "very powers to undertake the exercise". Secondly, the court had flagged the petitioners' objection to the "procedure and the manner in which the SIR exercise is being undertaken". "An important question has been raised in this bunch of petitions before this court, which goes to the very root of the functioning of a democratic republic, i.e. our country. The question is of the 'right to vote'," the Supreme Court had observed in July. Violating voters' rights

The court recorded the petitioners' argument that the SIR, notified on June 24 under Section 21(3) of the Representation of People Act, 1950, broke that law as well as the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, apart from violating the fundamental rights of the voters. The petitioners' counsel, including advocates Prashant Bhushan, Vrinda Grover and Neha Rathi, had argued that the SIR was only an excuse to conduct "citizenship screening". However, later orders of the court on the SIR had diverged into ensuring that voters were not arbitrarily excluded from the electoral roll in Bihar. Though the court did not stay the Bihar SIR exercise, it made several timely interventions to infuse more transparency into the process, order the inclusion of Aadhaar as a 12th document of proof, and to ensure the publication of the draft electoral roll, among other steps. Learning experience An October 9 hearing gave the first indication that a pan-India SIR had more or less become fait accompli, though the court has agreed to hear arguments on the constitutionality of SIR exercise from November 4. Addressing the EC's counsel and senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, Justice Surya Kant, who headed the Bench, orally observed

Rethinking immigration in the age of exclusion

The arrival of Columbus in the New World marked the beginning of a long history of human migration, driven by the universal quest for survival, hope and dignity. Yet, in a grotesque inversion of history, contemporary politics in the United States, particularly under the Trump administration, has perversely transformed immigration into a toxic battleground of fear, exclusion and ideological warfare. By erasing this brutal history, successive governments in the United States have perpetuated a myth of exceptionalism, even as it denies the humanity of those seeking refuge on its shores. As schoolchildren, many of us were asked to write an essay on the theme, "What if Columbus had not discovered America?" Understandably, the very framing of this question is steeped in colonial ideology that assumes that Columbus's landing was a historic necessity, a great leap for civilisation rather than what it actually was. Our answers, drawn from textbooks that valorised explorers and erased victims, inevitably celebrated Columbus's courage and navigational daring. We were taught to admire the predator, never to mourn the prey. The destruction of vibrant civilisations

But what if Columbus had not landed in the Bahamas in 1492? What if the Arawaks, the generous, peace-loving people he first encountered, had been allowed to live in peace? What if the Americas had been allowed to evolve on their own terms, with their own cultures, languages, and knowledge systems flourishing unmolested? The Iroquois Confederacy, for instance, had developed a sophisticated democratic system that inspired elements of the U.S. Constitution, though that influence is often buried or denied. These were not "primitive" societies awaiting rescue. They were civilisations with libraries, roads and astronomy, all destroyed in the name of gold and god. From the early waves of European colonisation in the Americas and Africa to the apartheid regimes of South Africa, migration has not merely been a matter of movement. It has also been a means of conquest, expansion and domination. Settler colonial projects thrived through the forceful displacement and systematic downgrading of native populations, manifesting in overt and subtle ways through systems of oppression that are deeply ingrained in societal structures that perpetuate racial disparity and injustice. The U.S., frequently celebrated as an ideal for the "tired, poor, huddled masses", was itself forged through the expurgation of native peoples and the abuse of enslaved labour. By denying entry to migrants, powerful nations conveniently obscure their own complicity in creating the conditions that drive people to flee. The intricate dynamics of historical memory and its distortion are starkly illustrated in the U.S.'s approach to immigration and counter-terrorism. Let us for a moment go back to the distressing example of "Geronimo", the code word said to have been used in the 2011 mission ("Operation Neptune Spear") to eliminate Osama bin Laden. By appropriating the name of the legendary Apache leader, Geronimo, the U.S. military inadvertently highlighted its historical amnesia. Geronimo was a complex figure, a warrior who resisted Mexican and U.S. military forces, seeking to preserve Apache sovereignty and way of life. Labelling him a terrorist overlooks the nuances of his struggle and reduces it to simplistic binaries. But this is no isolated misstep, for it is symptomatic of a deeper sickness in the dominant historical narrative: a narrative that begins in 1492 with the mythic arrival of Christopher Columbus. This moment is still described in textbooks, museums and mindless school rhymes as the "discovery" of America. The truth, of course, is far more brutal. Columbus did not discover a new world. He invaded one, and that invasion set in motion one of the most ferocious chapters in human history. Columbus's

that "you [EC] have decided to carry out SIR on a pan-India basis. So, this experience [with Bihar] would have made you wiser now... The next time you introduce a SIR module, owing to what you experienced now, you would also bring some improvements." The second phase of the SIR in 12 States and UTs has indeed introduced modifications, such as the inclusion of Aadhaar as a proof of identity and the exemption from filing documents in the enumeration stage. The onus to be included in the voters' list, however, continues to be shouldered by the elector. The process of enumeration itself does not have the benefit of any statutory backing.

However, the EC has asserted in the Supreme Court that it has plenary power under Article 324 to conduct the SIR and to frame procedure. In this context, it has referred to the court's judgment in the 1978 Mohinder Singh Gill case, which observed that "Article 324 operates in areas left unoccupied by legislation and the words 'superintendence, direction and control as well as conduct of elections are the broadest terms'. Myriad maybes, too mystic to be precisely presage, may call for prompt action to reach the goal of free and fair election... There is no hedging in Article 324. The Commission may be required to cope with some situations which may not be provided for in the enacted laws and the rules."

Citizenship verification Again, the question about the EC's jurisdiction to delve into the citizenship claims of an already registered voter without any formal objection lodged against the person continues to remain open. A cardinal point raised by petitioners was whether citizenship comes under the EC's purview when specific statutes like the Citizenship Act and the Foreigners Act already address the issues of acquisition of Indian citizenship and illegal aliens, respectively. The new column in the modified enumeration form allows an elector to provide details of a 'relative' who was a voter in the last SIR. Lawyers associated with the Bihar SIR case claim this is a move to verify lineage, and recalled the 'family tree verification' process followed during the Assam National Register of Citizens exercise, though Assam is not part of the current SIR. The poll body has argued it has authority to determine citizenship. The EC noted that one of the fundamental pre-conditions set out in Article 326 (adult suffrage) is that a person is required to be an Indian citizen to be registered in the electoral roll. The EC contended that to this extent it has powers to check the citizenship of electors, and insisted that the "burden to prove citizenship falls on the person who claims the right to be registered in electoral rolls". The petitioners have opposed the EC's stand, saying it was plainly contrary to the top court's 1995 judgment in the Lal Babu Hussain case, which had held that the burden of proof of citizenship would be on those who are registering anew and not on those whose names are already on the electoral roll.



arrival heralded not discovery, but genocide. The devastation was total.

What mainstream historians miss Mainstream historians seldom dwell on the mass enslavement, the sexual violence or the cultural annihilation. To question Columbus's legacy is to invite accusations of being "anti-American" or "revisionist". But if revision means restoring truth to the record, then revisionism is a moral obligation. The problem is not that we remember too little; it is that we remember too selectively. The Columbus myth, far from being a harmless fable, is the ideological blueprint for centuries of colonial expansion, white supremacy and racial capitalism. It legitimises the pillaging of the Americas, the enslavement of Africans, and the later interventions of American imperialism under the guise of spreading "freedom". The mentality that justified the extermination of the Arawaks is the same that rationalises drone strikes today.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, and the brutal calculus of migration remains unchanged: flee war-torn Syria, economically ravaged Venezuela, or climate-ravaged sub-Saharan Africa, and you will be met with suspicion and hostility at the borders of the Global North. The Trump presidency has been a zenith of this xenophobic fervour, pathologising immigration as an existential threat to American identity. The border wall, family separations, and the Muslim ban are not just policy aberrations but ideological manifestos that codify cruelty and exclusion. These measures are not pragmatic responses to complex issues; they are declarations of war on the most vulnerable. Moreover, the resurgence of exclusionary nationalism, a hallmark of Trump-era politics, has biased the discourse around belonging and citizenship. It designates the immigrant not as a fellow human in search of security but as an economic burden, a cultural contagion or a national security risk. What emerges, then, is a moral paradox of nations founded on violent migration and colonisation but now busy erecting moral and legal barriers to those seeking refuge. If settler colonialism is justified under the banner of "civilising mission", why should today's migration be framed illegitimate? The glaring disparity between the revered pioneers of the past and the vilified migrants of today lays bare the insidious role of race, power and historical amnesia in shaping the immigration narrative. Watch: What is India's stance against illegal immigration in the U.S.?

A fundamental aspiration Clearly, the future of immigration policy hinges on our willingness to confront the darkest chapters of our past and the brutal realities of our present. We need to excavate the buried subtexts of empire, capitalism and racial domination that continue to shape mobility, and forge a new path forward informed by historical reckoning and a commitment to human dignity. The right to seek safety, to move across borders, is not a privilege to be doled out to the few, but a fundamental human aspiration

'Darkest period in our history': Mohammad Yousuf lashes out after India humiliate Pakistan in T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI: India's emphatic 61-run demolition of Pakistan in the T20 World Cup has triggered an extraordinary outpouring of anger and anguish from former Pakistan great Mohammad Yousuf, who described the current phase as "the darkest period in our cricketing history."

The defeat extended Pakistan's dismal World Cup record against India, who have now won eight of nine T20 World Cup meetings and all eight ODI World Cup clashes between the rivals. On Sunday night, Suryakumar Yadav's side piled up 175/7, powered by a blistering 77 from Ishan Kishan, before bowling Pakistan out for 114 in 18 overs to storm into the Super Eights alongside the West Indies.

Soon after the defeat, Yousuf vented his frustration on social media, writing, "Time's up for Shaheen, Babar, and Shadab, Pakistan's T20 squad needs new performers, not empty wins against weaker sides."

A day later, his criticism deepened. "Unless we remove political influence and personal agendas from Pakistan cricket, we cannot return to the team we once were. This is the darkest period in our cricketing history, and my heart bleeds for it. Incompetent individuals must be removed from office and from the team," he posted on X.

Pakistan's collapse was swift and brutal. Chasing 176, they were 13/3 inside three overs after early strikes



from Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah. When Axar Patel bowled

Usman Khan's 44 provided brief resistance, but a reckless charge at Axar ended his stay and triggered another collapse. Earlier, Kishan had set the tone with fearless strokeplay, bringing up his fifty in just 27 balls. "I was just keeping it simple and watching the ball," Kishan said, while Suryakumar added, "After we were 0-1, someone had to take responsibility and the way he took it was amazing." For Pakistan, however, the conversation has shifted beyond one defeat. Yousuf's stinging words have framed it as something deeper.

T20 World Cup: Steve Smith added to Australia squad ahead of must-win Sri Lanka clash

NEW DELHI: Steve Smith has been drafted into Australia's T20 World Cup squad to replace the spot left vacant by Josh Hazlewood and is likely to feature in their must-win clash against Sri Lanka on Monday.

Smith reached Sri Lanka last week and became eligible for selection after the International Cricket Council cleared his inclusion, completing Australia's 15-man squad. Sean Abbott had initially been summoned as cover for Hazlewood, who pulled out on the eve of the tournament, but the pacer was never officially added to the squad, leaving a vacancy.

Smith responded to an SOS last week, flying to Sri Lanka after captain and regular opener Mitchell Marsh was struck by a throw-down during batting practice in Colombo. With Marsh — who has missed Australia's first two matches — still doubtful for Monday's encounter in Kandy due to bleeding from a testicle, Smith is poised to open the innings. "ICC regulations stipulate any squad change must be submitted and activated at least one day prior to a match," said Australia selector Tony Dodemaide. "With Steve here, along with some uncertainty around Mitch and Marcus Stoinis, it made sense he is activated and available for selection in time for the match, if required."

The in-form Smith remains one of Australia's most seasoned performers and a strong player of spin. He was controversially left out of the original T20 World Cup squad despite his explosive run in the Big Bash League as an opener. "Smitty's obviously here, so if he gets his chance, he'll be ready to go. He's the ultimate professional," Australia all-rounder Stoinis told reporters in Kandy late Sunday. Australia are already without injured frontline pacers Pat Cummins and Hazlewood. Power-hitter Tim



David has only recently returned from a hamstring tear sustained in December, while Stoinis hurt his hand while fielding during the shock loss to Zimbabwe — a result that pushed Australia to the brink of elimination. If Australia fail to Sri Lanka in Group B, it would mark their second defeat. A Zimbabwe win over Ireland on Tuesday or Sri Lanka on Thursday would then knock out the 2021 champions. Stoinis, however, indicated he expects to be fit for the decisive fixture. "The hand's pretty good," Stoinis said. "Got the scan and there's no break there or anything like that, so it's just a bit battered and bruised, much better than I thought, to be honest."

Revealed! India storm into Super 8s after Pakistan thrashing: Who's next?

NEW DELHI: India crushed Pakistan by 61 runs to secure a place in the Super 8s stage of the T20 World Cup on Sunday. Ishan Kishan starred with a brilliant 77, helping India reach 175/7, before the bowlers dismissed Pakistan for just 114 in 18 overs. After qualifying, India captain Suryakumar Yadav praised his team and said, "I think this is for India," adding, "Batting first was (the) better option on this wicket."

He also praised Kishan's knock, saying, "Ishan thought outside the box. After we were 0-1, someone had to take responsibility and the way he took it was amazing." With the win, India have qualified for the Super 8s. Their schedule in the next round includes matches against South Africa, one of Zimbabwe or Australia, and West Indies, as they continue their title defence. India's matches in Super 8s of T20 World Cup 2026

However, before beginning their journey in the Super 8s, Team India will play against Netherlands in their final group-stage game on Wednesday at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. On Sunday,



Pakistan's chase fell apart quickly. They lost three wickets in the first two overs, including captain Salman Agha and opener Sahibzada Farhan. When Babar Azam was bowled for five, Pakistan were in deep trouble. Usman Khan tried

to fight back with 44, but once he was stumped, the rest of the batting collapsed.

Earlier in the match, the two captains again avoided shaking hands at the toss, continuing a pattern seen in the Asia Cup last year. Kishan played fear-

lessly, scoring his fifty in just 27 balls and attacking the bowlers all around the ground. His innings gave India a strong base, and the bowlers made sure Pakistan never came close in the chase.



'Biggest crime in the world': Shoaib Akhtar slams PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi, Pakistan after India defeat

NEW DELHI: Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar launched a fierce attack on Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Mohsin Naqvi after Pakistan's heavy 61-run loss to India in the T20 World Cup.

Speaking to ABP News after the match, he criticised the PCB leadership, saying, "One guy who does not know anything has become the Pakistan Cricket Board's chairman. What can you do? How will the team run?" He also slammed the team's reliance on underperforming superstar players, saying, "You have made a superstar out of a player who cannot win you a game." Akhtar added that poor appointments are a major problem, calling it "The biggest crime in the world is to give a particular job to incompetent people." He even described Naqvi as "incompetent and 'jaahil'" and said he was not fit to lead the

board. Akhtar also criticised Pakistan's performance, saying the team was far behind India and lacked modern-day cricket standards. He said Pakistan have failed to invest in talent for years and can no longer compete with India at the highest level.

In the match, India scored 175/7 thanks to Ishan Kishan's 77 and useful contributions from Suryakumar Yadav and Shivam Dube. Pakistan's chase collapsed early, falling to 13/3 in just two overs. Babar Azam was dismissed cheaply, and despite Usman Khan's 44, the team kept losing wickets regularly. India's bowlers dominated, with Axar Patel, Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, and Varun Chakravarthy sharing wickets as Pakistan were bowled out for 114 in 18 overs.



Ranji Trophy: Rahul, Padikkal flatten Uttarakhand; Karnataka 355/2 on Day 1

LUCKNOW: Barely an hour into the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday, Uttarakhand captain Kunal Chandel's decision to bowl first seemed questionable. There was some seam movement and occasional uneven bounce early on, but little else to justify inserting a batting powerhouse like Karnataka on a largely placid surface — particularly with a spin-heavy attack. Go Beyond The Boundary with our YouTube channel. SUBSCRIBE NOW! Two of Karnataka's most elegant stroke-makers — KL Rahul (141; 211b; 11x4; 5x6) and skipper Devdutt Padikkal (148 batting; 236b; 16x4, 2x6) — produced commanding centuries to power their side to 355/2 in 90 overs.

Karnataka began cautiously. Uttarakhand struck in the ninth over when Mayank Agarwal (5), attempting to drive a back of length delivery from Aditya Rawat (2/73), edged to Prashant Chopra at second slip.

It proved to be the only breakthrough for the visitors across two sessions. From that point, Rahul and Padikkal stitched together a commanding 278-run partnership for the second wicket — a stand defined by control and classical stroke play. In the near-empty expanse of the Ekana Cricket Stadium, the sound of bat meeting ball — crisp cuts, flowing drives and authoritative pulls — echoed through the day. Padikkal signalled his intent early, opening his account with a backfoot cut off Aditya to the boundary.

A typically assured Rahul was a delight to watch. He drove fluently against the pacers and used his feet confidently against the spinners, rarely allowing the bowlers to settle. His fifty came off 86 deliveries, brought up with a

square cut off Aditya. There were fleeting opportunities for Uttarakhand. Rahul, on 47, offered a chance when he advanced down the track, only for wicketkeeper Saurabh Rawat to miss a stumping.

Later, when Rahul was on 136, a half-chance catch went begging. Rahul reached his 25th first class century off 153 balls, continuing his rich vein of form following a match-winning 130 against Mumbai in the quarterfinal. Left-arm spinner Mayank Mishra, Uttarakhand's leading wicket-taker this season, was introduced in the 18th over but found little assistance from the surface and struggled to contain the flow of runs. At the other end, Padikkal matched his senior partner stroke for stroke. His half-century came briskly off 65 deliveries. The landmark moment of his innings arrived when he launched former Karnataka teammate J Suchith for a one-handed six over long-on to bring up his hundred. Aditya eventually broke the stand when Rahul closed the face of the bat a touch early and offered a leading edge back to the bowler. It was, however, only a momentary respite for Uttarakhand. With Karnataka's depth, the run feast continued. Karun Nair (37 batting) joined Padikkal and seamlessly carried the momentum forward. Karun marked the team's 300 with a deft glance to fine leg for four. By the close of play, Uttarakhand's bold decision had backfired as Karnataka, powered by two masterful centuries, had turned the contest into a test of endurance for the semifinals debutants, with the promise of more to come. Brief scores: Karnataka 355/2 in 90 overs (KL Rahul 141, Devdutt Padikkal 148 (batting), Karun Nair (batting) 37; Aditya Rawat 2-73) vs Uttarakhand.

'He took the game away': Coach Mike Hesson admits fearless Ishan Kishan broke Pakistan

NEW DELHI: Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson delivered a blunt and telling verdict after his side's crushing 61-run defeat to India in the T20 World Cup in Colombo, admitting that one fearless innings had effectively decided the contest long before the chase fell apart.

Hesson said Kishan's aggressive approach and rare form proved the decisive difference in the marquee clash, acknowledging that the opener's brilliance had dismantled Pakistan's plans on a challenging surface. Go Beyond The Boundary with our YouTube channel. SUBSCRIBE NOW! "I think he's fearless. He's able to score on both sides of the ground. So, he's not just committed to the leg side. We know he's incredibly strong there, but he can reverse."

Kishan's breathtaking 77 off 40 balls powered India to 175 for seven, but more importantly, it broke the backbone of Pakistan's spin-heavy strategy on a slow Premadasa Stadium pitch. He attacked the slower bowlers with authority, scoring 66 runs off 37 deliveries against spin and forcing Pakistan's bowlers out of their comfort zone.

Hesson admitted that pressure created by Kishan forced his bowlers away from their strengths and ultimately changed the course of the match. He noted that apart



from Kishan and a brief contribution from Shivam Dube, scoring was difficult, underlining just how exceptional the knock was. "That certainly was a standout amongst the whole match, really. The way Kishan played took the game away from us," Hesson said.

The heavy defeat pushed them to third place in Group A, leaving their qualification hopes dependent on beating Namibia in their final league match.

'I don't want to be spoken about all the time': Sobhita Dhulipala on choosing privacy over publicity

Sobhita Dhulipala returns to Telugu cinema with 'Cheekatilo', her first full project since Goodachari (2018). She prefers avoiding Bollywood's constant PR, saying, "I don't want to be visible 24x7." From Visakhapatnam, her career follows instinct over industry norms.

Sobhita Dhulipala is making her comeback to Telugu films with 'Cheekatilo' and talks about her journey, her choices, and why she likes to stay away from too much publicity in Bollywood. She has worked in many languages, and 'Cheekatil' is her full return to Telugu cinema.

Before this, she was seen in the bilingual film 'Major' in 2022, but her last full Telugu movie was 'Goodachari' in 2018. In the years between, she acted in many big films in different languages.

Sobhita Dhulipala reconnects with her Telugu roots. The actress shared that stepping back into authentic Telugu narratives felt instinctive, not planned. Speaking to Hindustan Times, "When she signed the project, she didn't think too deeply about it since she is deeply connected to Telugu cinema as an audience and consumer.

But when she started performing, the experience felt so effortless and smooth that she truly enjoyed it. Playing a podcaster meant using a lot of crisp vocabulary, so she felt relieved to speak this language, her mother tongue.

Delivering those lines isn't easy if you don't know the language, and that's why she enjoyed it so much," she said.

Sobhita Dhulipala finds comfort performing in her mother tongue

She highlighted how using her mother tongue made her performance feel natural and comfortable, particularly for a character with heavy dialogue.

Moving beyond her project selections, she also touched on the rising influence of PR strategies in entertainment. Lately, debates about actors' public presence and marketing efforts have grown louder, with several facing backlash for what critics call over-the-top publicity moves.

Sobhita Dhulipala explains why she rejects constant publicity

Sobhita firmly stated that constant publicity doesn't match her values or lifestyle. "Over the past few years, in brief pockets here and there, I've worked with a PR firm, but I think for my personality or the kind of choices I'm keen on making for the kind of life I want to lead, I've



decided that I'm not going to require this sort of amplification.

I don't want to be visible 24x7 or I don't want to be spoken about all the time.

That's not my interest, I don't find it useful for me," she said.

Sobhita Dhulipala says her choice is personal

She clarified that avoiding PR is her own preference, not a critique of industry peers. "I don't work with PR, but maybe it works for someone else. There's no fixed rule with this thing. You can only have your preferences and I think I have clarity about my own."

Sobhita Dhulipala reflects on managing publicity and perception

When asked if excessive publicity can backfire or misrepresent artists, Sobhita gave a reflective response.

"I wish I had the answers for everything because there are so many things we figure along the way. Most of my projects were already counter culture in their own way and I am someone who does not come from the film world or even Mumbai. I came from Vizag and everything I learned on the go. I have arrived at an understanding of what I would like and what I wouldn't like.

What does work and doesn't work for people, I don't know. I only know for myself," she said. Dhulipala, who hails from 'Visakhapatnam' and entered the industry without any film connections, shared that her journey has been guided by self-discovery and instinct rather than standard industry playbooks.

Rajkumar Rao breaks silence on his new look, reveals he gained 9-10 kilos by eating pizzas, parathas for Ujjwal Nikam biopic

In the last few days, Rajkumar Rao has been the centre of attention on social media as netizens just couldn't recognise him in his new look. The actor has put on some weight and was seen sporting grey hair.

While many even trolled him for looking like this as he attended the Bolli Khidkiyaan Short Film Festival in Mumbai, the actor has now broken silence on it.

Many trolled him while some fans were genuinely concerned. Setting the record straight, Rao took to his social media and revealed that he has undergone a transformation for his upcoming biopic on Ujjwal Nikam. He has put on 9-10 kilos for the film and further added that now he's in the process to shed all the weight for Sourav Ganguly biopic. He shared a collage of Ujjwal Nikam, Sourav Ganguly picture and wrote, "My being is through my Art. Just finished shooting for my next Biopic #NIKAM and yes, it has demanded me to change physically which I love doing. I'm not a believer in prosthetics as long as I can achieve the look through my hard work which I've achieved in Nikam, be it gaining weight or looking old (to play a certain age) or to make my hair thin which my hair stylist was very much against but everyone told me to not go half bald for BOSE also and to gain that much weight or to Not stop eating and lose so much weight for TRAPPED or to not behave like a visually impaired person even when cameras weren't rolling during SRIKANTH.

"He further added, "For Nikam I had to gain around 9-10 kgs and I was eating 2 pizzas and a lot of sweets and my fav Aloo Parathas, Biryani and to not use anything



glam to look like the part. Hopefully, when you will see the film which will be releasing soon you will be able to see all that hard work in the film." Sharing an update about his next transformation, he added, "And now it's the transition phase and time to lose these extra kgs and get ready to slip into Ganguly mode. Our very own Dada. Will always work the hardest to engage you, entertain you through my work. Much Love," he wrote. His upcoming film on Ujjwal Nikam, directed by Avinash Arun, is based on the life of one of India's most renowned public prosecutors, known for taking on some of the country's most high-profile and complex criminal cases.

Mahesh Babu unveils teaser of mythological action epic 'Nagabandham'

The teaser of the upcoming mythological action film 'Nagabandham' was unveiled on Sunday by Telugu superstar Mahesh Babu.

The film is set against the mystic Himalayan expanse, and the teaser gives a peek into a world where a secret older than time itself lies buried. When one man's greed threatens to expose this cosmic truth, destiny steps forward to choose its warrior.

Sharing the teaser on social media, Mahesh Babu wrote, "The #WorldOfNagabandham looks absolutely fascinating all the way.... Looking forward to experiencing it soon (sic)".

It is partly inspired by the historical Afghan invasion led by Abdali, the narrative blends mythology, history, and spiritual warfare. The conflict takes shape at the intersection of cultural resistance and divine guardianship.

At the heart of this epic lies the sacred Nagabandham Temple, a hidden shrine protected by celestial energies and believed to safeguard an ancient cosmic force. Nestled deep within secret Himalayan pathways, the temple holds a power so immense that its fall into the wrong hands could trigger unimaginable devastation.

"Born from Brahma's Creation... Guarded by Vishnu's Dharma... Powered by Mahadev's Fury", this striking line perfectly captures the soul of Nagabandham,



a saga where divinity, destiny, and destruction collide.

The film is helmed by Abhishek Nama and stars Virat Karma. Abhishek Nama showcases bold ambition and crystal-clear vision. His blend of mythology, action, and spiritual depth, elevated by exceptional technical execution, gives the teaser a powerful cinematic identity that promises a monumental theatrical experience.

The film also stars The casting is another major asset, featuring Nabha Natesh, Ishwarya Menon, Mahesh Manjrekar, Jagapathi Babu, Rishabh Sawhney, Garuda Ram, Jayaprakash, Murali Sharma, Anasuya Bharadwaj, and BS Avinash in crucial roles.



Shanaya Kapoor gets emotional about response to 'Tu Yaa Main': 'Film came when I didn't have the most confidence...

Shanaya Kapoor thanked fans for loving her role in 'Tu Yaa Main' (Feb 13 release), her second film—a The Pool remake. She shared BTS photos with Adarsh Gourav and reflected on Instagram how it boosted her low confidence, calling character Avani a "BADASS."

Shanaya Kapoor recently shared a heartfelt message thanking everyone for the love she received for her role in 'Tu Yaa Main', which released on February 13. The daughter of Sanjay Kapoor also posted behind-the-scenes photos with her co-star Adarsh Gourav. The movie, which is Shanaya's second film, is a remake of the Thai movie 'The Pool' and has received a warm response from the audience.

On Monday, Shanaya took to her Instagram handle and wrote, "Tu Yaa main came into my life at a time when I really didn't have the most confidence in myself.. and it gave me that.. and everything more. Tu Yaa Main is now in theatres and Avani is out there surviving crocodiles. She taught me so much.. especially taught me how to be a complete BADASS. (still trying.. getting there.. I think). Thank you... thank you not just for letting me play her, but for accepting me as a part of something like this so early on in my career... all the love from the audience.

the reviews.. everything. Overwhelmed. I still have a long journey of learning this art... so getting to work with @bejoynambiar & @aanandirai 's slightly unhinged, very real world feels kind of wild?!?! @bejoynambiar sir thank you for bringing AVANI to life.. for believing in me and pushing me to be the best version of myself.. I'm forever grateful to have gotten the chance to be directed by YOU! Love u sir!"

She further added, "@aanandirai sir this whole madness exists because you back stories that aren't the obvious choice.

You backed me when you could have taken ANYONE else for this character and they would have happily done and been part of your project.. so thank you for believing in ME and giving me this opportunity. You gave me this chance, a chance on a new actor, that had to fill in shoes of a heavy and layered character.

A chance to be part of a wild and super cool story. Thank you for trusting me. You're the best. @gouravadarsh allafloppara from nalasopara, talent hai bharpur, naa dekhoge dobara.. (Rap is not my thing). thank you for being you and the best partner through this roller coaster of a ride!

Special thank you to Mukesh sir @castingchhabra for helping me audition for this part and pushing me to do so. Thank you to Atul sir @atulmongia for guiding me through each step.. and helping me build Avani :) The entire cast and crew.. heres to the crazy nights that turned into beautiful mornings. We did this. We're here and I'm so thankful for everyone's support and kindness. This was a wild ride. The end of a campaign full of green outfits and

'Tu Yaa Main' shows steady box office growth

'Tu Yaa Main' started slowly at the box office, earning Rs 60 lakh on its first day. The film picked up on Saturday after getting good reviews and positive feedback, making Rs 1.45 crore. On Sunday, the numbers went down a bit, with around Rs 75 lakh collected. According to Sacnilk, the film's total so far is Rs 2.80 crore.

Alia Bhatt says she's 'obsessed' with parenting book on motherhood



Actor Alia Bhatt shared her love for a parenting book offering ancient wisdom for modern parents. The actress, who welcomed daughter Raha in 2022, is currently busy with multiple film projects, including Alpha and Love & War.

Mumbai: Bollywood star Alia Bhatt shared that she's "obsessed" with reading about motherhood, posting a picture of a book that offers ancient advice for modern parents.

Alia took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a glimpse of the book she's currently "obsessed" with, "The Parent's Tao Te Ching: Ancient Advice for Modern Parents" by William Martin.

The actress, who is married to actor Ranbir Kapoor and shares daughter Raha with him, posted a picture of the book and simply wrote, "obsessed."

The Parents Tao Te Ching talks about helping parents to have meaningful conversations and relationships with their children.

Alia and Ranbir got married in April 2022. They welcomed their daughter, Raha, in November 2022.

On the work front, Alia will be seen in the upcoming spy thriller "Alpha". The film also stars Sharvati Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor. The film will now bow in cinemas on April 17, 2026.

Yash Raj Films confirmed as they shared that the VFX team of 'Alpha needs more time to present Alpha in its visually best shape. Alia and Sharvati will go toe to toe against Bobby in this brutal showdown that is a part of YRF spy universe.

She is currently busy shooting for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Love & War". The upcoming epic romantic drama also stars Ranbir Kapoor, and Vicky Kaushal. The film, set in the 1960s against a war backdrop, features an intense love triangle where Ranbir and Vicky play Air Force officers.

Alia and her sister, Shaheen Bhatt, are also backing the coming-of-age romantic comedy "Don't Be Shy" under their home banner, Eternal Sunshine Productions, in association with Prime Video.

"This film immediately spoke to us because of its sincerity and coming-of-age lens and Sreeti's passion and energy naturally fed into the spirit of the story. It's an incredibly special project for me and for Eternal Sunshine," Alia had said.