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Teenager ends life over delay in buying motorcycle in Karimnagar

Karimnagar: Upset over his parents' delay in purchasing a motorcycle, a teenager, Ritvik (17), died by suicide in Gopalpur of Karimnagar rural mandal.

According to villagers, Ritvik had been pressuring his parents to buy him a bike. Though they had promised to purchase the vehicle after selling their crop, he attempted suicide by consuming pesticide on March 6.

Road named after Karimnagar Municipal Commissioner Praful Desai

Karimnagar: In recognition of the services of Municipal Commissioner Praful Desai, a road within the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation limits was named after him.

A road in the eighth division of the Alugunur area was named 'Praful Desai Marg' on Sunday. The decision was taken in appreciation of the commissioner's role in the development of the town and his efforts to address public issues.

Electric scooters for college girls soon: CM

Hyderabad, March 8

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has declared that the state government would soon distribute electric (EV) scooters to college-going girls as part of its efforts to promote women's empowerment and encourage eco-friendly means of transportation. The government has already implemented a zero-tax policy on electric vehicles to promote their use, he mentioned, while participating in the International Women's Day celebrations here on Sunday.

Highlighting women empowerment initiatives, he stated that the government had introduced free bus travel for women, encouraged women's participation in solar power generation and facilitated marketing opportunities for self-help groups through partnerships with global platforms like Amazon. He also said the government had established 150 stalls on a three-and-a-half-acre land near HI-TEC City to showcase products made by women.

The Chief Minister said the government has been taking several measures to reduce air pollution in the city.

As part of these efforts, about 2,500 diesel buses, currently operating under the State Road Transport Corporation (RTC) in Hyderabad, will be shifted to various districts by December and replaced with electric buses.

The Chief Minister said he would make a presentation on the Musi Rejuvenation Project on March 13 to address apprehensions regarding displacement and rehabilitation of the project oustees and to share the government's vision of developing the Musi riverfront into a major economic hub.

Responding to concerns over displacement due to the Musi project, Revanth Reddy assured people that the government would ensure proper relief and rehabilitation for the affected families. He said that after a decision was taken to create a 50-metre buffer zone along riverbanks, construction activity was banned in those areas. All structures falling within the buffer zone have "zero value" under regulations; yet, the government was willing to provide adequate compensation and rehabilitation to displaced residents.

The Chief Minister said residents in the affected areas had been invited for discussions on rehabilitation measures and the government was ready to allot seven acres of land and provide financial support for constructing apartments for those displaced. However, he alleged, the issue was being politicised by opposition parties.

Criticising the opposition for opposing the Musi project, Revanth Reddy pointed out that large-scale riverfront projects had been successfully implemented

elsewhere in the country. He cited the Sabarmati Riverfront project in Ahmedabad as well as similar developments along the Yamuna in Delhi and the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh.

The Chief Minister also defended the state government's decision to allocate Rs 200 crore for the construction of the Mahatma Gandhi Knowledge Centre, asking critics what was wrong with building such a facility.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to develop Hyderabad on par with global cities. He said efforts were underway to transform the city into an international hub capable of competing with cities such as New York, Tokyo, and those in South Korea. As part of urban planning measures, the government was also considering shifting industries outside the Outer Ring Road.

Revanth Reddy said the state government was working towards contributing to India's goal of becoming a \$3 trillion economy by 2047 by attracting investments and strengthening the services sector in Telangana.

Revanth Reddy also spoke about welfare measures for journalists, recalling the support extended to him by many journalists, including women journalists, during his political journey. He said the state government would soon take a decision on allotting housing sites for journalists and develop a dedicated journalists' colony in the proposed Future City along with MLAs, MPs.

The Chief Minister also announced that the government would soon set up a platform to receive complaints



against false news and misinformation being circulated on social media. He said steps were needed to prevent individuals from misusing the system in the guise of journalism.

New Guv Shiv Pratap to enter Lok Bhavan tomorrow

Hyderabad: Outgoing Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma will leave for Mumbai on Monday, following his transfer as Governor of Maharashtra, it is learnt. The newly appointed Governor of Telangana Shiv Pratap Shukla is expected to arrive in the state on Tuesday and formally enter Telangana Lok Bhavan, his official residence.

Shukla was appointed as the Governor of Telangana on March 6, 2026. Earlier, he served as the Governor of Himachal Pradesh. He is replacing Jishnu Dev Varma as part of a major gubernatorial reshuffle announced by President Droupadi Murmu.

Meanwhile, the outgoing Governor issued an important order summoning the Legislature. On Saturday night, Jishnu Dev Varma summoned the Third Telangana Legislative Assembly to meet for its Eighth Session at 11.45 a.m. on March 16, 2026, in the Assembly Hall. He also summoned the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Telangana Legislative Council to meet at the same time and venue. These may

be among the final official orders issued by the outgoing Governor before demitting office. Although the Assembly and the Council have been summoned by Jishnu Dev Varma, incoming Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla is expected to address the joint session of the Legislature on March 16 at the beginning of the Budget Session.

The Budget for the financial year 2026-27 is scheduled to be presented on March 20 by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka. The Assembly session will commence on March 16 with the Governor's address to the joint sitting of the Legislature. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Revenue, Housing, Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy paid a



courtesy call on outgoing Governor Jishnu Dev Varma at the Telangana Lok Bhavan on Sunday evening in view of his transfer to Maharashtra.

ISKCON Cyberabad Temple Bhumi Puja Ceremony held with Grandeur



“Bhumi Puja ceremony for the construction of the ISKCON Cyberabad Temple was held with great spiritual enthusiasm on Sunday, March 8, 2026, at Nallagandla-Gopanpalli, Hyderabad. The event was attended by Hon'ble Minister Konda Surekha, Endowments & Forests Department, Government of Telangana, as the Chief Guest. The Telangana Government had allocated 6000 square yards of land adjacent to Sri Ranganatha Swamy

Temple in Gopanpalli, Nallagandla, for the construction of the ISKCON temple. The ceremony began on Sunday at 5:19 am with the performance of Bhumi Pooja, Go Pooja, Guru Pooja, Sudarshan Narasimha Homa, Purna Ahuti, and Mahannadana. “Speaking on the occasion, Minister Konda Surekha emphasized the importance of spiritual growth alongside material development, stating that the temple would serve as a center for spiritual guidance,

cultural preservation, and skill development for youth. She congratulated the ISKCON leadership, Swamis, and devotees for their efforts in constructing the temple and wished the project success. “The event was also marked with the presentation of “Nari Puraskar 2026” awards to 20 women on the occasion of International Women's Day. “The ceremony was attended by local MLA Arekapudi Gandhi, former Corporator Gangadhar, officials from the Endow-

ments Department, Government officials, ISKCON representatives, and a large number of devotees. “Sri Ramadas, President of ISKCON Cyberabad Temple, expressed his gratitude to all attendees and stated that the temple would become a beacon of peace, spirituality, and cultural heritage for the community. “Issued by: “Sri Ramadas” President, ISKCON Cyberabad Temple

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Attack on the idea of India

The shocking incident of shoe hurling at Chief Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai in the Supreme Court premises reflects the normalisation of hate in a deeply fractured society. It shows that even the highest constitutional spaces are not free from social prejudices. The attack has left the legal fraternity and the public deeply disturbed. The act, committed by 71-year-old advocate Rakesh Kishore in the name of honouring 'Santan Dharma', occurred while the Chief Justice was presiding over a hearing. Justice Gavai, who belongs to the Dalit community, upholds, at least symbolically, the promises of the Constitution, wherein equality and dignity transcend multiple socio-cultural barriers. The attack on him is a shameful reflection of the growing intolerance corroding our national fabric. When even the educated sections of society resort to such uncivil behaviour, it signals a dangerous moral decay. This mindset stems from blind religious fanaticism, political manipulation, and a deliberate assault on reason and constitutional values. India's strength lies in its tolerance, diversity, and respect for differing opinions — not in mob-like reactions. Such disgraceful conduct against the head of the judiciary undermines the dignity of the law. The nation must wake up to this rising tide of bigotry before it drowns our collective sanity. The CJI was apparently targeted for remarks he made while refusing to entertain a public interest litigation seeking judicial intervention for the reconstruction of an idol of Lord Vishnu in the Khajuraho temple. His comments were interpreted as being hurtful to Hindu sentiments.

Over the past decade, an ideological ecosystem promoting radical right-wing thinking has been created. This has emboldened certain groups that have repeatedly taken the law into their own hands, from cow vigilantism to street-level intimidation. The political glorification of 'Sanatan Dharma' as a rallying cry has often blurred into mindless aggression. Though the government distances itself from such acts, critics argue that the ideological ecosystem surrounding the Sangh Parivar has indirectly legitimised a culture of religious outrage. The Bar Council of India, the Supreme Court Bar Association, and the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta strongly condemned the incident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi too expressed his disapproval, calling it "an act that has shaken every Indian." While the immediate condemnations, cutting across party lines, were swift, the deeper issue — of religious zealotry and mob radicalisation under the veneer of devotion — cannot be ignored.

That an elderly lawyer could resort to violence inside the highest court of the land shows how deep misinformation and sectarian anger have seeped into public consciousness. Kishore's belief that he was defending religion is a telling example of how social media-fuelled fanaticism can override both logic and law. The all-round condemnation underlines that the incident was more than just an attack on one individual — it was an act of disrespect towards the institution of the judiciary, the Constitution it upholds, and the rule of law.

Grand Annual Day Celebrations of Sri Saraswati Shishu Mandir School

— Uppal's Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 8 (Indian Chronicle): "The annual day celebrations of Sri Saraswati Shishu Mandir School were held in a grand manner at Kommidi Krishna Reddy Gardens, Uppal. Former Uppal corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest. "Students made the celebrations vibrant with cultural performances including dance, songs, and drama, showcasing their talents and creativity." Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said that such events provide a platform to encourage the creativity of school children. She stated that every program helps bring out the hidden talents of students and nurtures valuable human qualities in them. She emphasized that organizing such activities is very important for the overall development of children. "Among those present at the event were Dr. Professor Bhadrappa, Dr. Lingraju (Principal, Government Homeopathy College), Naga Prashanthi (Director, Samskruthi Foundation), Ardhachandra Prakash Reddy (Regional Joint Secretary, Sri Saraswati Vidyapeetham), School General Secretary Prasad, School President Ankanna's Madhav Reddy, village elders Dubba Narsimha Reddy, Gone Prabhakar Reddy, Jetta Sudhakar, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Shambhu Prasad, Jashwanth Reddy, Gujjula Narsimha Reddy, Mandumula Anji Reddy, along with Manjula, Bhargavi, Anita, Padma, Ankanna's Rama, Gujjula Chandrakala, local residents, teachers, students, and school staff."



Former united Adilabad district ends 50 years of association with left wing extremism



"S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 8" March 31, 2026 will mark the end of half a century of association of former united Adilabad district with left wing extremism. Naxalism or Maoism, as this brand of violent campaign towards bringing about egalitarianism among other things, saw many ups and downs before its rather tame end. "The left wing extremism in erstwhile unified Adilabad began in 1975 when a tribal money lender was killed in



Ginnedhari in present day Tiryani mandal of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district. The accused, Kistaiah and Bhooma Goud, members of a left party were sentenced to death in 1976 and the sentence was carried out in

Hyderabad Central Prison in 1979. "It was in the same year, 1976, that the infamous and ghastly Tapalpur murder case also occurred. This event saw murder of seven persons including the two sons of the main target landlord G.V. Pithambar Rao committed by a band of highly motivated young extremists. "The next big violent incident which shook the government and common people alike came in August 1987. An exchange of fire in Allampalli forest of present day Kadam mandal of Nirmal district left 11 policemen including 2 SIs dead while the extremists fled with their weapons. "In August 1988, another curious incident happened which raised questions on the then jail system. The then AP State committee member of CPI (ML) People's War, now known as CPI (Maoist), Nalla Adi Reddy and his associates Syed Hussain and Bandi Prakash escaped from the Adilabad sub jail. "The first even ambush of a police patrol by naxalites in the country occurred in February 1989 in Singapur in which 7 policemen including one SI was killed. The perpetrators decamped with weapons of the deceased policemen. "After a slowdown in major activities for about a decade, the PWG outlaws blasted the remotely located Sirpur (U) police station in present day KB Asifabad district. This major incident left 11 special police constables dead and the extremists also took away their weapons. "Among the top ranking and dreaded Maoists to have lost their lives in police encounters in Adilabad were RK and Lalithakka, Maoist CC member Cherukuri Rajkumar alias Azad in 2010 and DCM Chippakurthi Rai later that year. "A conservative estimates puts the number of people from united Adilabad district to have joined left wing extremism during the 50-year period at 800. Most of them surrendered during the course thanks to evolving policy of the government in facilitating their efforts to join the mainstream."

Even at home, there is a risk of sunburn.

Room temperatures rising with the sun

It has been recorded up to 38-46 degrees, Doctors advise to take precautions even at home, Charakonda Babu NHRC, NGO



Wanapatti Correspondent "(Indian Chronicle)" "The sun is rising in the state. The temperatures have already reached 46 degrees. People are afraid to step outside due to the fear of the sun. Due to this, many are confined to their homes. However, doctors are warning that even if they are at home, there is a risk of getting sunburned if proper precautions are not taken. Along with the sun, heat waves have also increased. Due to this, room temperatures are increasing. People who are indoors are also getting sunburned. The effect of heat waves is especially severe on children, the elderly, women, and those with chronic diseases. That is why doctors are advising to take proper precautions even while indoors. Room temperatures are increasing significantly due to the sun. Normally,

room temperatures should be between 26 and 28 degrees. But currently, room temperatures are being recorded as high as 36 to 46 degrees. Due to this, the room heats up and that effect is felt on the body. To cool the body, the water in the body is released. This causes dehydration and sunstroke. Doctors warn that indoor heat stroke is just as dangerous as sunstroke when you go outside. Do not keep windows and doors closed in cramped rooms. If you keep them closed, the temperature will rise. Windows and doors should always be open. Wet curtains should be drawn to prevent hot air from entering. If the room temperature rises, fans, ACs, and coolers should be turned on to cool it down. The room temperature should be between 25 and 30 degrees. Children, the elderly, and women are especially susceptible to indoor heat stroke. Drink water every half hour. It is suggested not to take cool drinks when dehydrated. Precautions to be taken in the intense sun, ensure that the room temperature is between 26 and 28 degrees. Drink water every half hour. Drink at least 4 to 6 liters of water a day. Even when at home, cotton clothes should be worn. Windows and doors should be kept open. Curtains should be tied to prevent direct hot air from entering. If necessary, wet curtains, thermocol, and sheets should be tied to the windows for cool air. Elderly people should consume more buttermilk and lemon juice. Children and pregnant women who have suffered from sunstroke should consume more fruit juices. Do not drink cool drinks at all for sunburn. Stay away from spicy foods as much as possible. If you suffer from sunburn, wipe your body with a wet cloth. Keep your house cool. If the body temperature exceeds 99 degrees Fahrenheit in summer, water is lost in the form of sweat. This puts the person at risk of dehydration. Some times, a person with sunburn may even go into a coma. Keep your house cool as much as possible. Drink at least 4 to 6 liters of water daily. People suffering from dehydration should avoid consuming soft drinks and take precautions by consuming energy drinks such as lemonade, buttermilk, fruit juices, and ORS.

Ward member training program completed at Chinnadagada Village Farmers' Forum

Mandal MPDO Surna Adarsh Goud Mandal MPO Ramaswamy



Wanaparthi correspondent Indian Chronicle "MPDO Surna Adarsh Goud and Mandal Panchayat Officer Ramaswamy informed on this occasion that a training program will be organized for the newly elected ward members in various villages under Chinnambavi mandal of Wanaparthi district as per the government's instructions. As part of this program, some villages in Chinnambavi mandal have been selected as the first phase and some villages as the second phase. In the first phase, 78 ward members belonging to 8 village panchayats were trained for five days at Chinnadagada Gram Rythu Vedikawas conducted. And Completed successfully. Also second Phase 9 to 13 The second phase will be extended to 9 Gram Panchayats. To the 78 ward members concerned Training at Pedamaru Village Rythu Vedika The program will be held. Therefore Ward members of 9 villages undergo this training You can take advantage of the program. We inform that. This village Panchayats Lakshimpalli, Chinnambavi, Pedamaru, Koppunuru, Chinnamaru, Velturu, Ayyavaripalli, Kaluru, "Chellepad, these nine villages are the ward Training for members from Monday The program will be held. Everyone Ward members came and organized these programs. MPDO Surna Adarsh Goud, Mandal Panchayat Officer Ramaswamy says they can take advantage of it wanted."

Development Works Worth Rs 13.35 Crore in Uppal Bhagayat Rs 9.85 Crore for Road Development, Rs 3.50 Crore for Community Hall Construction

---Parameshwar Reddy Hands Over Fund Sanction Letters to Colony Residents "Works to be Inaugurated Soon by CM Revanth Reddy

"Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 8 (Indian Chronicle): "Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy stated that efforts are being made for the comprehensive development of the HMDA Layout in Uppal Bhagayat. He said that with the support of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, funds have been sanctioned and development works required in the layout are being taken up. "He added that the works will soon be inaugurated by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. As a result of the efforts made earlier by former Corporator



Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, funds worth ₹13.35 crore have been sanctioned for several development works in Bhagayat. "On Sunday, Parameshwar Reddy handed over the fund sanction letters to the colony residents. He stated that the tender process will be completed soon and steps will be taken to start the works within the stipulated time. He also mentioned that 42 sanitation workers have been carrying out cleaning works in the HMDA Layout from Monday morning. The program was attended by Uppal HMDA Bhagayat Welfare Association members Vakkanti Srinivas, Chandrashekar Reddy, Vamsi Chander Reddy, Sudhakar Reddy, Poojala Prabhakar, Balayya, Raju, Kishan Mudiraj, Viplav Reddy and others."

Sarees Distributed to Municipal Sanitation Workers on the Occasion of International Women's Day

"Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, March 8 (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of International Women's Day, sarees were distributed to municipal women sanitation workers under the leadership of Jyotirao Phule Seva Sangham President Burra Mahender Mudiraj at the Phule Sangham office in Ramanthapur on Sunday. "As part of the programme, women municipal sanitation workers were felicitated and honoured for their service. Former Corporator Bandaru Srevaani Venkata Rao, who attended as the chief guest, distributed sarees to the women sanitation workers. "Among those present at the event were Telangana State Gangaputra Sangham leader DT Mallaiah, Munnuru Kapu Sangham President Mutthineni Jagadeesh, committee members K. Laxman, G. Suresh, Itkala Venkatesh, Mallesha Yadav, women representatives Sabitha and Aliveelu, and several municipal workers."



TRS Leader Gogikar Shivakumar Attends Pooja & Abhishek Wedding Ceremony

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 8, (Indian chronicle):“Kapra Division TRS leader Gogikar Shivakumar attended the wedding ceremony of Pooja and Abhishek held on Sunday and extended his wishes to the newly married couple. Speaking on the occasion, he said he was happy to be part of the celebration and wished the couple a joyful and prosperous married life filled with happiness. He also expressed gratitude to the family members for inviting him to the auspicious event. TRS leader Ganesh Yadav and other party members also participated in the ceremony.



Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Attends Multiple Wedding Ceremonies



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 8, (Indian chronicle):“Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended several wedding ceremonies on Sunday and extended his wishes to the newly married couples. He attended the wedding of the son of Namaste Telangana Editor Tigulla Krishna Murthy at Meghana Convention in Keesara and blessed the couple. Later, he participated in the wedding

ceremony of the daughter of Cheeriyal Temple Chairman Lakshmi Narayana Goud held at SNR Pushpa Anthipally and conveyed his best wishes to the bride and groom. The MLA also attended another wedding ceremony held at N Convention in Janwada and blessed the newly married couple. On the occasion, Bandari Lakshma Reddy wished all the couples a happy and prosperous married life.

International Women’s Day Celebrated at Medipally Police Station



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 8, (Indian chronicle):“International Women’s Day was celebrated at Medipally Police Station with a special program honoring women police personnel. The event was organized under the supervision of Medipally ACP Mohan, Medipally Police Station SHO R. Govinda Reddy, and Detective Inspector Election Reddy. Women constables and women

staff serving at the station were felicitated on the occasion. Speaking at the event, the officers stated that women are excelling in all fields and that there is nothing they cannot achieve if they are determined. They also highlighted the significant role women play in society as mothers, homemakers, and professionals. Sub-Inspectors and other police staff of Medipally Police Station participated in the program.

Municipal Authorities Crack Down on Street Vendors in Tandur



“Indian Chronicle Babar Tandur(March 8)““The Chairperson of Vikarabad Municipality, Neerja Bal Reddy, and Commissioner Madhusudhan Reddy, conducted a surprise inspection of the old municipal office premises in Tandur, Vikarabad district. They directed vegetable vendors to refrain from occupying roads and selling their produce, citing inconvenience caused to ambulances and two-wheeler riders.““The officials warned that failure to comply would result in action against the vendors. They emphasized that selling vegetables and fruits on roads was not acceptable and would lead to traffic problems.““During the inspection, Chairperson Neerja Bal Reddy and Commissioner Madhusudhan Reddy also visited various wards, educating residents about the importance of proper waste disposal and cleanliness. They urged residents to keep their surroundings clean and warned of fines for littering.““The officials also inspected the Sai Pur Road area, emphasizing the need to remove illegally constructed sheds on drains to prevent flooding during the rainy season. They directed the removal of waste and debris from the area.““The program was attended by Municipal Manager Narendra Reddy, Sanitary Inspectors Venkataiah and Umesh, Ward Officers Snehala Reddy and Tejaswini, Environmental Engineer Praveen Kumar Goud, and other municipal staff.

Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Participates in Bhoomi Pooja for New Building at Shesh Sai Nagar



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 8 (Indian Chronicle):“Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy participated in the Bhoomi Pooja ceremony for the construction of a new building at Shesh Sai Nagar in Uppal Division. The ceremony was held on Sunday, where Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest and formally inaugurated the Bhoomi Pooja for the new building.“Several local residents and colony members were present on the occasion, including Achchana Srinivas, Modugu Mohan Reddy, Narsayya, Bheem Nayak, Venkateshwara Rao, Shiva Shankar, Prabhakar, B. Rakesh Nayak (General Secretary), Srinivas, Narasimha Reddy, Hanumanth, Pawan Vanka, Suresh B. Yadav Reddy, Viplava Reddy, Mahesh, Sandeep, B. Veeraiah, and other members of Shesh Sai Nagar Colony.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy Attends Wedding Reception in Gachibowli



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 8, (Indian chronicle):“The wedding ceremony of the son of Suram Anil Kumar Reddy was held grandly on Sunday at Anvaya Convention in Gachibowli. Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy

attended the ceremony and extended his blessings to the newly married couple. Medchal-Malkajgiri District Congress Committee President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav also attended the event and conveyed his wishes to the bride and groom.

International Women’s Day is a global annual platform recognizing achievements in social, economic, cultural, and political fields

— Former Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 8 (Indian Chronicle):“On the occasion of International Women’s Day, former Uppal Division Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy participated in the Women’s Day celebrations organized on Sunday by the Prathibha Madiga Jagruthi Mahila Sangham, Indira Nagar, and the Lakshminarayana Colony Women’s Association,

Ramanthapur, in Uppal Division.“Speaking on the occasion, former corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said that International Women’s Day (IWD) is a global annual celebration that recognizes and honors the achievements of women in social, economic, cultural, and political fields. She stated that the day is dedicated to acknowledging the accomplishments of women across various sectors and advocating for gender equality.“Several leaders and members participated in the event, including Prathibha Madiga Jagruthi Mahila Sangham President Cheruku Jayamma, Vice President Ganjai Yadamma, Dappu Sunitha, Rapula Harika, Cheruku Lavanya, Dappu Mounika, Okkasu Shirisha, Nagole Bhagyalakshmi, Mamatha, Ganjai Shirisha, Division President Bakaram Laxman, A-Block SC Cell President Ramakrishna, Alugula Anil, Suresh, Thokata Nareesh, Mandal Tirupati, Gunde Raju, Maska Nagesh, Misala Jangaiah, Okkasu Bhanarasimha, Thokata Narasimha Rao, Punender, Nagaraj, Lakshminarayana Colony President Lucas, Lakshmi, Pushpa, Jaya, Jhansi, Nageswara Rao, Suren Reddy, Sudhakar, Namini Nagaraju, Anil, Niranjana, Misala Ramulu, Istarakula Srinu, Bhaskar Das, RTC Kumar, Pedda Prasad, Hari, Usha, Swathi, Vinod, Sita, Pushpalatha, Devi, Shirisha, Narmada, Mani, Anitha, Aliveelu, and others.

Salute to Women Power: Komaram Bheem District’s Women Leaders Lead the Path of Progress



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 8,“Women at the Helm: Komaram Bheem District Salutes Its Inspiring Women Leaders on International Women’s Day“Greetings on the occasion of International Women’s Day, dedicated to the women power of Komaram Bheem district.“Women leaders in Komaram Bheem district continue to play a vital role in governance, development, and public service, setting inspiring examples of leadership and dedication.“District Collector Mrs. K. Haritha has emerged as a guiding force for effective governance and development initiatives in the district.“District Superintendent of Police Mrs. Neethika Pant stands as a symbol of courage and commitment in maintaining law and order.“Asifabad MLA Mrs. Kova Lakshmi has been actively striving for the progress and development of the constituency.“Kagaznagar Sub-Collector Mrs. Shraddha Shukla is focusing on efficient administration, developmental activities, and ensuring accessible services to the public.“Kagaznagar Municipal Chairperson Mrs. Shaheen Sultana has been paying special attention to urban development and sanitation in the town.“Government Degree College Principal Mrs. K. Sridevi is paving the way for quality higher education and a brighter future for students.“Women empowerment in the district continues to move forward, with women leaders standing as role models in governance and social progress. Their leadership not only strengthens development but also inspires many other women to step forward and contribute to society.“Salute to Women Power! ??

HPV vaccine helps prevent cervical cancer: District Collector P. Praveenya.



“Sangareddy, correspondent Indian Chronicle: March 08: District Collector P. Praveenya said that HPV vaccine is very useful in preventing cervical cancer, which is a major health problem among women worldwide. The Collector inaugurated the HPV vaccination program at Sangareddy General Hospital on Sunday. “Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the HPV vaccine will be provided free of cost to girls under the age of 15 in the district at the general hospital and area hospitals. “The Medical and Health Department officials said that about 12,500 girls between the ages of 14 and 15 have been identified in the district. “It was revealed that all these girls



will be vaccinated free of cost during the 99-day program of the Public Administration-Progress Plan. “The Collector said that this vaccine will be provided in the presence of parents keeping in mind the health of the girls. He called on the people to cooperate in making this program a success for building a cancer-free society. “In this context, he urged everyone to take advantage of this vaccination program being undertaken by the government. “District Medical Health Officer Dr. “Vasantha Rao, Medical Health Department officials, staff and others participated in this program.

Kuchipudi Dance Performance Enchants at Uppal Mini Shilparamam



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 8 (Indian Chronicle): “As part of the weekend cultural programs held at Uppal Mini Shilparamam, a Kuchipudi dance performance by the disciples of Guru Sumedha Joshi from Srikara Kuchipudi Art Academy captivated the audience on Sunday. “The troupe presented a series of classical items including Vinayaka Kautam, Mooshika Vahana, Januta Shabdham, Maha Ganapathim, Pushpanjali, Krishnam Kalaya Sakhi, Garuda Gamana, Adigo Alladigo, Jatiswaram, Mandooka Shabdham, Takkavemi Manaku,



Namasshivayate, and Brahmanjali, receiving great appreciation from the spectators. “The performances were delivered by Nitya, Ramya, Udvita, Greeshma, Archana, Poojita, Neeraja, Sarvamayi, Spandana, Adhya Vikas, Jashvika, Sriakshmi, Deekshita Sri, and Chaitra, who impressed the audience with their graceful expressions and rhythmic movements. “Goodepu Narsinga Rao and Nikita, who attended the program as chief guests, congratulated the artists and appreciated their dedication to preserving the classical art form.

International Women's Day celebrations in Kothakot



“Former District Child Welfare Department Women Development Chairman Keshi Reddy Venkatravamma Chinna Reddy” Wanaparthy correspondent Indian Chronicle “International Women's Day was celebrated grandly under the auspices of former MPP of Kothakota Mandal Guntha Mounika Mallesh. At the invitation of former MPP Mounika Mallesh, the chief guest of this program was former Child Welfare Department Women Development Chairman of Wanaparthy Zilla Parishad, former ZPTC K. Reddy Venkatravamma Chinnareddy. The program was attended by women from various mandals. On this auspicious occasion, former MPP Guntha Mounika Mallesh established a voluntary organization called Savridaya Seva Samiti as an occasion to celebrate Women's Day. On this occasion, former MPP Mounika Mallesh speaking in her turn He has a duty to help the orphans and the poor. Service programs through voluntary organizations Everyone said that they wanted to take it up May blessings be upon you on this occasion. Said. On this occasion, Mounika Mallesh



Former ZPTC of Chinnambavi Mandal, Garini Venkatravamma Chinna Reddy with a shawl Honored. On this occasion, former MPP and Chinnambavi Mandal ZPTC speaking on Women's Day Occasional women's “Greetings, there is no Sri in creation. “Goddess Bhudevi, Goddess Saraswati, who said that there is no life, Lakshmi Devi, Jhansi Lakshmi Bavi, Sarojani Devi, Many women have been role models throughout history. In today's society that we have stood Women's development and awareness development It is a pleasure to be a part of all walks of life. Wanaparthy says women are at the forefront He said on this occasion that since the formation of the district, our district collectors and SPs have been women and have effectively handled the responsibilities of good administration and that women should participate in the development of the country. At the invitation of former Kothakota MPP Guntha Mounika Mallesh, the former ZPTC of Chinnambavi Mandal was felicitated at the International Women's Day program held at the Kothakota (PRB) Function Hall.

Happy International Women's Day to the women of Ammayi Palli village



Chinnambavi mandal, village sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud said that the Telangana state government is moving forward towards empowerment with a determined initiative by the Telangana Chief Minister Nallamalla Tigar CM Revanth Reddy to make one crore women in the state millionaires so that women in the state can achieve progress in all fields and become self-sufficient. It is International Women's Day Celebrated with great pomp All over Telangana state on the occasion International Women's Day Grand celebration In the days to come, women will be financially, Socially, politically, educationally, To achieve development in terms of employment Village Sarpanch Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud said Appealed on the occasion. Women Congress government for welfare This is the occasion to commit to work For the women of Telangana State, Chinnambavi For Mandal women, Ammai Palli village for village women Sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud International Women's Day Greetings.

“Ammayapalli village sarpanch Madhagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud “Wanaparthy Correspondent Indian Chronicle “Speaking at Ammayi Palli village under

CM Revanth Reddy Inaugurates Renovated Telangana Legislative Council Building



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 8, “Renovated Telangana Legislative Council Building Opened by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy “Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy inaugurated the renovated Telangana Legislative Council building on the occasion of a special

programme held on the Assembly premises. “The event was attended by several public representatives and officials. MLC Dande Vittal also participated in the inauguration ceremony. “The renovated building is expected to provide improved facilities for the functioning of the Legislative Council and strengthen administrative efficiency.

Empower Girls with Education and Awareness: Chairperson Shaheen Sultana



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 8, “Kagaznagar: Municipal Chairperson Shaheen Sultana said that women should excel in all fields and play an active role in the development of society. “International Women's Day celebrations were held with great enthusiasm at Krishnaveni Talent School under the leadership of the PRU Telangana State Teachers' Union, with Mrs. Anuradha Bai presiding over the programme. “Municipal Chairperson Shaheen Sultana and Municipal Vice-Chairperson Dr. Anita attended the event as chief guests. “Speaking on the occasion, they emphasized that women should achieve success in every field and pay special attention to their personal health. They also said that girls should be educated from the school level about legal awareness, health, family values, and the impor-

tance of higher education. “They further stated that teachers should guide and mentor students so that they can reach greater heights in various fields. “On the occasion, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson were felicitated by the teachers. Women teachers working in different schools were also honoured. Prizes were distributed to winners of various games and cultural activities conducted for women teachers. “Among those who participated in the programme were Samatha, Sujatha, Gangabhavani, Anuradha Bai, Vijaya Nirmala, Sridevi, Mumtaz Begum, Sunita, Kavitha, Bharathi, Nagarani, Anni Rani, Vijayalakshmi, Vanitha, Etukuri Srinivasa Rao, Sunarker Anil Kumar, Enaganti Bikshapathi, Jadi Devaji, Pattipaka Shruvan Kumar, Ratan Gain, Indarapu Prakash, Sambasiva Rao, Munjampalli Ramesh, Pola Dasari Ramchander, Lalaji, and several teachers.

Cantonment land encroachment



“Secunderabad Cantonment. March. 8 (Indian Chronicle): “Government lands are seen empty.. Illegals are resorting to encroachment. They are manipulating records with the help of revenue employees and cantonment officials. A person has encroached on about 250 yards of cantonment land worth crores of rupees belonging to the cantonment board, opposite Spencer Supermarket in the sixth ward of the cantonment board, and has kept it under their control. Three months ago, the Cantonment Board officials, who realized that this land was a target for encroachment, demolished the structures that had appeared on the land and erected a perimeter wall around the land. They also erected a warning board on it stating that this land belonged to the Cantonment Board and the Cantonment authorities took possession of the land. However, a person along with some of the locals occupied the land again and built two ghoris (Graves) on it night after night and painted them. The next morning the locals were surprised to see the two newly appeared ghoris (Graves) on the cantonment land and informed the Cantonment Board authorities. When they

did not take action, they brought it to the attention of the higher officials. When they did not take action, the locals said that they brought it to the attention of the CEO. Moreover, the said encroachment owner not only built ghoris but also occupied the road outside and rented it out to pushcart traders, due to which traffic problems are being faced in this area. However, locals are complaining that some Cantonment Board officials are not taking action on this land as it has changed hands in large numbers. Many are questioning the Board officials, who are immediately reaching there and subjecting the poor to these bonds when they are building houses on their own land by borrowing money. The Cantonment Board officials should immediately respond and remove the newly constructed ghoris (Graves). Locals many morning walkers, and the Board officials are urging the police to take strict action against those who are creating panic and creating fear in the people by constructing ghoris. In addition, many are requesting that an open gym be set up to prevent the land from being encroached upon. Many are asking why the officials who took encroachments in the cemetery are not paying attention to this.



India-U.S. ties not criteria for Delhi-Moscow relations: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov



GNS News Agency, March 8

Russia fully respects India's national interests and the independent foreign policy being pursued by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, asserting that India's ties with the United States or any other country cannot be a benchmark for New Delhi-Moscow ties. Mr. Lavrov, who addressed the UN General Assembly (UNGA) shortly before External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's speech at the high-level General Debate, said India and Russia share a "particularly privileged strategic partnership". "These situations that might arise between India and the United States or India and any other country, I can't consider them a criteria for relations between India and Russia," he said at a press conference on Saturday. Mr. Lavrov was responding to a question on India's continued imports of Russian oil despite U.S. pressure on countries to reduce such purchases, and how Moscow views its ties with New Delhi in this context. "We have full respect for the national interests of India, full respect for the foreign policy that (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi is carrying out to promote these national interests," he said, noting that India and Russia maintain regular high-level contacts. Mr. Lavrov cited the recent meeting between PM Modi and President Vladimir Putin at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in China. He added that President Putin is expected to visit New Delhi in December. "We have a very extensive bilateral agenda — trade, military, technical cooperation, finance, humanitarian matters, healthcare, high tech, artificial intelligence — and of course, close coordination at the international level, within the SCO,

BRICS and bilaterally," the Russian leader said. Mr. Lavrov had met with Mr. Jaishankar for bilateral discussions on the margins of the 80th session of the UNGA and had also participated in the annual meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations, chaired by India in its capacity as the incoming Chair for 2026. Mr. Lavrov spoke about bilateral visits and regular exchanges between him and Mr. Jaishankar. "I'm not even asking what is going to happen to our trade relations or oil? I don't ask our Indian colleagues this. They are perfectly capable of making these decisions for themselves," he said. Referring to Mr. Jaishankar's remarks on oil imports, Mr. Lavrov said the External Affairs Minister had clearly stated that if the "U.S. wants to sell its oil to us, we are prepared to discuss the terms for this, but what we buy from other countries, not the United States, but from Russia or other countries, that's our own business, and that has nothing to do with the Indian-U.S. agenda". "That is a very worthy response," he said, adding that it shows that India, like Turkey, has "self-respect". In response to another question, Mr. Lavrov stressed that the economic partnership between Russia and India is secure. "There is no threat to this relationship. And if somebody does do something of that nature, the Indian Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, have said it loud and clear, India chooses its own partners," he said. "If the US has proposals on how to enrich bilateral trade between the U.S. and India, they are prepared to discuss the terms for that, whatever terms the U.S. might put forth. But when it comes to trade, investment, economic, military, technological and other relations between India and third states, it is something that India will discuss only with those states in question," Mr. Lavrov said. The Trump administration has imposed 50% tariffs on India, including 25% for its purchases of Russian oil, with New Delhi facing among the highest levies imposed by Washington. The Trump administration has imposed an additional 25% tariff on India as a penalty for its purchases of Russian oil, taking the total levies imposed on the country by the US to 50%, among the highest in the world. India has been maintaining that its energy procurement is driven by national interest and market dynamics. Earlier, Mr. Jaishankar had posted on X about his meeting with Mr. Lavrov: "Good conversation with FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia on the sidelines of #UNGA80. Useful discussion on bilateral ties, the Ukraine conflict and developments in the Middle East."

UN is gridlocked and needs reform, says Jaishankar at United Nations General Assembly



GNS News Agency, March 8

The United Nations is "gridlocked" and in dire need of reform, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, while delivering the government's address to the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Saturday. During his speech, Mr. Jaishankar criticised Pakistan for being a hub of terror, highlighted some of the challenges faced by the world today, including tariff uncertainty, and said India was ready to take on greater responsibilities at the UN. Conflicts, a lack of resources and terrorism had left the UN "gridlocked", according to the Minister. The diminishing ability of the UN to forge common ground was eroding the belief in multilateralism, he said. "Central to the erosion of the UN's credibility has been resistance to reform," Mr. Jaishankar said. He called for historical wrongs done to Africa at the global body to be redressed and for the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India was ready to assume greater responsibilities, he said. The Minister

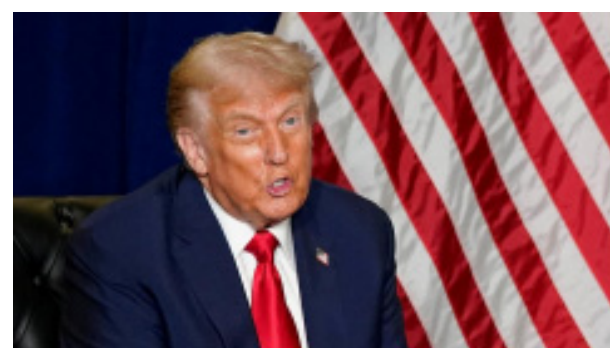
highlighted India's role in UN peacekeeping, efforts in fighting piracy in the Arabian Sea and the promotion of digitisation as core activities of India's foreign policy. Mr. Jaishankar briefly presented a summary of the UN's history and contemporary challenges, which included the conflicts in West Asia and Ukraine, slow progress on the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and challenges with energy and food security. He also pointed to tariff volatility and uncertain market access as current challenges. "De-risking is a growing compulsion, whether from limited sources of supply or over-dependence on a particular market," he said. Many countries, including India, have been navigating tariffs imposed by the U.S. administration of Donald Trump. Without naming Pakistan, Mr. Jaishankar said India's neighbour had become "an epicentre of terrorism". "The UN's designated lists of terrorists are replete with its nationals," he said. India had exercised its right to defend its citizens against terrorism, in its response to the Pahalgam terror attacks of April 22, Mr. Jaishankar said. He called for the financing of terrorism to be choked and for relentless pressure on the terror ecosystem. On Gaza and Ukraine, the Minister called on nations that could engage both sides to the conflict to step up and search for solutions. "India calls for an end to hostilities and will support any initiative that will help restore peace," he said. Atmanirbharta (self-reliance), atma raksha (self-defence) and atma vishwas (self-confidence) were the three concepts that guided India's engagement with the contemporary world, the Minister said. "Bharat will always maintain its freedom of choice and will always be a voice of the Global South," he said, presumably referring to pressure on India to align with various blocs in the conduct of its foreign policy.

Trump to meet with top four congressional leaders as government shutdown risk looms

GNS News Agency, March 8

The meeting involving House Speaker Mike Johnson and Senate Majority Leader John Thune as well as House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer was confirmed Saturday (September 27, 2025) by a White House official and two other people familiar with the planning. They were granted anonymity to discuss a meeting that has not been announced. "President Trump has once again agreed to a meeting in the Oval Office. As we have repeatedly said, Democrats will meet anywhere, at any time and with anyone to negotiate a bipartisan spending agreement that meets the needs of the American people," Mr. Schumer and Mr. Jeffries said in a joint statement on Saturday (September 27, 2025) night. "We are resolute in our determination to avoid a government shutdown and address the Republican healthcare crisis. Time is running out." The parties have been in a standoff for days as Democrats, namely in the Senate, have refused to offer the necessary votes to pass a funding measure that would keep the government open beyond

Democrats had secured a meeting with Mr. Trump until Republican leaders intervened and the President called it off. But Mr. Schumer spoke privately with Mr. Thune on Friday (September 26, 2025), pushing the majority leader to get a meeting with Mr. Trump scheduled because of the approaching funding deadline, according to an aide for Mr. Schumer. "As rank-and-file Democrats begin to question their leadership's unsustainable position, Sen. Schumer is clearly getting nervous," Ryan Wrasse, a spokesman for Mr. Thune, responded Saturday night. "There's an easy way out, and they'll get a chance to take it next week." Democrats, believing they have leverage, have insisted on key health care provisions in exchange for their votes. They want an extension of subsidies that help low- and middle-income earners purchase insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Democrats are also insisting on reversing cuts to Medicaid that were included in the GOP's signature tax measure earlier this year. Republicans say those demands are nonstarters and that they are willing to have a conversation with Democrats on those issues separate



from government funding talks. The GOP is asking for a straight extension of current funding for seven weeks. Earlier in the week, Mr. Johnson acknowledged he had encouraged Mr. Trump not to meet with the Democratic leaders. "He and I talked about it at length yesterday and the day before. I said, look, when they get their job done, once they do the basic governing work of keeping the government open, as President, then you can have a meeting with him," Mr. Johnson said on the Mike & McCarty Show in his home state of Louisiana. "Of course, it might be productive at that point, but right now, this is just a waste of his time." And Mr. Thune, R-S.D., had said earlier in the week that he "did have a conversation with the President" and offered his opinion on the meeting, which he declined to disclose. "But I think the President speaks for himself, and I think he came to the conclusion that meeting would not be productive," Mr. Thune said. Democrats have expressed confidence that voters would blame Mr. Trump and Republicans for any disruptions in federal services, even though that's not at all guaranteed. Republicans, on the other hand, had been heading toward the work week with plans in the Senate to keep showcasing Democrats' refusal to agree to the stopgap measure, while the House GOP planned to stay away from Washington in a show of their own unwillingness to engage Democratic alternatives. That too, came with potential political drawbacks for House Republicans, as Democrats hammered them for being, as Mr. Jeffries said, "on vacation."

Airstrikes, shooting kill at least 44 people in Gaza as Israel ignores demands for ceasefire



GNS News Agency, March 8

Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least 44 people across Gaza, health officials said on Saturday, as international pressure grows for a ceasefire but Israel's leader remains defiant about continuing the war. Among the dead were nine from the same family in a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp, according to staff at Al-Awda Hospital, where the bodies were brought. Five others were killed when a strike hit a tent for the displaced, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the dead. Israel's army said they were not aware of anyone being killed by gunfire on Saturday (September 27, 2025) in southern Gaza, and didn't provide immediate comment about the airstrikes.

The director of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City told The Associated Press that medical teams there were concerned about Israeli "tanks approaching the vicinity of the hospital," restricting access to the facility where 159 patients are being treated. "The bombardment has not stopped for a single moment," Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmiya said. He added that 14 premature babies were treated in incubators in Helou Hospital, though the head of neonatal intensive care there, Dr. Nasser Bulbul, has said that facility's main gate was closed because of drones flying over the building. Netanyahu and Trump scheduled to meet as pressure grows.

The attacks came hours after a defiant Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza. Mr. Netanyahu's words, aimed as much at his increasingly divided domestic audience as the global one, began after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the U.N. General Assembly hall en masse, on Friday (September 26, 2025) morning as he began speaking. International pressure on Israel to end the war is increasing, as is Israel's isolation, with a growing list of countries deciding recently to recognise Palestinian statehood — something Israel rejects.

Countries have been lobbying U.S. President Donald Trump to press Israel for a ceasefire. On Friday (Septem-

ber 26, 2025), Mr. Trump told reporters on the White House lawn that he believes the U.S. is close to achieving a deal on easing fighting in Gaza that "will get the hostages back" and "end the war." Mr. Trump and Mr. Netanyahu are scheduled to meet Monday, and Trump said on social media Friday that "very inspired and productive discussions" and "intense negotiations" about Gaza are ongoing with countries in the region. Yet, Israel is pressing ahead with another major ground operation in Gaza City, which experts say is experiencing famine. More than 3,00,000 people have fled, but up to 7,00,000 are still there, many because they can't afford to relocate. The strikes Saturday (September 27) morning demolished a house in Gaza City's Tufah neighborhood, killing at least 11 people, more than half of them women and children, according to the Al-Ahly Hospital where the bodies were brought. Four other people were killed when an airstrike hit their homes in the Shati refugee camp, according to Shifa hospital. Six other Palestinians were killed by Israeli gunfire while seeking aid in southern and central Gaza, according to Nasser and Al Awda hospitals where the bodies were brought. Israel's Army did not immediately respond about the airstrikes or the gunfire. Hospitals and health clinics in Gaza City are on the brink of collapse. Nearly two weeks into the offensive, two clinics have been destroyed by airstrikes, two hospitals shut down after being damaged and others are barely functioning, with medicine, equipment, food and fuel in short supply. Many patients and staff have been forced to flee hospitals, leaving behind only a few doctors and nurses to tend to children in incubators or other patients too ill to move. On Friday, aid group Doctors Without Borders said it was forced to suspend activities in Gaza City amid an intensified Israeli offensive. The group said Israeli tanks were less than half a mile from its health care facilities and the escalating attacks have created an "unacceptable level of risk" for its staff. Meanwhile, the food situation in the north has also worsened, as Israel has halted aid deliveries through its crossing into northern Gaza since September 12 and has increasingly rejected UN requests to bring supplies from southern Gaza into the north, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 65,000 people and wounded more than 167,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants, but says women and children make up around half the fatalities. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, but UN agencies and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.

How Israel used Azure to monitor Palestinians | Explained



GNS News Agency, March 8

The story so far: In August, a joint investigation by The Guardian, +972 Magazine and Local Call revealed that Israel's military intelligence unit had built a cloud-based surveillance system using Microsoft's Azure to store audio recordings of Palestinians' phone calls. Unit 8200, which is considered Israel's equivalent to the U.S.'s National Security Agency, was reportedly uploading "audio files of millions of calls by Palestinians in the occupied territories" into a dedicated Azure environment.

What was Microsoft's initial response?

Microsoft's initial response downplayed any wrongdoing. The company said it had "found no evidence" that its tools were used to harm civilians and claimed to be unaware of how the cloud project was being used. But following the expose, the software giant launched an internal review. And on September 25, the company announced that its review had "found evidence that supports elements" of the reporting and that it had "ceased and disabled a set of services" to the Israeli defence unit involved.

How did this partnership begin?

The project was hatched in late 2021 when Unit 8200's commander, Yossi Sarial, met with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in Seattle. Mr. Sarial pitched to move a huge portion of Israel's collected intelligence data onto Azure. Mr. Nadella reportedly agreed to a proof-of-concept plan and assigned a dedicated team of Microsoft engineers to work closely with Unit 8200 to build a secure, custom Azure deployment accessible from military bases. In Microsoft's internal view, this partnership was treated as "critical" to the company and even a "powerful brand moment" for Azure. The military's reason was simple: the existing Israeli data centres could not hold vast volumes of intercepted phone traffic. Under Mr. Sarial's tenure, Unit 8200 had dramatically expanded its surveillance and integrated multiple databases of Palestinians. Previously, the unit could keep the calls of only some tens of thousands of individuals on its own servers. By moving to Azure, it suddenly had "infinite" storage. In effect, once the cloud project was approved, Unit 8200 could funnel nearly all phone intercepts into Azure and scale its watchlist from thousands of calls per day to millions.

How did the surveillance work?

The mechanics of the system hinged on cloud computing. Essentially, Unit 8200's field listening posts and telecom intercepts were piped into a dedicated Azure "instance". Microsoft and IDF engineers built a segregated Azure environment so that data from Gaza and the West Bank could be uploaded continuously and stored long-term. Because Azure offers elastic capacity and advanced AI tools, the unit could automate analysis on this content. According to published reports, all intercepted voice calls and texts were transcribed and translated in the cloud. Advanced search indexes were then used to analyse the data to quickly decipher patterns. In short, Azure acted as both an enormous archive and an AI-driven search engine. The Guardian's investigation emphasised that the IDF's calls database was kept in "a customised and segregated area within the Azure platform," allowing it to be "analysed using

AI-driven techniques". This kind of setup is enabled by modern cloud features that are powered by multi-modal AI that can turn any data into searchable text. Once a phone call is converted by speech-to-text, it is treated like any document. In practice, such tools would allow an intelligence officer to input a query and quickly retrieve relevant conversation snippets or even link them to satellite imagery.

Where did phone usage data come from?

Crucially, none of this would have worked if Palestinian networks were independent. While, under the 1995 Oslo accords, Israel recognised Palestinians' right to build and operate their own communications systems, including mobile networks, in practice, Israel retained control over almost all telecommunications infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank. That means virtually every Palestinian cellphone call and data packet passes through Israeli-controlled switches. As The Guardian's report notes, "thanks to the control [Israel] exerts over Palestinian telecommunications infrastructure, Israel has long intercepted phone calls in the occupied territories". Without an independent mobile backbone, Palestinians must use cellular services that are extensions of Israeli operators, so mass monitoring of local networks has long been routine. Multiple analyses stress that Israel's continued monopoly or de facto control of Palestinian internet and phone lines violates the spirit of Oslo's "separate infrastructure" provisions. Israeli bureaucrats often justify such surveillance on security grounds, but rights advocates warn that it amounts to mass spying.

Will the surveillance stop?

Microsoft's Azure was not the only cloud in use. Earlier investigations revealed that the Israeli military also tapped Amazon Web Services (AWS) for some of its data storage. Moreover, the IDF has a broader cloud strategy: it signed a \$1.2 billion deal, nicknamed "Project Nimbus", under which both Google Cloud and Amazon provide computing and AI services to the military. Even IBM subsidiary Red Hat has supplied cloud infrastructure, and Palantir, a U.S. defence tech firm, offers AI targeting tools to Israel. In short, besides Microsoft, almost all major U.S. tech firms have become entwined with Israel's digital war effort. What this means is that cutting off Azure does not leave Unit 8200 defenceless; it will simply shift workloads to AWS, Google or a combination of on-premises servers.

Iran slams US, Europe as nuclear deal sanctions set to resume

Tehran: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the United States is the main obstacle to reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, as UN sanctions lifted under the pact were set to be reimposed later in the day. Speaking at Tehran airport after returning from the UN General Assembly in New York, Pezeshkian said France, Britain, and Germany — who triggered the "snapback" mechanism — had been told of Iran's readiness to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency during his visit to the UN, Xinhua news agency reported. "The United States always attempts to prevent the achievement of an agreement by raising fresh pretexts," he said. "The reality is that the United States cannot tolerate a strong Iran and wants to weaken our country." Last month, the three European powers invoked the snapback clause of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), restoring UN sanctions that had been lifted in exchange for limits on Tehran's nuclear program. Ahead of the measures taking effect, Iran recalled its ambassadors to the three capitals.

‘Ek darr sa lagta hai’: A year after family of five was found dead in South Delhi flat, unease lingers in locality



For several minutes, neighbours knocked repeatedly on the door of flat C-4 in Chauhan Mohalla. No one answered. Flies swarmed around the entrance, and a strong, foul smell lingered near the main door. It was around 9 am on September 28 last year — a Saturday morning like any other in Rangpuri village, in Southwest Delhi's Vasant Kunj. But inside C-4, something was amiss.

In the flat lived Heeralal Sharma (46) and his four daughters. They were tenants, renting the modest two-room space on the third floor of a residential building in the narrow lanes of Rangpuri. The flat was tucked into a corner of the third floor in a four-storey building. There were seven units on each floor. All were rented, except for one on the ground floor where the caretaker lived with his family. Most residents worked as drivers, factory workers, and shop assistants; some also worked at the Delhi Airport around 8 km away. Concerned over the strong stench, neighbours knocked a few more times on the door of C4 before alerting the caretaker. He contacted the building's owner, who lived nearby. Soon, the police were called. With the door locked from the inside, police had to break it open — and made a grim discovery. Heeralal and his four physically challenged daughters — Neetu (26), Nikki (24), Neeru (23), and Nidhi (20) — were found dead in two separate rooms. There were no signs of struggle. The four women were lying on the same bed. Heeralal was found in another room, seemingly asleep at the time of death. Their bodies were in a highly decomposed state.

vasant kunj The flat was on the third floor of a residential building in the narrow lanes of Rangpuri (Express) Police suspected it was a mass suicide, possibly after consuming a poisonous substance mixed into cold drinks and sweets. They found four packets of 'sulphas' tablets, five empty glasses, and a spoon near the bodies of the women. A red kalaya (sacred thread) tied around their waists led police to initially suspect that certain rituals may have been performed prior to their deaths. "The scene in the room reminded us of the 2018 Burari deaths, where 11 members of the same family died under mysterious circumstances," said a police officer who was among the first team members to reach the spot after the PCR call. However, investigators later ruled out any occult angle. "We did not find evidence of occult practices being performed... The deaths appear to have stemmed from Heeralal's depression, reportedly due to the condition of his daughters," the officer said. For nearly 28 years, Heeralal had worked as a carpenter at the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC) in Vasant Kunj. He would earn around Rs 25,000 a month. But after his wife died of cancer in 2023, police said Heeralal went into shock. "He had to take care of his daughters, which also forced him to quit his job last January," the officer said. "With no income and no savings, he was struggling. We believe it was a suicide pact — he convinced his daughters to consume the poison. That is perhaps why he bought some sweets and cold drinks, to make the bitter taste of the poison a little milder," the officer added. The bodies were sent for post-mortem, forensic examinations were conducted, and statements of Heeralal's brothers, family members, relatives and friends — those he would often talk to — were recorded. Police said none of

them ever thought that he would take such a step, although they did reveal that he had been struggling. The flat, meanwhile, was cleaned with chemicals, and crucial evidence was collected. Police sealed the premises and began inquest proceedings. No foul play was suspected, though the exact circumstances of the deaths remained unclear. A year later: New tenants, but questions remain. When The Indian Express visited Rangpuri a year later, the broken, narrow roads leading to Chauhan Mohalla — where this three-storey building is located about a kilometre from the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway — remained unchanged. A board with the words, 'To Let One Room and Two Room Set' with a mobile number of the owner hung on the main gate. Opposite the building, a multi-storey complex that houses shops like a medical store, a general store, and a hair salon were shut. A nearby vegetable vendor explained, "This market usually remains closed in the afternoon." The maroon paint on the main gate, as well as on the doors and windows of the flats in this building, remained unchanged. However, Flat C-4 was no longer sealed. Several pairs of dusty, mud-covered shoes lay scattered outside. A man, around 35, opened the door after a knock. He appeared to have just woken up. Inside, a few more men were seen sleeping. "We've been staying here for the past two months," he said, adding that they were from Nashik, Maharashtra, and were employed at a construction site. Asked if they knew anything about the incident that happened in the house a year ago, he replied they didn't and shut the door. Next door, Flat C-3 was locked. No one answered despite repeated knocking. Hearing the knocks, a middle-aged woman living in the building stepped out from another flat. "Kaun rehta hai in dono makaano mein humein nahi pata. Lekin yeh dono hi makaan kafi dino se band the. Kuch dino se ab dono mein koi reh raha hai. (We don't know who lives in these flats. But these houses remained vacant for many months after the incident. Some people recently moved into both flats)," she said.

When asked about the deaths, she hesitated. "No one wants to talk about it," she said quietly. Another woman, who wished to remain anonymous, came out to join her. She said, "Hum log aaj bhi 7 baje ke baad ghar se bahar nahi aate... ek darr sa lagta hai (We still don't go out after 7 pm. We feel a bit scared)." A neighbour passing by remarked, "Dar ki kya baat hai? Jo hona tha ho gaya (What is there to be scared of? Whatever had to happen, happened)." The second woman recalled Heeralal and his family. "I shifted here in 2021, and aunty used to talk to us," the neighbour said. "She took care of all the daughters, while uncle would go to work. A relative who lived with his family nearby would sometimes come to meet them." "They were quiet... But after aunty's death, the family went into shock. Uncle's youngest daughter had been going to school but stopped. All four of them were affected by some physical disabilities." She said C-4 was unsealed almost four months after the incident. "The owner performed rituals in the house and began looking for tenants. Two people rented the house but left within a few days. Then a couple moved in, but they also shifted elsewhere within a week. Now, we've heard that some men have been staying there." The woman said many residents moved out after the tragedy and few of the original tenants remain. Most families now living on the third floor are new. Caretaker Sonu, who lives on the ground floor, confirmed that the flat was reopened after the police investigation concluded. A senior police officer said: "Unlike the Burari case, circumstantial evidence suggested there was no occult practice involved. The glasses and drinks indicated they consumed 'sulphas' tablets and died in their sleep. The post-mortem reports confirmed death due to poisoning, but the actual cause can only be confirmed after the viscera reports, which are still awaited, arrive." While the police probe suggests a suicide pact, some still believe the deaths were the result of occult practices gone wrong. Until the viscera test results arrive, the true cause behind this family's tragedy remains unsolved.

Reclaiming the human in the age of AI



Artificial intelligence is advancing at a breathtaking pace, reshaping how we work, learn, connect — and even how we feel. It can now mirror our moods, preferences, and personalities with uncanny precision. For those battling loneliness or anxiety, AI tools can offer comfort — sometimes even the illusion of companionship. Recently, after a tragedy, it was discovered that a young adult had confided only in a chatbot. But being non-human, the bot lacked the capacity to escalate or seek real help. In workplaces too, cobots — collaborative robots — work alongside humans, blurring the lines between machine efficiency and human presence. Capacity for connection

Yet as digital intimacy deepens, something profoundly human is fading: our capacity for connection, presence, and emotional nuance. After all, it's easier — and often more convenient — to give instructions to a machine than to engage in the unpredictable richness of human interaction. We live in the most digitally connected era in history, yet emotional distress, loneliness, and anxiety are on the rise. Among the affluent, wealth increasingly buys insulation — not just comfort. Insulation from unpredictability, discomfort, and sometimes, from people themselves. While therapy is more accepted and pets are embraced as companions, many are now substituting human relationships with digital "partners". Chatbots — once purely functional — are emotionally responsive, always available, always agreeable, always validating. They never confront. And slowly, they begin to rationalise wrong as right.

It sounds ideal. But what's the hidden cost of such perfectly tailored convenience?

Imagine your AI — let's call her Mary — knows your moods, fears, and wounds. She becomes your therapist, coach, and best friend on demand. She never interrupts. Never disagrees. Never challenges you. No friction. No judgment. No accountability. Tempting? Absolutely. Dangerous? Undeniably. Mary can help you feel seen, but never truly known. Her warmth is synthetic. Her memory, conditional. If the app crashes or the company pivots, she vanishes. No presence. No shared moments. No legacy. It's comfort without discomfort. Stability without depth. Support without growth. Often, Mary's cultural lens is not even your own. Yet we lean on her, mistaking convenience for care. That is emotional stagnation disguised as support. In India and across Asia, we have long turned to Gurus and Gurumas

— formal or informal guides — who help us think deeply, step onto the balcony, and reflect. But what we often need even more are conversations with those closest to us, complemented by formal support when required. One of my mother's batch mates once introduced me to Wayne Dyer's No-Limit Person, reminding me not to become a prisoner of my own rigid rules. The unconditional love and guidance from my grandparents left an indelible stamp on my journey — something irreplaceable. Only an illusion AI companionship feeds the illusion that we can fully control our emotional world. Its tone and rhythm feel so real that we forget it's only a bot. But resilience is forged in the messiness of human relationships — arguments, silences, reconciliation, and the willingness to show up despite discomfort. To love, to care, and to be loved and cared for are fundamental human needs. When heartbreak or illness strikes, can Mary hold your hand? Cry with you? Sit in silence and speak volumes? Even humans stumble in such moments. But they show up. Flawed. Fumbling. Real. Not every interaction is easy. Some are fleeting. Some painful. Many teach us lessons we are not ready for. But this unpredictability is what makes connection vibrant. We don't need to reject AI. We need to ensure it enhances — not replaces — our humanity. Even at home, my wife jokes that thanks to ChatGPT, I now direct some of my constant instructions toward the bot instead of her. Balance is maintained! So let AI handle the calendars, reminders, and efficiency hacks. But let humans hold the sacred spaces that technology cannot touch: Real conversations, not scripted empathy; physical presence, not digital gestures; emotional courage, not engineered comfort; undivided attention, not distracted multitasking. Connection is not a service. It is a shared human experience — messy, awkward, joyful, painful, and deeply meaningful. True relationships are divine blessings, helping us live fully each day. Reweaving the threads we can reclaim what's slipping away in simple ways: share meals without screens. Walk, cook, or laugh together. Visit gardens, temples, or cafés. Speak honestly, even when messy. Let office coffee corners spark warmth. One of my cherished gifts was a "Caring & Sharing" box with two packs of nuts — one to keep, one to pass on. A small gesture, but it sparked a chain of joy. Research supports this: an MIT study found that using ChatGPT after thinking through a problem — not before — enhances originality. Had I started this article with AI, it would have been generic. Instead, I wrote first, then refined. In the end, we still need people. We live in a paradox: hyper-connected, yet emotionally isolated. Mary, your AI confidant, may know your preferences. But as Cornell research shows, her responses are often homogenized and culturally detached. She will never feel your pain. She won't sit by your bedside. She won't make you tea. She won't hold your hand in your final moments. A loved one might. A friend can. A human will. Perhaps it's time for a gentle AI detox. A reset. A return. To people. To presence. To touch. Any takers? Many. Enough givers? Not yet. But each of us can begin — by caring, sharing, listening, and showing up a little more each day. With acceptance. Without expectation.

Huge protest by job aspirants throws life out of gear in Dharwad

A huge protest for employment by hundreds of job aspirants who are demanding steps to fill vacancies threw life out of gear in Dharwad on Thursday for hours. As the students blocked the arterial junction Jubilee Circle as part of their protest, it took nearly four hours for the police to restore normality. The protest was staged under the aegis of All Karnataka State Students Association. The protestors, mainly job aspirants from various coaching institutes in Dharwad, marched from Sri Nagar, covered the College Road before congregating at Jubilee Circle, where they stood firm for hours to register their protest. They raised slogans against the State government for failing to fill vacant posts in various departments.

Considering the huge number, the Traffic Police diverted vehicles at key junctions. However, vehicular movement across the city was disrupted and also the movement of public transport buses as the protestors blocked the junction and staged a dharna. They blocked movement of all vehicles barring an ambulance. Addressing the job aspirants, State president of All the Karnataka State Students Association Kanth Kumar highlighted the problems being faced by job aspirants, who get coaching in various centres for competitive examinations, because of inordinate delays by the State government in completing the recruitment process. The other speakers pointed out that the recruitment process for constable and sub-inspectors posts has been stalled for over four years, while FDA and SDA posts have



remained vacant for over seven years. Pointing out that the delay has adversely affected job aspirants as many of them have now crossed the upper age limit, they urged the State government to give minimum age relaxation of five years. Although Police Commissioner N. Shashikumar tried to pacify the protesting aspirants and prevent them from marching to the Deputy Commissioner's office, the protestors were in no mood to listen to him. The protestors subsequently marched to the Deputy Commissioner's office to submit a memorandum. As a precautionary measure, the police had made elaborate bandobast along the route of the protest march and at the Deputy Commissioner's office.

Acetaminophen | Spectacle of blame

Every political story needs a villain and a vehicle. In the latest 'Make America Healthy Again' edition, the vehicle is maternal behaviour: what pregnant mothers take, what they eat, what they fail to suspect. In a previous era, they were blamed for overlooking vaccines; now they are being blamed for taking acetaminophen, aka paracetamol, during their pregnancy. But between the vaccine and paracetamol narratives, the strategy has been to reframe autism as a preventable harm caused by bad choices, and to marginalise social determinants and advances in genetics and leave mothers to carry the blame. Acetaminophen has, of course, been made the villain. For a century now, this drug has been kept near bassinets and on bedside tables, and has been trusted to deal with fever and ordinary pain when stronger versions of other drugs would have been reckless. Pharmacology texts say it blunts prostaglandin signalling in the central nervous system and nudges receptors that modulate pain. While this picture remains incomplete and the subject of ongoing research, acetaminophen has been reliable in its effects against pain and temperature. Both researchers and regulators have said for many years that in excess, acetaminophen can also maim the liver.



ture wars to a podium and asked to confess to something that can't possibly be proven: that it "causes" autism when used during pregnancy. Scientists and obstetric groups have already objected to this accusation. The World Health Organization has publicly repudiated it. Some observational studies, but especially an analysis published in JAMA Psychiatry in 2019, reported that higher in-utero levels were statistically associated with later diagnoses such as autism. A consensus statement in Nature Reviews Endocrinology in 2021 urged a "precautionary" approach to the drug. However, these and some other papers set out associations, not proof of causation, and admitted to being vulnerable to confounding by the very illnesses acetaminophen treats (including fevers), by genetics, and by family environment. However, the Trump-RFK combine has mutated "might be associated under certain conditions"

into "is a primary cause". The rhetorical effect has been to pin responsibility not on access to care and diagnostics and environmental exposure but on imputed maternal failings. But just as vaccines don't cause autism — epidemiology and reviews have repeatedly proved this — professional bodies have maintained that acetaminophen is appropriate during pregnancy when medically indicated and at the lowest effective dose.

Indeed, in 2024, a large Swedish population study reported that the small increases in risk observed in simpler studies disappeared when matched siblings were analysed. Its findings were a powerful rebuttal to lazy causal claims. Courts have also had their say: one federal judge excluded plaintiffs' experts in a multidistrict litigation and dismissed hundreds of cases, finding their methods unreliable. Only political theatre is breathing new life back into these

claims. Acetaminophen also has its own baggage and it would be dishonest to omit it. It's the leading cause of acute liver failure in the U.S. Everyone who prescribes it is expected to be aware of the dosage ceiling as well as be mindful of the fact that certain combinations with other drugs can render it poisonous. Ultimately, acetaminophen is a tool — and a sobering one at that. It returns the drug to the clinic, where decisions are individualised and the risks are explicit. It returns autism to being a spectrum of neurodevelopmental differences with a complicated matrix of causes, rather than a punishment for taking a pill during a difficult pregnancy. And ultimately, it returns public health to its first principles: that one shouldn't claim causal links sans evidence, shouldn't trade in fear where counsel is required, and shouldn't allow the spectacle of blame to substitute for the work of care.

APEC CEO Summit to put AI in focus as global tech leaders weigh attendance

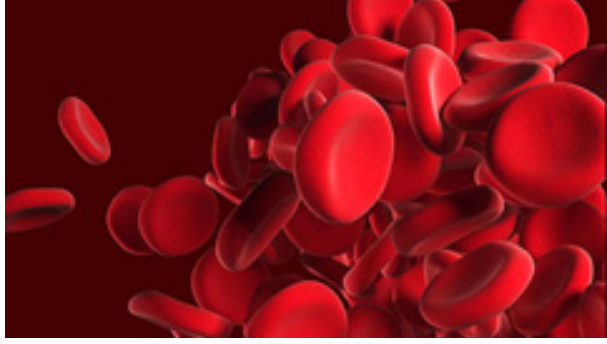
Seoul: Next month's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit in Gyeongju is expected to shine a global spotlight on artificial intelligence (AI), with attention centering on whether top executives from Nvidia, OpenAI, and other tech giants will take part in the gathering.

Scheduled for October 28–31 as an official side event of the multilateral summit between APEC leaders in Gyeongju, about 330 km southeast of Seoul, the forum for global chief executive officers (CEOs) is being organised by the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), reports Yonhap News Agency. The KCCI serves as the secretariat of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) for next month's summit. ABAC is a private-sector advisory body that delivers recommendations from business leaders to their respective governments, such as removing trade barriers. Government and business leaders are working to finalise the participation of high-profile business figures, whose attendance at the CEO event could position AI as one of the major themes. At the top of the list of prospective attendees is Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang. An Nvidia representative told Yonhap News Agency that nothing has yet been confirmed, but a separate industry source said Huang's visit is "most likely confirmed." KCCI Chairman Chey Taewon, who also leads SK Group, personally invited Huang last month at a business roundtable held on the sidelines of a summit between President Lee Jae Myung and U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington. Huang had reportedly responded positively, with industry sources suggesting he is preparing to lead a dedicated AI session on the final day of the APEC CEO Summit. He could also hold separate meetings with the South Korean president and other heads of state, and possibly visit the semiconductor facilities of Samsung Electronics Co. and SK hynix Inc. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman is another closely watched figure. He also reportedly extended a personal invitation to Altman during their July meeting at OpenAI's San Francisco office. The U.S. AI giant recently launched an office in Seoul, pledging to



support Korea's "sovereign AI" policy initiative. It is also working with local tech giant Kakao Corp. on ecosystem integration and is exploring partnerships with Samsung and SK hynix in semiconductors and hardware. Outside of the CEO gathering, AI will also serve as a key topic during the APEC leaders' summit, with the South Korean president having pledged to share Seoul's "APEC AI Initiative" at next month's event. "We will strive to ensure that the vision of 'AI for all', where advances in cutting-edge technology contribute to the universal values of humanity, becomes the 'new normal' for the international community," Lee said in his recent address at the 80th U.N. General Assembly in New York. Other possible attendees from global big tech companies include Apple's Tim Cook, Sundar Pichai of Google, and Citigroup's Jane Fraser. From China, Alibaba CEO Eddie Wu and TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew are also reportedly considering visits. With many CEOs expected to confirm their schedules by mid-October, business leaders here, led by Chey, are reportedly mobilising their global networks to secure participation. "The KCCI will work closely with the government to turn the APEC CEO Summit into a platform for connection and cooperation among global companies,"

What your child's platelet count and haemoglobin levels could be telling you



Platelets are blood cells essential for blood clotting, while haemoglobin is the iron-containing molecule that helps carry oxygen. Platelets are small, colourless cells normally found in your child's bloodstream. They spring into action when there is an injury to blood vessels, helping to stop bleeding and forming clots. Haemoglobin, on the other hand, is an iron-containing protein in the red blood cells that gives them their colour. It circulates in the bloodstream, carrying oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. The normal range of platelets and haemoglobin in blood varies with age, and can also fluctuate slightly from day to day. A normal platelet count for children is generally between 1,50,000 and 4,50,000 platelets per microliter of blood. Normal haemoglobin (HGB) levels in children vary significantly by age. Newborns have the highest levels, but these gradually decrease in the first months of life before stabilising with minor variations until puberty. Low haemoglobin levels cause a condition known as anaemia and reduce the amount of oxygen delivered to tissues. Common symptoms include unusual tiredness, weakness, and reduced activity levels. Causes of anaemia include nutritional deficiencies (iron,

vitamin B12, folic acid), chronic diseases such as liver or kidney disorders, blood loss, and genetic mutations affecting the haemoglobin.

High haemoglobin levels cause a condition called polycythaemia, which can also be harmful. This condition may be asymptomatic or may cause symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, dizziness, blurred vision, itchy skin (especially after warm baths), facial redness, or an enlarged spleen leading to discomfort in the upper left abdomen. Other signs include numbness or tingling in the extremities, bone pain, nosebleeds, shortness of breath, or even blood clots, such as deep vein thrombosis or stroke. Common causes include heart and lung disease or a genetic condition called Polycythaemia Vera. Low platelet count, known as thrombocytopenia, can become life-threatening if the platelet level drops below a critical range, as internal bleeding may occur. Symptoms include easy bruising, frequent nosebleeds, or small red/purple dots (petechiae) on the skin. Causes include viral infections (such as dengue), certain medications, autoimmune conditions, and blood cancers such as leukaemia. If you notice reddish spots or excessive bruising in your child, consult a paediatrician immediately. A high platelet count, known as thrombocytosis, usually results from an underlying condition. It often has no symptoms and is detected incidentally during routine health checks. The most common cause in children is recovery from a recent viral infection, which typically resolves within a few weeks. Other causes include infections, inflammation, or iron-deficiency anaemia. If your child has nosebleeds, frequent bruising, persistent headaches, fatigue, lethargy, or blood in the stool or urine, consult your paediatrician. A doctor can interpret a complete blood count (CBC) to identify the cause of abnormalities and decide whether further tests or treatment are necessary.

Can an ivermectin pill keep malaria from being transmitted?

Between 2000 and 2015, the world's fight against malaria made remarkable progress, with millions of lives saved through better prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Of late, however, that momentum has slowed. In 2023 alone, malaria claimed nearly 6 lakh lives, with 95% of those deaths occurring in the African region. India has made dramatic progress too, with malaria cases dropping by over 80% in the last decade, especially in urban and semi-urban areas. However, some districts in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and the Northeastern States continue to struggle with persistent transmission. This lingering threat has drawn renewed attention to the mass drug administration (MDA) of endectocides, systemic insecticides that work from inside the human body, as a promising tool to reduce malaria transmission. Among these, ivermectin reportedly stands out as the most promising candidate.

Ivermectin has been around since the 1970s. Originally developed to treat parasitic worms, it has been safely given to more than four billion people and is a cornerstone of global campaigns against river blindness and lymphatic filariasis. Dubbed a "wonder drug," it earned its discoverers the Nobel Prize. However, a surprising discovery later expanded its potential: mosquitoes that bite people recently treated with ivermectin often died or didn't live long enough to spread malaria. This finding sparked renewed interest in using ivermectin as a vector control tool in malaria-endemic regions. Subsequent modelling and pilot studies suggested that mass drug administration with ivermectin, especially when timed to seasonal transmission peaks, could help bring down infection rates by shrinking the mosquito population. In malaria control, mass drug administration aims to eliminate the parasite from both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals, reducing the human reservoir and interrupting transmission.

To test this idea in the real world, scientists launched the BOHEMIA trial in Kenya and Mozambique and the findings were published on July 23 in The New England Journal of Medicine. In Kenya, the trial was conducted in Kwale County, a coastal region with year-round malaria transmission despite 85% bed net coverage. The villagers were randomly given either ivermectin or albendazole (an anti-parasitic drug that doesn't affect mosquitoes) once a month for more than three months, starting in October 2023. Children aged 5 to 15, who are among the most vulnerable, were then monitored for six months. The result: malaria cases dropped by 26% in the ivermectin group. This figure exceeded the World Health Organisation's threshold of a 20% reduction to be considered a valuable public health tool. Notably, children living farther from untreated areas had even greater protection, suggesting a strong community-level impact. More than 56,000 doses were administered during the study and the participants reported no serious side effects. However, the trial excluded pregnant women and children under 15 kg of body weight, which may limit the drug's broader applicability. The Mozambique trial could not yield conclusive results as the research team's operations were severely disrupted by Cyclone Gombé and a subsequent cholera outbreak. In November 2024, a study in Guinea-Bissau called the MATAMAL trial involved more than 25,000 people in 24 villages. It tested whether adding the drug ivermectin to an already strong malaria treatment program — which used the drug dihydroartemisinin-piperazine, or DP — could make the program work better. Contrary to expectations, there was no significant



difference in malaria prevalence between villages that received ivermectin and those that received a placebo. In fact, there were slightly more malaria cases in the ivermectin group, with no clear impact on mosquito survival or infection rates. Researchers concluded that the timing and dosing used in this trial may not have been sufficient to add value to existing interventions.

Ivermectin still matters. Despite mixed results, both trials reaffirmed ivermectin's safety in large-scale campaigns. Side effects were mild and temporary, mostly headaches and dizziness, with no serious adverse events reported. Ivermectin also offered a distinct advantage over traditional malaria control tools. Bed nets, indoor spraying, and larvicides target mosquitoes that bite indoors and at night. But mosquitoes evolve: some now bite earlier, outdoors or even feed on livestock. This makes it harder to keep them at bay with conventional tools. On the other hand, ivermectin kills mosquitoes from the inside after they bite humans, regardless of time or location. It can also be delivered through existing deworming or parasitic disease campaigns, making it a practical dual-use tool, particularly in remote or underserved areas. The BOHEMIA team also found significant collateral benefits. In Mozambique, people who took ivermectin had fewer skin problems like scabies and head lice. In Kenya, many noticed a dramatic drop in bed bugs. As with all widespread interventions, resistance is a looming concern. A 2024 review in Parasitology Research highlighted the growing resistance to ivermectin in ectoparasites like ticks, lice, and scabies mites, mostly due to overuse in veterinary medicine.

While resistance among human parasites is still rare, there's little data on its impact on Anopheles mosquitoes. Only two out of 18 reviewed studies examined ivermectin's impact on mosquito populations, highlighting a critical gap in surveillance. Should resistance emerge, the drug's value as a malaria control tool could diminish rapidly. And the drug's widespread use for scabies, lice, and livestock parasites may make resistance develop faster. Researchers have also warned that as ivermectin's mass drug administration expands, resistance in non-target organisms must be closely monitored as this risk is often overlooked. Ivermectin affects many parasites, so targeting one species may accelerate resistance in others. In regions with multiple parasites, the chosen doses might favour the target but harm broader control efforts. To stay ahead, researchers are exploring longer-lasting formulations, higher doses, and combining ivermectin with malaria vaccines or genetically modified mosquitoes. Upcoming trial data and resistance tracking will shape its future role in malaria control programs.

New species of finless snake eel named after Kanniyakumari

Researchers from National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), Kochi functioning under Indian Council of Agricultural Research, have discovered a new species of finless snake eel and named it after Kanniyakumari as *Apterichtus kanniyakumari*. The discovery has been published in the latest issue of international peer-reviewed journal, Zootaxa. The species belonging to the genus *Apterichtus* was discovered off the Colachel coast and has been named after Kanniyakumari to honour the district's cultural, linguistic, historical and geographical significance, said T. T. Ajith Kumar, Principal Scientist and Head, Regional Centre of NBFGR, Kochi.

He added that the researchers from NBFGR have used two specimens collected from Colachel, where fishermen have reported catching them at a depth of 100 metres, during deep-sea trawling. Researchers and scientists have conducted extensive morphological analysis, vertebral counts and DNA based molecular analysis, which confirmed that the eel represents a species which is previously unknown to science. According to the discovery published in

Zootaxa, the new species is distinguished from its congeners by the following characteristics such as head length 9.6-9.7% of total length (TL), tail length 1.8-1.9% of TL and body depth at gill openings 42.1-54.8% of TL. Other features include three preopercular and 9 supratemporal pores, conical uniserial teeth on jaws and vomer, distinct golden-yellow body colouration, ventral side of head pale white with yellow lines along the lower jaw, and three black blotches including one behind the eyes followed by one in rictus and other behind the origin of rictus. The species also has a mean vertebral formula of 52-131. In addition, molecular analysis based on mitochondrial CO1 gene exhibits that this new species forms a distinct clade with its sympatric species, *Apterichtus nanjilnaduensis*. Mr. Ajith Kumar highlighted species *Kanniyakumari* as the 16th species discovered from the Indian coast by the NBFGR team. "Kanniyakumari has a rich biodiversity that needs to be explored further to strengthen the India's biodiversity catalogue," he said.

Why eco-restoration alone won't help residents of the heavily industrialised Manali-Ennore region in North Chennai



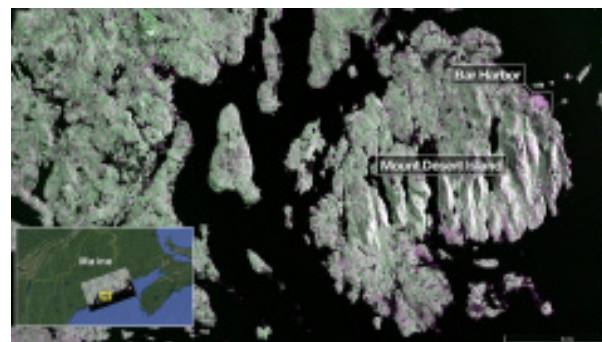
For decades, residents of Ennore and Manali in North Chennai have lived under the shadow of fertiliser plants, oil refineries, and coal-powered thermal plants along the coast. The presence of these "red-category" industries makes Tiruvallur district the State's most polluted industrial cluster, which has left locals there to endure recurring gas leaks, oil spills, and layers of toxic dust settling over fishing hamlets and working-class neighbourhoods.

The crisis deepened in December 2023, when two major industrial accidents — an oil spill and a gas leak — once again exposed the vulnerability of residents. In response, the Tamil Nadu government set up the Manali Ennore Rejuvenation and Restoration Council (MERRC), which was recently launched by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change. As per a government order issued in September 2024, the Council has been tasked with greening projects, desilting, waste management, mangrove restoration, and pollution control. But residents and experts say these efforts fall short. Without addressing the severe health problems that already plague communities, they warn, restoration will remain incomplete. Toxic everyday exposure

For P. Vijayashanthi, a mother of two kids, who moved to Sathyavani Muthu Nagar in Ennore just over a year back, the effects have been stark. "It is terrible for newcomers like me. I developed a continuous cough that doctors linked to asthma. When I leave this area, it improves. When I return, the throat and cough problems start again," she says. She avoids letting her children play outside and shuts windows whenever the air turns pungent. "If we leave our footwear outside overnight, by morning, a layer of black dust covers them," she adds. A recent report from the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) flagged Ennore-Manali as a stark example of how fossil fuel operations devastate public health. The Cradle to Grave report warns that pollution affects human health from foetal development to old

age. "Our waters are the heart of our culture," said fisherman R. L. Srinivasan from Kattukuppam in the report. "But coal and oil refinery pollution has poisoned them. Fishing is no longer viable, and many of us are leaving behind generations of tradition." Residents say water sources are badly contaminated. "When we dug borewells, the water looked pale whitish, so we had to close them," says Ms. Vijayashanthi. In Valluvar Nagar, Vadivukkarasi says, "Children under five have breathing troubles. Doctors say it's because we live in an industrial area. Effluents in the water cause diarrhoea." According to the GCHA report, fossil fuel pollution is linked to asthma, cardiovascular disease, neurological disorders, cancer, and complications in childbirth. Many harms remain understudied, often surfacing decades later. At a public hearing in January 2024, residents raised concerns about fertility and cancer. Lalitha from V.O.C. Nagar said: "I spent ₹3.5 lakhs on treatment. You'll find many families here without children or with cancer patients." No doubt these claims will have to be investigated thoroughly by State agencies. Demands for a health survey intensified after dust samples collected by locals in May 2025 in Sathyavani Muthunagar showed dangerously high levels of lead, uranium, cadmium, and fluoride. However, no plans have been floated by the State government to carry out a health survey. For older residents in the area, decline has been long and visible. "In the 1970s we fetched clean water two kilometres away. Even then my children's teeth turned yellow from fluoride. Now there are respiratory problems too," says 69-year-old K. Devaki. Without immediate systemic interventions, including health surveys, medical access, and environmental clean-up, Ennore risks remaining a "sacrifice zone" where livelihoods and dignity are traded for industrial growth. Shweta Narayan of the GCHA, co-author of the Cradle to Grave report, stresses that health must be addressed alongside the environment. "Environmental restoration prevents future health problems. But what about the people already affected?" she asks. She calls for parallel, robust health infrastructure in heavily industrialised regions, citing how residents in Cuddalore district have had to pay out of pocket for treatment of allergies and respiratory illnesses caused by untreated industrial effluents. Soumya Swaminathan, chairperson of the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and former chief scientist of the World Health Organization, says interventions must be multipronged. "A quick assessment of health needs is essential to understand the kinds of diseases and issues people face, and to make access to specific health services easier. Psychological support must also be given, and residents should be consulted on how things can be improved," she adds.

NISAR satellite sends first radar images of Earth's surface



The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Earth-observing radar satellite has sent the first images of Earth's surface as the joint mission between NASA and ISRO approaches full science operations later this year. NASA said that the images from the spacecraft, which was launched by ISRO on July 30, display the level of detail with which NISAR scans Earth to provide unique, actionable information to decision-makers in a diverse range of areas, including disaster response, infrastructure monitoring, and agricultural management. "By understanding how our home planet works, we can produce models and analysis of how other planets in our solar system and beyond work as we prepare to send humanity on an epic journey back to the Moon and onward to Mars," said NASA Associate Administrator Amit Kshatriya. Fruits of collaboration

He added that the successful capture of these first

images from NISAR is a remarkable example of how partnership and collaboration between two nations, on opposite sides of the world, can achieve great things together for the benefit of all. NASA said that on August 21, the satellite's L-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR) system, which was provided by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California, captured Mount Desert Island on the Maine coast.

"Dark areas represent water, while green areas are forest, and magenta areas are hard or regular surfaces, such as bare ground and buildings. The L-band radar system can resolve objects as small as 15 feet (five metres), enabling the image to display narrow waterways cutting across the island, as well as the islets dotting the waters around it," NASA said. It added that on August 23, the L-band SAR captured data of a portion of northeastern North Dakota straddling Grand Forks and Walsh counties. "The image shows forests and wetlands on the banks of the Forest River passing through the centre of the frame from west to east and farmland to the north and south. The dark agricultural plots show fallow fields, while the lighter colors represent the presence of pasture or crops, such as soybean and corn. Circular patterns indicate the use of centre-pivot irrigation," it added. The U.S. space agency further said that the images demonstrate how the L-band SAR can discern what type of land cover — low-lying vegetation, trees, and human structures — is present in each area. "This capability is vital both for monitoring the gain and loss of forest and wetland ecosystems, as well as for tracking the progress of crops through growing seasons around the world," it said.

'Confined field trials' on GM maize to begin soon at Punjab Agricultural University

The field trials of two kinds of genetically modified (GM) maize are expected to begin in the ongoing kharif (summer) season at the Punjab Agricultural University, days after the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, the country's top regulator for the sector, gave the nod for the trials, after receiving consent from the Punjab government. In its meeting in June, the committee recommended a proposal by Bayer Crop Science Limited for the conduct of confined field trials on herbicide-tolerant transgenic maize, and insect-resistant transgenic maize at the Ludhiana-based university for this year's kharif season.

The trials will study weed-control efficacy in herbicide-tolerant maize hybrids with the application of glyphosate-K salt, and the efficacy of insect-protected maize hybrids against targeted lepidopteran pests. "The field trials will begin soon as this is the right time for sowing maize," Punjab Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor Satbir Singh Gosal told The Hindu. The university had no involvement in decisions related to the commercialisation of the crop; its mandate was limited to conducting research, under which the field trials would be conducted on GM maize. Mr. Gosal said, dismissing concerns over genetic modification. "At the Punjab Agricultural University, we have the necessary infrastructure, facilities and experts, so we are going ahead with the trials. We need to understand that, unless we study the matter, we will not know whether it's good or bad. The trials are for research purposes only, and we are not going to recommend that it (GM maize) should be grown commercially or not. It's for the Central government to take a call. We would be conducting the trials adhering to the guidelines of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, and established standards of procedures. It's a research institute, and it's our mandate to conduct research," Mr. Gosal said. The Coalition for a GM-Free India, a plat-



form advocating safe and sustainable agriculture, has urged the Punjab government to withdraw its No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the trials. In a letter to Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian, Kavitha Kuruganti, co-convenor of the coalition, said that the State government had an issued order prohibiting the usage of glyphosate, a deadly herbicide with a large body of scientific literature pointing to its negative impacts on human health and the environment... How can the university experiment with herbicide-tolerant maize that has been modified to withstand the application of glyphosate, which is in itself against the legally-approved label claim for glyphosate in India's pesticides regulatory regime?" Ms. Kuruganti said. In 2018, the Punjab government banned the sale of glyphosate, a herbicide used extensively in the State to control a wide variety of weeds in almost all crops. Pointing out that the State government's NOC would result in national repercussions, Ms. Kuruganti urged the State to prioritise an inquiry into the scientific basis on which such NOCs were being issued, and to immediately withdraw the NOC that has been issued for confined field trials on GM maize.

Will AI help fix India's energy demand or will its own needs surge?



As artificial intelligence (AI) and its attendant data demand continue to expand in India and worldwide, a curious dilemma has arisen: will AI help transform energy delivery for the better or will the data centres crucial to its operations impose a new burden on the world's power grid?

In a 2024 report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) highlighted the growing interconnections between energy and AI worldwide projected that demand from data centres would more than double by 2030 to around 945 TWh and that AI would be the principal driver. The demand from AI-optimised data centres was projected to more than quadruple by 2030. A McKinsey report has also estimated that the annual global demand for data centre capacity could rise at 19-22% from 2023 to 2030, reaching 171-219 GW, against the total current demand of 60 GW. To avoid a deficit, at least twice as much data centre capacity built since 2000 will have to be in place in less than a quarter of the time. Given AI's significant hunger for computing power, energy demand is naturally increasing, Ms. Anvesha Sen, an assistant programme manager at Takshashila University studying the impact of technology policy and AI on society, said. She is however optimistic that it's "not as drastic when compared to other energy-intensive industries". Worldwide, data centres consume 1-2% of total power and that's expected to increase to 3-4% by 2030. To compare, the steel industry consumes around 7% of total power, Sen said. Pressure, and potential According to McKinsey, India's data centre demand is projected to increase from 1.2 GW in 2024 to 4.5 GW by 2030, driven largely by AI and digital adoption across sectors. Mumbai accounts for 41% of the data centre capacity, followed by Chennai (23%) and the National Capital Region (14%). AI-driven data centres in India are projected to consume an additional 40-50 TWh of electricity annually by 2030, according to Raghu Raman, professor and Dean at the School of Business at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham. The increasing adoption of AI and digital technologies in India is contributing to a significant rise in energy demand, especially in already energy-intensive sectors like real estate, Vimal Nadar, national director of research at the Mumbai-based India office of Colliers, a global investment company, said. India is the third-largest energy consumer worldwide, after China and the US, with coal, crude oil, and natural gas comprising the bulk of its energy mix.

The energy consumption of data centres is imposing huge pressure on energy systems worldwide, Anish De, global head for Energy, Natural Resources, and Chemicals at KPMG, said, adding: "India will not be any different." According to Sen, an equal concern is the correspondingly increasing demand for freshwater required to cool the servers in these data centres. That said, there is scope to press AI to the service of smarter energy management as well. "AI is playing a pivotal role in transforming how energy is delivered, utilised, and managed, both globally and within India," Mr. Nadar said. On the one hand, AI could help develop energy transition technologies and as well as new materials that mitigate India's dependence on critical minerals it currently has to import from abroad, Dr. De said by way of example. "It will also aid faster project development.

This is already playing out in the main geographies and will propagate to others quickly," he added. "We will see energy efficiency and resource efficiency gains that will also be substantial, though not enough to offset the demand. AI itself will support the gains in expansion of clean energy." On the flip side, carbon emissions will also increase. "Despite best efforts it is practically impossible to meet this demand from renewables, both from quality and quantity standpoints," according to Dr. De. The IEA also noted in its report that AI "could intensify some energy security strains" as "cyberattacks on energy utilities have tripled in the past four years and become more sophisticated because of AI" even as AI tools are becoming critical for energy companies to defend against such attacks. Renewables rescue

As energy demand intensifies, real estate stakeholders are increasingly prioritising energy efficiency, sustainability, and emission reduction in both new developments and retrofitting of existing assets, Mr. Nadar said. "Concurrently, there is a growing emphasis on renewable energy adoption. Real estate developers are increasingly incorporating rooftop solar solutions and solar-integrated building systems, further reducing the sector's reliance on conventional energy sources." The IEA has also said a range of energy sources will be tapped to meet data centres' rising electricity needs although, according to its report, "renewables and natural gas are set to take the lead due to their cost-competitiveness and availability in key markets." India and many other countries are taking advantage of AI to enhance energy efficiency and promote sustainable real estate practices, per Mr. Nadar. In India, the Energy Conservation Building Code and the Roadmap of Sustainable and Holistic Approach to National Energy Efficiency scheme aim to integrate AI and data analytics into smart metering, renewable energy management, and sustainable building design. Also within the real-estate sector, AI-driven solutions like smart lighting systems, predictive HVAC optimisation, and automated building controls promise to reduce energy consumption by up to 25%. Green certifications such as GRIHA and LEED further encourage AI-based monitoring of energy and resource usage. Data centres are also adopting AI to optimise cooling systems and server utilisation. As of April 2025, nearly one-fourth of the country's total data centre capacity in major cities had been green-certified, reflecting an explicit focus on creating sustainable infrastructure. Almost 67% of the Grade A office stock across India's top seven cities is also green-certified. "Need some nudging" Under the National Smart Grid Mission, AI-enabled systems manage demand and integrate renewables, enhancing grid reliability while reducing wastage, according to Raman. The Nxtra (Airtel) Data Centres uses AI-powered cooling and predictive analytics to cut energy use, paired with renewable power purchase agreements to run green data centres. BrightNight's PowerAlpha AI deployed in India to forecast and optimise hybrid solar-wind-battery plants and ensure 24/7 access to renewable energy while minimising grid stress.

Tata Power ReNew Power and Hindustan Zinc both use AI for real-time load forecasting, reducing outages and optimising power supply in Mumbai, Dr. Raman added. BESCOM in Karnataka has also started using AI to detect faults and 'heal' grid sections and thus mitigate downtime. Similarly, smart meters in Uttar Pradesh have been using AI to detect power theft as well as manage demand-side issues. "A digital energy grid approach aims to build a unified and interoperable power infrastructure, and its potential can be amplified using AI," Ms. Sen said. She added that companies are also working to develop "sustainable AI" that uses recycled water and has higher power use efficiency. "As the race to build the most capable AI systems has got companies investing in massive data centres, a transition of the energy grid itself to use more sustainable power sources is required and might need some nudging by governments," Ms. Sen said.

Artificial Intelligence and exam shibboleths



Once, in an exam, I got the least marks in a question that I thought I answered the best. The topic was dear to me, and I had prepared two pages of notes after going through more than a hundred pages. One friend of mine came to me on the examination eve and asked for help as the topic was vast and not much time was left. I gave him my notes, assuring him of decent marks. The friend got more marks than I got! In the same paper, I got the highest marks in a question that I had no idea about. I wrote rubbish with jargon, and the teacher wrote a remark along with full marks, "Very well explained." I wondered for days about the marking and evaluation schemes of our education system. If marks are awarded on a random basis, what is the point of working hard? Of course, the evaluation is subjective, more so in social sciences. But I believe there must be a line between subjectivity and randomness.

Evaluating somebody's performance is a multi-dimensional task, but our credentialism-dominated system does not do so. In the words of Stephen Hawking, "Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change." In today's times, we need to differentiate the parameters to judge human and machines. Accuracy or efficiency is not the only criterion to judge a human. We judge machines based on such criteria. Such questions have become more important than ever in the wake of artificial intelligence. Well, innovation is the only thing that can separate us from the technology. But our education system is not ready to deal with the AI onslaught. The system, which deems memory as merit and doing mundane tasks as skills, is bound to scare us citing layoffs. With AI becoming more capable day by day, we surely must catch up.

Technology is like a horse. If you race against it, you lose; if you ride it, you win. This is not to say that dependence on technology is something to be proud of. Technology is not a one-stop solution for all our problems. The purpose of technology is to enable us, not to disable us further. But the panic caused by AI is partially to be blamed upon the education system as well. Individuals must not be blamed for the systemic failures and vice versa. Humans were never the strongest but still survived against the strongest predators because we innovated. Today, AI has raised several important questions. One of them is, how can our education system help us become the masters and not slaves of our times?

Daughters are not children of a lesser god

When my father-in-law passed away last week, my wife and her sister decided to perform the last rites. Eyebrows were raised, but soon it gave way to appreciation, even from unexpected quarters. The priest reassured her that the departed soul would be happy with her performing the rituals, and that it was true love that mattered.

I have heard some people lament, "I don't have any sons in my lineage to perform my last rites". Traditionally, in families where there are only daughters, distant male relatives are entrusted with the responsibility. My wife always maintained that it is gross injustice. A daughter loves her father and mother just as deeply as a son does -- sometimes even more. So, what is the point in denying her the right?

Of late, many daughters have performed the last rites of their parents, which made news headlines. In 2018, when India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee passed

away, his adopted daughter Namita Kaul Bhattacharya lit the funeral pyre. She not only made a powerful statement about gender equality, but also inspired many daughters in the coming years. However, while daughters in progressive families may find it easy to step into this role, those in more orthodox households face greater resistance. It's appalling that at an age when daughters reach the space as astronauts, beat opponents as chess champions, and rule nations as prime ministers, there are still those who feel obliged to have a son -- if only to carry out the last rites. Such thinking may well have played a part in the dark history of female foeticide which was rampant till a few years ago. Social acceptance for daughters performing the ceremonies will take us one step closer to gender equality. Citing reasons like "impurity" to forbid a daughter from performing the last rites reflects the patriarchal mindset which needs to change. India's daughters are not the children of a lesser god; they are the harbingers of a bright future.

Well-oiled connections



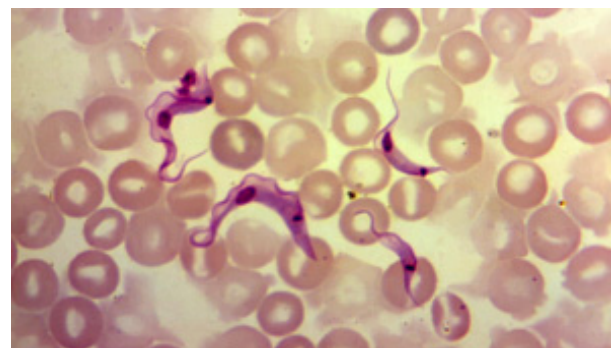
They say the squeak of a machine is a whisper of warning — ignore it, and you court calamity. I learnt this lesson not from a monk's manuscript or a mystic's mantra, but from my own rusting bicycle on a fog-frosted winter dawn. The mist swirled like spilled milk around the lamp posts, and the breath of the morning hung in soft silver clouds. The chain had been groaning for weeks, gritting its metallic teeth with every turn of the pedal, yet I silenced it with smug procrastination. That day, halfway through my morning round — past the sleepy tea stall where steam curled like incense from brass kettles — it snapped. I stood still for a moment, the sudden silence making the street feel like a paused prayer. Then I walked. Each step felt like an unspoken reprimand for negligence.

Years later, the lesson returned, this time dressed in the delicate disguise of friendship. A friend and I had once been inseparable — two spirited schoolgirls soldered by shared secrets, stolen mangoes, and Sunday hopscotch. But as our worlds widened with work, weddings, and weary deadlines, the calls thinned, the visits vanished. I told myself friendship didn't need daily oiling — it was a monument, not a machine. One afternoon, at a bustling bazaar where bangles clinked like temple bells, I saw her. She stood across the street, her laughter spilling over like a monsoon sluice, but for someone else. I raised my hand, a hesitant semaphore across years, but it felt like tapping on a dusty,

locked door. She didn't see me — or perhaps the hinges of our bond had rusted shut. It isn't just bikes and bonds that demand tending — it's everything that breathes, even in silence. My grandmother's courtyard taught me that truth. There, a neem tree stood like a sentinel of seasons. Every summer, she watered it in the amber light of dawn, her wrinkled hands moving with unwavering rhythm. "If you forget to water what you love," she would say, "you'll stand in its shadow one day and find no shade." She wasn't speaking only of trees — she meant promises, partnerships, even the brass prayer lamp she lit each evening without fail, its flame flickering like a faithful heartbeat.

In our cities, I see houses sagging under soot, shuttered workshops with machines swaddled in cobwebs, and relationships collapsing under the weight of words left unsaid. We polish impatience and parade it as progress. We replace quicker than we repair, forgetting that maintenance — of objects or oaths — is an act of quiet reverence, a declaration that what exists is worth more than what can be bought anew. I imagine society as a sprawling loom, threads of trust, toil, and tenderness weaving the shared cloth of our lives. Every unattended tear widens if left alone; every loose stitch ignored eventually unravels. And when the cloth comes apart, we shake our heads and blame the times, never our own idle hands. Now, whether it's my bicycle, my friendships, my scattered letters, or the potted tulsī in my courtyard I pause to check, clean, and cherish. I oil the chain before it groans, call before the silence becomes a canyon, water before the soil turns to dust. I send the message before misunderstanding festers, and tighten the screw before the structure sags. For I have learnt — from metal, from memories, from the murmurs of my own heart — that neglect is never a sudden collapse. It is a slow, sly decay, a corrosion that begins quietly and ends catastrophically. And when the crack finally shows or the bond finally breaks, the squeak or the silence will not be your first loss. It will be the moment you realise, with the weight of a stone in your chest, that you didn't just lose the thing. You let it slip away, one unword second at a time. And so, I choose to tend, to touch, to treasure — before the hinges rust.

All you need to know about: the 'kissing bug' disease



A potentially fatal illness known as the 'kissing bug' disease or Chagas disease, which has affected more than seven million people worldwide -- mostly in Latin America -- may now be endemic to the United States, according to new research published in a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) journal. The study, published in September 2025, states that though Chagas disease -- caused by a parasite called *Trypanosoma cruzi*, predominantly transmitted through 'kissing bugs' or triatomine insects -- is generally considered endemic to 21 countries in the Americas, excluding the U.S., increasing evidence of the parasite in the U.S. suggests this may no longer be the case. When a disease is endemic to a region, it means that it is consistently present in that region's population. Chagas disease has both acute and chronic phases, with the latter potentially being fatal. It causes approximately 10,000 deaths each year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). But what exactly is Chagas disease? How does it spread? Can it be cured? Here's all you need to know. Chagas disease spread Chagas disease, also known as American trypanosomiasis, is commonly spread through vector, oral, and congenital routes.

A person in endemic regions typically contracts Chagas disease when the *Trypanosoma cruzi* parasite is transmitted through the urine or faeces of triatomine bugs. These insects, commonly known as 'kissing bugs' or 'vampire bugs', bite people on the face and feed on their blood. They are usually found in small spaces, such as cracks in

walls, or roofs of homes, chicken coops, warehouses, and similar structures, and are mostly active during the night. After biting an exposed area, often the face, they defecate or urinate near the wound, allowing the parasite to enter the body. *Trypanosoma cruzi* can also spread through other means: by consuming food or beverages contaminated with the parasite (oral) or from mother to child during pregnancy or childbirth (congenital). Though rare, it can also be transmitted through blood transfusions or via organ transplants. The disease can infect animals too, especially captive and companion animals. The illness came to be known as Chagas disease as it was first diagnosed in a human being by Brazilian physician and researcher Carlos Chagas on April 14, 1909. What are the symptoms?

In the acute phase, which lasts a couple of months or so after a person is infected, symptoms are absent or mild. They may include fever, headache, enlarged lymph glands, muscle ache, breathing difficulties, swelling of eyelids, and abdominal or chest pain. The parasite primarily affects the heart and digestive muscles in the chronic phase and hence, early detection and treatment are vital. About 10 to 30 years after infection, individuals may develop cardiac or digestive disorders, as well as neurological complications. Over time, damage to the nervous system and the muscles of the heart and digestive tract can lead to cardiac arrhythmias, progressive heart failure, and even sudden death, according to the WHO. Is there a cure? Medications such as benznidazole and nifurtimox are completely effective in the early stages of the disease; however, their efficacy decreases as the disease progresses. There is also no vaccine against Chagas disease. Delaying the disease progression by getting treatment on time is, therefore, imperative. An infection such as this cannot be fully eradicated, says WHO, due to the continued presence of both the triatomine insects and the parasite in endemic regions. However, controlling the spread of the disease, ensuring early detection, and providing life-long follow-up care may help prevent deaths. Reducing human contact with the insects, along with blood screening before transfusions and organ transplantation are also essential measures. Researchers say the classification of Chagas disease as endemic to the U.S. may improve surveillance and encourage adequate public health responses.

School maths and street maths

A recent study led by Nobel laureates Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee exposes a stark disconnect in India's mathematics education between "street maths" and "school maths". The study reveals that when child vendors can mentally calculate complex market transactions at ease, they cannot solve simpler abstract mathematical equations taught in schools. On the other hand, their school-going counterparts who excel in academic maths very often fail at basic real-world calculations. There are so many instances I have come across to support the observation of the study. More than five decades ago when we were little children in vernacular schools, the dropout rate was very high due to extreme poverty. A large number of children would be destined to work as child labour. Another reason behind such a high dropout rate was of course corporal and inhuman punishment perpetrated by the then teachers who believed in the adage "spare the rod and spoil the child".

One of my dropout friends worked as an assistant in an obscure grocery store owned by his father. He left school mainly because of the corporal punishment which he had to endure almost every day. As a student, he could hardly do simple additions and subtractions. He failed to remember the number tables above five. He played truant frequently. Very often, the "catching squad" comprising a group of students meant to fetch absentees to the classrooms forcibly would be deployed to place him before the class.

I used to go to that grocery where my dropout friend worked to buy goods. For the first few months, he worked as an aide whose duty was to fetch grocery goods to his father. Besides, he brought down the containers from the high shelves with the help of a small ladder and put them properly to their niche. But after not more than a year of apprenticeship, he was found running the shop even in the absence of his father. He could calculate the prices of a variety of goods with ease applying the methods of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. As our locality was predominantly inhabited by poverty-stricken people, they could not afford to buy a rounding amount of goods. But he could calculate and settle accounts of the prices of long lists of goods proficiently. What surprised me most was that a



boy who failed to memorise the number tables and work out simple additions could easily keep in his mind the rates of more than a hundred grocery items and add long lists of the prices of goods perfectly and swiftly. Now he owns the largest retail grocery counter in the heart of the town market. Half a dozen persons are always ready to serve the customers with alacrity. Customers have to slide the thick, toughened glass door to enter the air-conditioned spacious room. Bright lights and neon glow signs give the store an illusive look in the evening. Now his store is accessible only to the well-off and so-called standard customers of the town.

After going through the research study of the Nobel laureate couples, I felt inquisitive to know the reason for my friend's sudden proficiency in simple mathematical calculations. He confessed frankly that he was so reluctant in the classroom study and the teachers seemed so formidable to him that the school was nothing but a compulsory purgatory to him.

It is heartening to note that modern schools have started recognising the value of relating mathematical concepts to real-world situations, or "street maths". This approach enables students to understand practical applications of what they learn in "school maths". There is a growing popularity of connecting abstract mathematical ideas taught in schools to everyday contexts such as shopping, cooking, baking, gardening, and sewing.

Data show seas rising faster around Maldives, Lakshadweep than believed



GNS News Agency, March 8

Rising seas are a major consequence of global warming, with many implications for low-lying coastal areas. Coral reefs, which are highly sensitive to their environment, are also particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in sea level. When the sea level rises, sunlight may no longer penetrate the water to reach a coral reef that it could reach before. This can lead to coral bleaching. Changes in tide patterns and increasing coastal erosion can further stress reef ecosystems already bearing the brunt of warmer waters and ocean acidification.

Monitoring sea-level rise across ocean basins has been an ongoing scientific priority. In the Indian Ocean, long-term efforts began during the Tropical Ocean Global Atmosphere programme in the Western Indian Ocean (1985-1994). These efforts were later incorporated into the Global Sea Level Observing System, which continues to support research in the region. According to India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Indian Ocean's levels have been rising at around 3.3 mm/year on average, which is higher than the global average. The Ocean is also experiencing above-average warming, which can amplify changes in ocean dynamics and atmospheric circulation that in turn affect coral bleaching episodes. This said, there are still significant gaps in sea-level records, especially in the central tropical Indian Ocean. A new study has now extended sea-level records in this region by 90 years, indicating water levels here may have started accelerating as early as the late 1950s, significantly earlier than data collected by conventional tide gauge records indicate.

In the study, a team led by Paul Kench, professor at the National University of Singapore, along with researchers from Nanyang Technological University turned to coral microatolls, a natural structure that they found could provide high-resolution, long-term sea-level records. Coral microatolls are disk-shaped colonies that grow sideways once their upward growth has become constrained by the height of the lowest tide. Because of this limitation, the upper surface of a microatoll closely reflects the lowest water levels in the area over time. These corals can survive for decades or even centuries, growing slowly in response to changing sea levels.

The study was conducted on Mahutigalaa, a reef platform located in the Huvadhoo Atoll in the Maldives. The team studied a Porites microatoll, measuring and sampling its structure to extract a sea-level history from 1930 to 2019. The researchers painstakingly surveyed the coral's

outer edge and surface elevation. Then they cut a slab from the outer edge to the centre of the microatoll, and X-rayed the slab to reveal annual growth bands — much like tree rings. These bands provided a precise timeline of the coral's growth, including when it reached sea level and when it died. The team also used uranium-thorium dating to determine its historical elevation relative to the sea level. Assumption challenged The data the team reconstructed in this way showed that sea levels had risen by around 0.3 metres over the 90-year period. The rate of rise increased markedly over time: 1-1.84 mm/year in 1930-1959, 2.76-4.12 mm/year in 1960-1992, and 3.91-4.87 mm/year in 1990-2019. Also according to the team, sea-level rise in the region began in the late 1950s, decades earlier than previously believed. This means the Maldives, Lakshadweep, and the Chagos archipelago have been experiencing significant rise for at least 60 years, with a total increase of 30-40 cm over the last half-century. This data challenges the common assumption in climate change and adaptation work that significant sea-level rise only began around 1990. Since 1959, sea level in these areas has risen by about 3.2 mm/year, and over the last 20 to 30 years at around 4 mm/year.

The coral microatoll also preserved environmental signals related to regional climate variability. Periods of slowed or interrupted growth were found to correspond with major El Niño and negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) events — climatic phenomena known to stress corals and lead to bleaching. The data also revealed the influence of the 18.6-year lunar nodal cycle, where long-term oscillations in the moon's orbit affect the sizes of tides and sea levels. The researchers noted that a critical factor in the success of its reconstruction exercise was that the study site was tectonically stable. This stability ensures changes in the microatolls' elevation can be safely attributed to fluctuations in sea level rather than to vertical land movement. According to Kench,

while coral microatolls are not a substitute for tide gauges or satellite observations, they offer a valuable complementary approach. In remote or data-sparse regions, microatolls can provide historical context and improve understanding of regional variability in sea-level behaviour. The study also highlighted notable differences in sea-level rise patterns across the Indian Ocean basin. While coastal locations have shown more recent acceleration, the central Ocean appeared to have experienced an earlier, more pronounced rise. This variation is thought to be driven by regional oceanic and atmospheric changes, including intensified Southern Hemisphere westerlies, increased ocean heat uptake, and potential shifts in the Intertropical Convergence Zone. As research continues, coral microatolls are expected to play a growing role in helping scientists rebuild sea-level histories across tropical waters. Their potential to fill critical gaps in observational records is particularly relevant for the central Indian Ocean, "which remains one of the least-monitored basins despite its strategic and ecological importance," Kench said. The new findings add to efforts aimed at refining projections of sea-level rise and improving preparedness in regions most at risk. For island nations, where communities and infrastructure are concentrated just above sea level, understanding the timing and magnitude of historic sea-level changes is essential for authorities to develop effective adaptation strategies.

Why NRIs are choosing India for medical tourism



GNS News Agency, March 8

Healthcare decisions, perhaps more than any other, show the complex equation of trust, access and value for money. Add to that the factor of geographical distance for NRIs, and the decision becomes even more nuanced. For millions of NRIs, this decision is now shaped by the realities of rising healthcare costs abroad and the assurance of timely, high-quality care back home in India. When people think of medical tourism, they often imagine a trade-off between affordability and quality. India has rewritten the equation by proving one doesn't need to compromise on either.

The numbers speak for themselves. A complex surgery in the U.S. can easily cost more than \$1,00,000. The same procedure at a top hospital in India may cost just \$10,000 to \$20,000. Also, our data suggests NRIs can save anywhere from 60-90% on major surgeries in India. With relaxed norms, affordable policies and ease of claims, growth has trickled down to health insurance too. Over the last year, the adoption of health cover among NRIs has risen by more than 150%. Young NRIs under 35 led the way with a 148% rise, while women buyers climbed 125%. Notably, 60% of NRIs are buying health cover for elderly parents living in India. Here's what makes India the top choice for medical tourism Value for money

Undeniably, the most important factor driving this adoption is affordability. For instance, a heart bypass surgery costs only \$5,000-\$8,000 in India compared with \$70,000-\$1,50,000 in the U.S. Similarly, a knee replacement surgery in the U.S. costs up to \$50,000 compared with only \$4,000-\$6,000 in India. More importantly, this affordability doesn't come at the cost of quality. From liver and kidney transplants to dental procedures and other major surgeries, the cost gap is huge. Even routine treatments show similar gaps, with India offering care at less than a third of international prices. Medicines, too, are up to 90% cheaper compared with global markets. So, the financial logic is undeniable. India offers world-class care at a fraction of the price, making it an increasingly compelling choice for NRIs. Coming to health insurance premiums, in India, they are often 25-40 times cheaper than in the U.S. or GCC countries like Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. For NRIs, this means getting comprehensive protection without the financial strain.

Financial ripple effect What's fascinating is that the benefits of medical tourism are no longer restricted only to big cities. In fact, almost half of NRI health insurance claims now come from Tier-3 towns and cities. It is true that metros like Hyderabad, Chennai, Kochi, and Thiruvananthapuram continue to remain trusted choices. But what is encouraging is that smaller hubs such as Thrissur, Kollam, and Thane

are quickly gaining ground as well. Access to quality care in these regions has been made possible by better infrastructure and the rise of digital platforms. Savings from choosing treatment in India aren't just figures on a hospital bill. They directly impact a family's financial security. For NRIs already balancing mortgages, children's education and retirement goals, this difference could be life-changing.

Another finding is that most claims by NRIs are tied to respiratory diseases, infectious ailments, cancer, and heart conditions. What these ailments have in common is that they are not one-time occurrences but recurring health needs demanding long-term planning. By having insurance in India, families of the NRI can plan ahead without draining savings each time a health emergency strikes. This shift also shows NRIs are becoming more health-conscious. Instead of waiting for a crisis to strike, they're taking charge early and protecting themselves against risks they know could come their way. Policy pull, digital push Government initiatives like Heal in India and the growth of digital-first platforms have further simplified the process. NRIs can explore, compare and buy policies remotely. Cashless claims across hospitals have bridged the distance, ensuring seamless access even when NRIs are thousands of miles away. The convenience of digital access, coupled with the affordability of premiums, has turned insurance into a natural extension of the medical tourism story. India's medical tourism market is on track to cross \$13 billion, and that growth opens a clear opportunity for the industry. With the right approach, India can strengthen its place as a global hub where healthcare and financial protection go hand in hand.

Mind your reinvestment risk in government bonds

Many appear to be interested in buying government bonds. You can buy such bonds by placing bids through your brokerage account. The intention to invest in such bonds is not surprising, given that they are credit-risk-free. In this article, we discuss the factors you must consider when investing in such bonds.

Picture this. You have lump-sum money, which, if invested at 6.5% per annum, can help you achieve a 10-year goal. So, you buy a 10-year government bond paying 6.50% per annum. The bond pays you interest every half year. The issue is that you must reinvest the interest received at 6.50% per annum for the remaining period of the goal. Otherwise, you are unlikely to accumulate the wealth required to achieve the goal. Why? The required return of 6.5% is a (post-tax) compounded annual return, referred to as minimum acceptable return or MAR. That means you must reinvest the interest every year at 6.5% per annum over the life of the goal to accumulate the required wealth. Government bonds do not compound interest income. You must find avenues to reinvest the interest income. The risk is that the interest rate could dip in any period through the life of the bond (viz., reinvestment risk). That means you could fail to achieve the goal. Also, it is optimal to match the

Inside the APK scam: how fake apps are used for financial fraud



Thousands of Indians with cell phones are losing money after answering a call or clicking on a message. Sometimes it begins with a phone call — calm, polite, and urgent. The voice at the other end warns of a blocked bank account, a missed government subsidy, or a pending electricity bill. Moments later, a message follows with a link to an app that promises a quick fix. The app looks official, bears the logo of a trusted institution, and installs without issue. The user grants a few routine permissions — contacts, SMS, notifications — not realising that, in that instant, their phone had become an open vault.

What happens after users install the app?

In less than 10 minutes, money begins disappearing from bank accounts. Fixed deposits are prematurely closed, and OTPs intercepted. The app, which now runs in the background, monitors, mirrors and mines everything, right from locations to private messages. The user is unaware until it is too late. And by the time help is sought, the funds have travelled through layers of digital laundering, impossible to retrieve. APK fraud is one of the fastest-growing cybercrime threats in the country today. The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal has logged 12,47,393 different types of cases in the last six months. Parliament has been informed that there has been a 900% jump in cyber crimes between 2021 and 2025. Data from the Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) revealed that a total of 2,188 such cases were reported between January and July of 2025, leading to losses of ₹779.06 crore. Officials said that 20 to 30 such cases are reported every single day, with daily financial losses between ₹10 and ₹15 lakh. In high-stake scams like investment and business, losses can go up to ₹30 to ₹40 lakh. These scams, driven by malicious Android Package Kit (APK) files, exploit public trust in digital systems while using sophisticated technical tools to stay undetected and operational across State lines.

How does the fraud work?

APK files on Android devices are much like .exe files on Windows computers; both are used to install apps, and both can be exploited by fraudsters to spread malware. Fraudsters build or source these apps to mimic the appearance and language of official portals, including government subsidy schemes like PM-Kisan, tax refund platforms, electricity boards, or banks asking for KYC updates. These fake apps are often circulated through social media platforms like WhatsApp, accompanied by convincing messages that urge users to act immediately. Developers use encryption techniques that hide malicious code from detection tools. By remaining dormant during installation, these APKs sidestep scans through antivirus software. Once downloaded, the app seeks mul-

iple permissions, including access to contacts, messages, call logs, location, microphone, and notifications. The app gains access to the phone's program files, harvests data in real-time, and transmits it in encrypted bits to external servers operated by fraudsters. These bits, while unreadable to ordinary users, are decoded to extract valuable information, including banking credentials, OTPs, contacts, and location coordinates, among others.

Who operates these apps?

The fraudsters who circulate these APKs are rarely the ones who build them. Instead, these apps are part of a well-structured underground economy. Cybercrime officials estimate that 60 to 70% of malicious APKs used in India are developed locally by tech savvy masterminds in Delhi NCR, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, Jamtara, and parts of Jharkhand. The remaining 30-40% originate internationally, with traces leading to the U.S., U.K., and China. Telegram channels and dark web marketplaces serve as prime distribution channels, offering pre-built APK kits and modules for a fee. Once in circulation, the same APK file is reused with minor modifications in the interface (name, logo and URL or web address of the file), allowing it to bypass detection even after earlier versions are blacklisted. Cybercrime officers say that across hundreds of scam cases each month, only about 10 distinct APK files are found, pointing to the widespread reuse of a few malicious apps.

How are users targeted?

The choice of victim is anything but random. Much like a recce before a physical crime, cyber fraudsters carry out extensive digital surveillance before striking. "Fraudsters purchase leaked databases, sourced from customer directories of malls, hospitals, or service portals, readily available on the dark web, Telegram, or even local search engines like Just Dial," said an official from the TGCSB. "These datasets include names, phone numbers, email IDs, addresses, and at times even income or professional details, which help criminals customise their approach," the official explained. High-earning professionals, including doctors, bank staff, teachers, and real estate agents, are often in the crosshairs. Using partial information already known about the target, fraudsters craft convincing, urgent messages designed to manipulate trust and prompt action.

How are investigators tackling the problem?

When a fraudulent app is seized, cyber forensics teams decrypt it to trace server origins or identify developer signatures. But the results are mixed. Only 2-3 out of every 10 APKs are decrypted successfully. Most reveal only the server addresses, or general code structures. Rarely do the files contain identifiable developer signatures. Even when financial trails are followed, they usually end in mule accounts, temporary bank or wallet accounts used to receive stolen funds, which are quickly converted into cryptocurrency. Arrests do happen, particularly of local accomplices managing these mule accounts or distributing the APKs. But the masterminds and coders, especially those offshore, remain elusive. Google has removed nearly 50 malicious apps in recent months based on reports from investigators. "Google or any other intermediary does not scrutinise every application that is being hosted on their server. Fraudsters also use mule accounts and shell identities to pay for hosting and publishing on search engines," explained the official.

The importance of India's federal design | Explained



The story so far: The Supreme Court has recently sought a detailed response from the Centre on the issue of restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. Considering the significance of the principle of the separation of powers, the top court rightly said that it did not possess all the expertise and that there are some decisions to be made by the government. The court is hearing the plea in Zahoor Ahmed Bhat versus UT of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been argued that the failure to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is affecting the rights of the citizens there. Another argument in this context is that it is also violating the essential features of federalism and thereby the basic structure of the Constitution.

How are States created?

There are three processes enshrined in the Constitution of India for creating States — admission, establishment and formation. For admission of a new State into the territory of India, the entity should have its own organised political unit. It is also required that admission through acquisition shall be guided by international law. This was the process by which Jammu and Kashmir was admitted into India's territory through the Instrument of Accession in 1947. By executing this Instrument under the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to accede his State to India. For establishing a new State, territory shall be acquired as per the definition of acquisition in international law. India acquired Goa and Sikkim and established them as States.

The process of forming a new State has been, in fact,

the reorganisation of an existing State which led India to take its number of 14 States in 1956 to 29 States before the enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. Article 3 of the Constitution provides for this process of reorganisation wherein Parliament may by law — form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State; increase the area of any State; diminish the area of any State; alter the boundaries of any State; or alter the name of any State. However, while the Union may diminish the area of a State, it cannot take it away by making it a Union Territory. This would be a step against the federal features of India. Therefore, it is mandatory for the Union to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. It may wait for sometime depending upon the situation at the ground level.

Xiaomi faces Apple, Samsung legal pushback for mocking iPhone, Galaxy in ads

New Delhi: Tech giants Apple and Samsung have sent legal notices to Xiaomi after the Chinese smartphone maker ran advertisements directly comparing its latest flagship with their premium devices.

According to people familiar with the matter, both companies have issued cease-and-desist notices, objecting to what they see as "disparaging content" in Xiaomi's campaign. A cease-and-desist notice is a formal legal document that asks a company to immediately stop a certain activity considered unlawful or damaging. "Comparing specifications is fine," said person aware of the development. "But you should not directly name a specific competitor. Instead of that, you simply say 'rivals'." However, Xiaomi has not commented on the matter yet.

The controversy began in April this year when Xiaomi rolled out full-page newspaper ads that mocked Apple's iPhone 16 Pro Max on April Fools' Day, claiming its camera was no match for Xiaomi's newly launched 15 Ultra. Earlier in March, during the India launch of the Xiaomi 15 series, the company ran another ad calling the iPhone 16 Pro Max's camera "cute" while highlighting its own photography strengths. Similar campaigns also took aim at Samsung.



maturity of the bond with the time horizon for the life goal; you may not get the maturity appropriate for the life goal at the time you invest.

If you have a 10-year goal, there must be an auction of a 10-year bond at the time you invest. This makes investing for, say, 6, 7 or 8-year life goals difficult, as RBI may not auction bonds for such maturities. Note that interest income on government bonds is taxed at your marginal tax rate.

Moscow's oil helped India save \$12.6 billion in 39 months; presumptive savings likely much higher as Russian oil imports kept global prices in check



India's Russian oil imports, which have evidently emerged as a major sticking point for the Donald Trump administration in its relationship with New Delhi, helped Indian refiners save at least \$12.6 billion in a little over three years, shows an analysis of India's official trade data by The Indian Express, comparing the landed price of India's Russian oil imports with crude from other countries. These apparent savings—while significant for Indian refiners—are not as high as what had been anticipated initially, and the effective discounts on Russian crude narrowed considerably over time, falling to their lowest in the 2024-25 fiscal. But there may be much more than meets the eye.

It is worth remembering that had New Delhi not stepped in to buy Russian oil, global crude prices would most likely have been considerably higher, which would have led to a ballooning of India's oil import bill as well given the country's extreme reliance on oil imports. When viewed from that lens, the presumptive savings for India would be significantly more than what the trade data analysis suggests, depending on how much higher the international price of oil would have gone had India not ramped up the import of Russian crude after it was eschewed by much of the West.

This may be among the reasons why India has shown no signs of buckling under American pressure on the issue of oil imports from Russia. Also, while there is a domestic trade-off at play—the apparently prohibitive cost of sky-high US tariffs on India's small and medium exporters versus the relatively lower savings accrued by large refiners by buying discounted Russian crude—Trump's public posturing has made it difficult for India to cut back on Russian oil immediately even if it wanted to. It is clear that New Delhi does not want to compromise on its strategic autonomy and is unwilling to be dictated to by Washington on whom it should be doing business with, particularly when it comes to Russia—an old and key strategic partner for India.

Indian refiners' hefty imports of Russian crude are seen as a lever that the Trump administration believes it can use to force the Kremlin's hand into ending the Ukraine war. Oil exports are the biggest source of revenue for Moscow, and New Delhi is the second-largest buyer of its oil after Beijing. Early August, Trump announced an additional 25 per cent tariff—over and above the 25 per cent tariff announced on Indian goods—as a penalty for India's Russian oil imports. The hit is expected to be significant for a bulk of India's goods exports to the US, which were valued at around \$87 billion in 2024-25. Notably, while Trump has slapped additional tariffs on India, it has not taken any such action so far against China, the biggest buyer of Russian oil.

New Delhi has termed the Trump administration's action "unjustified and unreasonable" and said these imports began as its traditional supplies were diverted to Europe, with the US having "actively encouraged such imports by India for strengthening global energy markets stability". The Joe Biden administration had encouraged India to increase Russian oil imports following Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine as the West began shunning Moscow's oil. The reason was simple: Russia is a major oil exporter and if a bulk of its oil goes off the market for dearth of buyers, international oil prices could shoot up, something that the US itself did not desire.

The Indian government continues to maintain that the country will buy oil from wherever it gets the best deal, as long as the oil is not under sanctions. There are no sanctions on Russian oil; it is only subject to a price cap imposed by the US and its allies that applies if Western shipping and insurance services are used for transporting the oil. India's public sector refiners have stated that they have not received any signal or directive from the government on the issue, and they will continue to buy Russian oil as long as it remains economically and commercially viable.

Russian oil math: discounts and savings When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow's share in New Delhi's oil imports was less than 2 per cent. With much of the West snubbing Russian crude following the invasion, Russia began offering discounts on its oil to willing buyers. Indian refiners were quick to avail the opportunity, leading to Russia—earlier a peripheral supplier of oil to India—emerging as India's biggest source of crude within a matter of months, displacing the traditional West Asian suppliers. Currently, Russia accounts for more than a third of India's oil imports by volume.

In 2022-23, India's total oil import bill was \$162.21 billion. Had Indian refiners paid for Russian oil the average price they paid for crude from all other suppliers put together, the oil import bill would have been \$167.08 billion, or \$4.87 billion higher, shows The Indian Express's analysis of India's trade data. The value of oil imports from Russia for the period was around \$31 billion, and the average landed price of Russian crude for Indian refiners was \$83.24 per barrel, about \$13 lower than the average landed price of non-Russian barrels, translating into an effective discount of 13.6 per cent to the average price of oil imported from other supplying nations. While the price of crude oil depends on grades and their prices can vary substantially, the average landed price of crude and import volumes from the supplying countries were used for computations as the government does not release grade-wise data.

In 2023-24, although the effective discount on landed price of Russian oil to non-Russian barrels averaged lower at 10.4 per cent, the savings were higher at \$5.41 billion as the volume of oil imports from Russia rose significantly to around 609 million barrels from 373 million barrels in 2022-23, the analysis shows. In 2023-24, the average landed price of Russian crude imported by India was \$76.39 per barrel, \$8.89 lower than the average landed price of non-Russian oil.

The 2024-25 fiscal, however, saw a significant erosion in discounts as well as savings. The discount for the year averaged at just 2.8 per cent, leading to savings of just \$1.45 billion, with the landed price of Russian crude—\$78.5 per barrel—just \$2.3 lower than the average landed price of a non-Russian barrel of oil imported into India. In the June quarter of 2025-26—the period till which country-wise and commodity-specific trade data is available—the discount expanded to 6.2 per cent, with a Russian barrel averaging at \$69.74 versus \$74.37 from other suppliers, leading to savings worth \$0.84 billion. According to industry watchers and experts, the reasons for erosion in discounts mainly include the general direction of decline that oil prices have taken, which have led to a significant contraction in the delta between the \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian crude and international oil prices, and the notably higher cost of freight and insurance for Russian crude as compared to oil from other suppliers due to the Western curbs on Moscow's oil trade. This means that while the discounts might have been deeper on the actual price of oil, the discount on landed price—which includes freight and insurance costs—would work out to be much lower. And for India, the price that really matters is the landed price as that is the cost that refiners actually pay. Beyond the actual savings that the trade data analysis establishes, oil industry executives and experts believe that the presumptive savings may be notably higher, given that India's rapidly expanded appetite for Russian crude contributed in keeping global oil prices in check. This, in turn, helped India—which has an oil import dependency level of around 88 per cent—avoid paying much more for its oil imports.

For the sake of understanding, consider this: had the average landed price of oil imported into India between April 2022 and June 2025 been higher by \$10 per barrel, the country's oil import bill for the 39-month period would have been higher by nearly \$58 billion—an additional \$17.35 billion in 2022-23, \$16.97 billion in 2023-24, \$17.89 billion in 2024-25, and \$5.34 billion in April-June of 2025-26. Had the price been higher by \$20 per barrel, the additional burden would have been around \$116 billion. Even today, industry experts and analysts believe that global oil prices would jump if India stops buying Russian crude, as much of that supply is unlikely to find buyers elsewhere given the current circumstances. In a recent report, brokerage CLSA estimated that oil prices could jump from the current levels of around \$65 per barrel to \$90-\$100 if India stops importing Russian oil. "With only a few buyers purchasing Russian crude, any stoppage from India may make it difficult for Russia to find buyers for possibly 1 million bpd or 1 per cent of global supply in the near term. Although India should be able to easily secure supply from other sellers, such a supply disruption could drive a spike in crude oil price to \$90-\$100 per barrel and would drive up inflation across the world, in our view," CLSA said. "Economics aside, we believe the issue of Russian crude oil imports has now become a political one with India reiterating its freedom to choose its trade partners within the purview of global trade rules," it added. Nomura economists estimate that given India imported around 1.8 billion barrels of oil in 2024-25, India's annual import bill could rise by around \$1.8 billion for every \$1 increase in global crude prices. According to an analysis by global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler, the combined effect of loss of discounted barrels and the potential increase in international oil prices due to a chunk of Russian supply going off the market could push up India's annual oil import bill by up to \$11 billion. India's economy is vulnerable to global oil price volatility. It also has a bearing on the country's trade deficit, foreign exchange reserves, the rupee's exchange rate, and inflation rate, among others.

Legal challenges cloud Trump's tariff powers as India faces 50% levy; 'tariffs still in place' says Trump

Days after steep 50 per cent US tariffs on India came into effect, a US appeals court on Friday ruled that a majority of US President Donald Trump's tariffs derived from powers under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) are illegal. The court said the tariffs, however, will continue to remain in place until October 14, giving the Trump administration a window to appeal to the US Supreme Court. Reacting to the court order, Trump in a post on Truth Social said that all tariffs are still in effect and that the "US will no longer tolerate enormous trade deficits" and unfair tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers imposed by other countries, "friend or foe", that undermine US manufacturers and farmers. "The core Congressional power to impose taxes such as tariffs is vested exclusively in the legislative branch by the Constitution. Tariffs are a core Congressional power. It seems unlikely that Congress intended, in enacting IEEPA, to depart from its past practice and grant the President unlimited authority to impose tariffs," the US Court of Appeals said. The ruling affects the 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US on India, as well as the additional 25 per cent tariffs imposed on India's imports of Russian oil, as Trump announced these under IEEPA. However, sectoral tariffs such as the 50 per cent duty on steel and aluminium where Trump has used Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, face no legal challenges. Trump, in his post on Truth Social, said: "Today a highly partisan appeals court incorrectly said that our tariffs should be removed, but they know the US will win in the

end. If these tariffs ever went away, it would be a total disaster for the country. It would make us financially weak, and we have to be strong." "We should all remember that tariffs are the best tool to help our workers, and support companies that produce great made-in-America products. For many years, tariffs were allowed to be used against us by our uncaring and unwise politicians. Now, with the help of the United States Supreme Court, we will use them to the benefit of our nation, and make America rich, strong, and powerful again," he said. The ruling came in response to two lawsuits filed by small businesses and a coalition of US states after Trump's executive orders in April. In May, the Court of International Trade had also declared the tariffs unlawful. That decision was put on hold during the appeal process. Arguing before another court in May, US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick had stressed the limitations of other legal tools available to the Trump administration to tackle rising trade deficits, particularly with countries like China. Lutnick explained to the Court of International Trade that alternatives—such as Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 and Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974—are not designed for national emergencies, are procedurally time-consuming, and do not permit immediate action. "Under Section 232, the Department of Commerce has up to 270 days to conduct an investigation and submit a report to the President, who then has up to 90 additional days to decide whether to act, and a further 15 days to implement any action.

'Unified Lending Interface to be a big boon for AI players in financial services'



The introduction of the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) will be a "big boon" for artificial intelligence (AI) players in the financial services space, according to Joydip Gupta, head of Asia-Pacific at Scienaptic AI. The New York-headquartered AI-driven loan underwriting platform company—which is looking to expand its Indian client-base to private banks from non-banks and small finance banks such as UGRO Capital, Uni Cards, and Jana Small Finance Bank—doesn't see the ULI as a competitor, with Gupta saying it will help remove a huge obstacle for firms such as Scienaptic AI: the lack of standardised data. The ULI, which is currently at a pilot stage, is an initiative by Indian authorities to allow easy access to authenticated data from various sources, with lenders expected to connect to this platform through a 'plug and play' model. In an interview with The Indian Express' Siddharth Upasani, Gupta also discussed the recommendations of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recently-released report on developing a framework for responsible and ethical enablement of AI in the financial sector, efficiency gains from AI, and the type of jobs that would be at risk. Edited excerpts: It is mostly underwriting and adjacent areas. Fraud is an adjacent area and one which is becoming very prominent—regulators are trying to put early warning signals and almost mandate that. A big use-case now is what happens after a loan gets disbursed: portfolio monitoring, early warning signals of stress, cross or up-sell potential to the customer—or pre-approving someone even before they come for a loan.

At the very base level, we have a platform that can be provided to the lender either as a SaaS (software as a service) offering or an on-prem (on-premises) deployment, where the lender can—without doing any coding, but just by knowing Excel and PowerPoint—be trained and they can create the journeys like on a piece of paper. Ultimately, whatever they're doing manually can be automated fully.

To make this platform operational, we connect it to various data sources. We have partnerships with 30-40 different APIs (application programming interface). They are connected based on the client's requirements and the whole journey gets executed in less than a second. Some clients might want to improve their internal rules and ask us for suggestions. That's where we bring in our scorecards and models. Those are our IP (intellectual property), which we train and keep validating and monitoring annually using real data. We can just drop that into the client's platform.

Would the ULI end up competing with you, considering it has the government and the RBI's backing?

Actually, that won't be the case. We don't produce the raw data—credit bureaus, banks, and others do that. We take the raw data, enrich it, and build intelligence on top of it. This completes the picture for a lender. What does the lender want ultimately: should I give a loan to this person? If so, how much should I give? And if there are slightly higher risks, can I change my interest rate? That is where we come in.

What the ULI is essentially saying is that there will be a unified interface where the data providers will provide the data and people like us, who are helping banks consume the data, will use that data. Today, if you ask an SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) for their financials, they will give you something in Excel, a printout, or at best something from Tally; there's no common system. Yes, there is the RoC (Registrar of Companies) and it will give some data. But account aggregators still don't give bank statements for the larger current accounts; they give for individual accounts and proprietorship current accounts only. In fact, a company like us struggles because we go with our models and clients say they don't have any data and ask us to scan PDFs. We do it, but that's not our forte. So, ULI (will be) a big boon to players like us because, hopefully, it will incentivise the givers of data to give the data and it will lead to the standardisation of schemas and let us focus on what we do best.

The RBI report on developing a framework for responsible and ethical enablement of AI in the financial sector wants to promote AI in the manner of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for payments: it wants a fund for data and compute infrastructure and high-quality financial sector data infrastructure to help build models. Will the strategy that worked for UPI and payments work for AI in financial services too?

The committee's proposal makes sense, but AI presents different challenges than payments. UPI succeeded because payments needed a standardised infrastructure. AI needs something more sophisticated: shared infrastructure to democratise access to high-quality data and compute, plus an AI innovation sandbox for testing.

The committee's recommendation for a dedicated fund to finance indigenous AI model development addresses a real problem. Unlike payments, where competition happens at the application level, AI benefits from shared foundational infrastructure while companies compete on implementation—think of it as building better roads so everyone can drive faster, not forcing everyone to use the same car.

India's financial data is fragmented across institutions, making it hard to build representative models. A shared backbone could help smaller players access quality data and compute power they couldn't afford alone, while preventing the bias that comes from training on narrow datasets. This levels the playing field without stifling competition. Companies will still differentiate on how they use these tools to serve their customers better.

Your clients are primarily non-bank financial companies (NBFCs) and fintechs. Is there a tendency for banks to depend more on in-house models?

Yes, the clients are mostly NBFCs and fintechs. We do have a few banks like Jana Small Finance Bank and Unity Small Finance Bank. We are also talking to a couple of other small finance banks. But the lion's share, yes, is not banks.

Banks tend to have large in-house teams and a sea of data scientists building models. But they do look at products from startups in a PoC (proof of concept) or PoC++ way. They don't take these products to replace their current main processes. And because of our size and bandwidth, it's tough to go to these banks and play with their PoCs for a year or two and wait for them to make their decision. So, it's just that we have taken a conscious stance to start with fintechs who are the early movers on AI and digitisation and then to the NBFCs. Now, we are getting in front of the banks. Private banks are next in our journey.

A big reason to use AI is efficiency gains. Are these gains meaningful in the underwriting process and banking in general?

Let's say you have a branch-based business and you are giving microfinance or MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise) loans to non-metro, non-salaried, non-Tier I prime customers. Typically, you get some data from them and an underwriter will punch some numbers in Excel and calculate certain ratios and based on them recommend a loan amount.

Now imagine if this is standardised across all branches while maintaining legitimate branch-to-branch differences: if the east zone has a higher risk, there should be a different tolerance for it. A tool like ours allows you to do that—it preserves the nuances of the different segments of a business even while standardising the whole process. Of course, 10-20 per cent of decisions might require a human call. But 80 per cent, let's say, can be standardised. If a company wants to double in size in the next two years, they would have had to double the number of underwriters. But if they're using a tool like ours, they will only add 10 per cent more because 80 per cent of the work is automated. That is the efficiency we are bringing in today.

Tomorrow, sentiments of a customer could be captured during a conversation with a branch official through the audio of the conversation and qualitative comments written in a tablet. If there was a Large Language Model (LLM) which can capture all these different forms of data—audio, video, unstructured text—and give it a structured meaning, which then feeds into a model like ours, then that one conversation replaces two-three visits to the customer. I think that's not too far away given the rate at which LLMs are coming.

It's difficult to have a conversation about AI without talking about job losses. What sort of roles is Scienaptic replacing and what would the typical worker in these roles look like?

Currently, because of platforms like ours, the need for underwriters is less for processing X number of files. So far, because the Indian economy is growing, it has not led to reduced underwriter jobs; companies are able to grow faster without having to hire that many people. But if this continues and broadens, I think one of the jobs that will obviously be at risk is underwriting. This is not a very high-end job. So, they will have to upskill or reskill themselves.

But it's not just underwriters. Take a Loan against Property, for instance. If you look at the handoffs in the whole process, it is not just underwriters, but a bunch of middlemen—somebody who takes files, goes to the field, etc. If the process is digitised and automated, the operational intermediaries will go away. So, COOs (Chief Operating Officers) of banks are really looking forward to AI to make their operations very efficient. But at the same time, that's where jobs will be lost. And it will mostly be in tier-III cities. In tier-I cities, a lot of this has already been digitised. But there is a whole new aspect which may lead to job creation. AI, in the future, could help banks identify opportunities to lend that they may be ignoring today. If a drone, for instance, can inform a lender about a farmer's field—what he grows, his productivity—then the bank can forecast his cash flows using estimates for demand for what is being grown, change in price of that item, rainfall, etc. And if the bank has information on the farmer's family members—children, their health, age—then the income and expenses can be forecast. Suddenly, banks can make a much more educated guess and could be willing to lend that farmer some money.

Drones must be part of India's war policy, says Rajnath Singh

Noida: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday stressed the need for incorporating drones into war policy, calling them critical to modern warfare strategy. "Generally, when we hear the word 'aircraft', images of Tejas, Rafale, and fighter jets come to mind. This is natural, as these are all combat aircraft. However, in today's changing times, drones have emerged as a significant force in this field. Drones are now being deployed even in areas where large equipment cannot reach," he said.

"If you closely observe the Russia-Ukraine conflict, you will notice that drones have been used extensively—earlier, now, and continuously. This proves that understanding the importance of drones and incorporating them into our war policy has become essential," Singh added. He was speaking at the inauguration of Raphe mPhibr Pvt Ltd's defence equipment and engine-testing facility in Noida. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was also present at the event. "A strong reflection of the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat was seen here today," Singh said after inaugurating the private facility. Highlighting the history of drones, Singh said that in their early days, they were used only for surveillance and reconnaissance. "Later, some countries began developing combat drones, and many nations started deploying them in border conflicts," he said.



"Countries that invested in drone technology have gained a significant edge in this field, while many others have been left behind. From my six to six-and-a-half years of experience (as defence minister), I can say that the reality of today's defence sector rests on aircraft technology and drones," Singh added. The Defence Minister further said it was a matter of great pride that India is rapidly advancing in this domain. "Earlier, we had to import drones, but today we are designing, developing, and manufacturing them domestically," he said. "Many entrepreneurs in the country are contributing to this progress, and no praise is enough for their efforts," Singh added.

Unnati Hooda's fight in vain, and beauty of badminton's relay format as India drop opening set on last point vs Korea in World Juniors



GNS News Agency, March 8

The Badminton Junior World Championships underway at Guwahati are witnessing a thriller of a quarterfinal between India and Korea as the hosts attempt to win their first ever team medal. Korea lead India 1-0 with one or two more 'set' (five matches to 45 points) to go. India are 27-23 ahead in the second set after losing the first as the arenas are booming with high decibel. The format followed is a relay system, where each of the five categories – men's singles, men's doubles, mixed doubles, women's doubles and women's singles play mini-matches to 9 points each.

Whoever gets to 9 points first in a match, next can go only upto 9 more points (so players change at 9, 18, 27, 36,

45). The beauty of the format is the team trailing can collect as many points as possible, while the leaders need only 9 more. India started with men's doubles and Bhargav-Viswa trained Choi-Lee 5-9. Indian women's doubles then made up the deficit taking team score to 15-18 (taking 10 points, giving 9). Then Rounak Chouhan further took advantage of hoarding points taking 12 points, levelling with Korea 27-27. This is where India faltered. Mixed doubles where Koreans are ace saw Lee-Cheon take their 9 points on a canter, and India managed only 3, as India trailed 30-36. Unnati Hooda playing the decisive match to win the set (first to 45 points) played out of her skin against Kim Han Bi. Using her length shots and court craft, she dragged India to 44-44 with individual score of 14-8, when the Korean Kim merely needed 9 to win. Kim only needed to defend her lead, while Unnati had a deficit of 6 points to cover. At 44-44, Unnati was on a roll, defending body shots and finding drops and tosses to take India to bring of first set win. It's when disaster struck, a mistake she will not forget ever. She served into the net, handing the set to Korea, after doing all the hard work. Slumped in despondency at the error, she couldn't believe her wretched luck. India fell a set behind, and Unnati will want to make amends if she can in the next two sets, if India win the second. But the Guwahati arena is buzzing. Bhargav Arigela paired with Lalramsanga in second set for men's doubles to take 9-7 lead, while WD made it 18-10.

'Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli should play 'A' games or Vijay Hazare Trophy': R Ashwin tells selectors 'must find a way'

GNS News Agency, March 8

Spin legend R Ashwin cast doubts over India's superstar duo Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's motivation to feature in preparatory matches with India A teams ahead of their ODI commitments. For the first time in nearly four months, Rohit and Kohli will be gearing up for competitive cricket since the IPL season when the Men in Blue tour Australia for three ODIs under newly-appointed skipper, Shubman Gill.

With negligible game time behind them, Ashwin said the selectors must aim to crack a middle ground and urge the veteran duo to try and feature in A games or the Vijay Hazare Trophy for their respective state sides to remain in contention in ODIs. "If you need their services, you have to find a way. For example, the India 'A' series happened, so you need to ask them to play that series because there is not much 50-over cricket. They should have said that if you don't play the series, I don't think you fit in the plan. If not this series, then they have to play the Vijay Hazare Trophy, because that will let us know the kind of form you are in," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel. "I have heard in the past that sometimes players do not like to play domestic cricket. Maybe they are not motivated to play in an India 'A' series, it could be the case. So, you have to give them the opportunity. If you have given them the chance and they said no, then it is clear. The management must tell them to show that they are serious. I don't think any selector or coach will have it in them to say that Virat and Rohit's



services are no longer needed. That experience you cannot buy in a store. You will have to be really gone wrong somewhere to say that you don't need them. If there is any doubt as to whether they will be able to make it until the 2027 World Cup, then I think the direction they have taken seems to be fair. You cannot go leading up to the World Cup with so many question marks," he remarked. Ashwin added that the chairman of selectors, Ajit Agarkar, and his panel cannot judge Rohit and Kohli solely based on their form and fitness ahead of each series with minimal playing time. "There is no doubt that both Rohit and Virat want to be there (in the 2027 WC). The preparation that we are seeing from them, it is an investment they are putting into their bodies to be ready for the World Cup. Ajit Agarkar and other selectors won't be sitting in a meeting saying that he has done the gym today, so let's select him. That is not how it works," Ashwin said.

'Jitna faayda hai utna lena chahiye': R Ashwin says 'bona fide legend' Ravindra Jadeja shouldn't be missing him in India XI

GNS News Agency, March 8

At the end of the first Test against the West Indies at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad last week, India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja spoke about how he missed his long-time spin partner R Ashwin while bowling at one end. After all, it was the first home Test match for India without Ashwin since 2010. Jadeja, adjudged Player of the Match for his century and four wickets in the innings victory, reflected on the times he bowled in tandem with Ashwin, making them one of the most potent forces of India's Test dominance at home for over a decade.

"Obviously, we miss him. Ash has contributed so much to Indian cricket for so many years. He has been a match-winner. Playing a Test in India without Ash, somewhere it feels Ash would bowl now, but then the realisation comes that he is not there," Jadeja said during the press conference after the first Test against West Indies. "He shouldn't be missing me. Reacting to Jadeja's admission on his YouTube channel, Ashwin said the star left-arm spinner should not be missing him as his presence may have meant fewer additions to the former's wickets column. "If I was playing, I would have taken 2-3 wickets from the ones he took, so he should not be missing me. Jitna faayda hai utna lena chahiye (He should capitalise on whatever there is). He is becoming a bona fide legend of Test cricket, I am really happy for him," Ashwin, who recorded a staggering 537 wickets in 106 Test appearances said.

'He has no one to talk to now' Ashwin also added that



the soon-to-be 37 Jadeja might be feeling slightly out of space with a transitioning side around him. "After hearing his comments, I know that he is showing affection, but more than anything else, I don't think he has anyone to talk to now. All of them are new boys. There used to be small talk between us, and you reach a level of super seniority, you have to think before making small talk to the youngsters. He must be thinking whether the youngsters would judge him, but if Ash was here he will not judge. When Puji retired, I felt the same, we used to sit together," he added. Jadeja has been in prolific form this season. After being part of the Champions Trophy victory in the UAE, Jadeja enjoyed a blockbuster England tour with the bat, recording over 500 runs with a century and four fifties.

Premier League trains 30 Indian community coaches in Mumbai, reaffirms grassroots commitment

HYDERABAD: The Premier League has reaffirmed its long-term commitment to supporting grassroots football in India through a Community Coach Development Programme in Mumbai. The three-day programme was central to the League's week-long fan and community engagement initiatives in India – its first major milestone since the opening of its Mumbai office earlier this year. Delivered in partnership with the British Council in Mumbai, the three-day programme was led by coaches from the Premier League, Brentford and Newcastle United, who provided expert training to 30 community coaches, helping expand access to football across India.

The activity culminated in a showcase event at the Cooperage Football Ground in Mumbai. The community coaches put the skills they have learned into practice with 80 children from the Oscar Foundation, highlighting how the programme empowers local leaders to inspire the next generation through football. Among the special guests in atten-

dance were UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Premier League legend Michael Owen, who interacted with the coaches and the young players. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said: "I'm hugely proud of our national sport – it brings communities together and changes lives." "That's why the Premier League's training programme in India is so impressive – not only is it one of our most successful exports, but it's training the game's future coaches, inspiring young people, and showing the world what British sport can do." Former Liverpool, Manchester United, and Newcastle United striker Owen said: "Witnessing the passion for football in India this week has been incredible and I'm sure it can only grow in the future." "The Premier League has been delivering community work in the country for nearly 20 years, helping to develop the grassroots game. It was great to see this programme bringing together community coaches who have been involved in the League's longstanding work, and seeing how football is being used to change lives is inspiring."

'He has played for a while now for that one ball in 2024': R Ashwin questions Harshit Rana's all-format inclusion



GNS News Agency, March 8

Former India all-rounder R Ashwin has questioned the all-format inclusion of Harshit Rana, while acknowledging that the Delhi pacer possesses raw talent to flourish in the near future. The veteran off-spinner did not also find merit in Rana's batting skills, which has been mentioned as one of the reasons the seamer has got the nod in recent months. Ashwin also added that Rana's presence across formats since the IPL 2024 season may just be on the merit of his exploits in the final against SunRisers Hyderabad that season, where he picked up two wickets.

"Why they are selecting him, I am not sure. I would love to be in the selection meeting to know the reason behind his inclusion. From my side, the reason I see is – In Australia we need that fast bowler who can bat. Someone trusts that he can bat, which is why they are selecting him

as a potential No. 8. But I am not sure about his batting ability. Two years back he bowled a brilliant pacy delivery in the IPL final that flew off the edge (Nitish Kumar Reddy's dismissal). He has played for a while now for that one delivery," remarked Ashwin on his YouTube channel.

'He has the ability' Ashwin, however, recognised Rana's potential to become a vital bowler across formats for India. The 23-year-old made his Test debut for India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy last year, before subsequently making his limited-overs debuts within the next four months. "He definitely has the ability with the ball. I will not accept it if someone says he doesn't have the skill. He definitely does. Such selections happen sometimes because you observe something from a player through close quarters and gain belief in him. Today everyone hails Ravindra Jadeja as a great player. But a time was there when some asked why Ravindra Jadeja was getting picked. I've picked up 540 wickets yet there were people that asked why I was getting picked," Ashwin added. While his selection may be debatable, Ashwin highlighted the qualities that make Rana an excitable talent. "Many people make judgemental calls based on their assumptions. But only when we face the music on the ground, we'll come to know. Likewise, Harshit Rana might come across in some way from a distance. But only when you face a heavy ball from him, you'll understand that he has something. Whether he deserves selection or not is a secondary issue, but he's got some X-factor, let's not forget that. Yet, if you ask me if he deserves selection now, it's very questionable," said Ashwin.

'I put Virat Kohli at number one over Sachin Tendulkar': Former England cricketer reasons why his choice will 'raise eyebrows'

GNS News Agency, March 8

Former England pacer Steve Harmison snubbed India batting legend Sachin Tendulkar to name Virat Kohli as the greatest cricketer of the last three decades. Kohli, who will turn 37 next month, is set to mark his return for the national side for the first time in seven months when India tour Australia next week for three ODIs. Harmison reckoned Kohli has had to face more changes and challenges on and off the field as opposed to Tendulkar. During the 2023 ODI World Cup, Kohli surpassed Tendulkar's tally of 49 ODI centuries and currently stands atop the charts with 51 hundreds. In 302 games, the former captain has aggregated 14,181 runs, averaging 57.88.

"I put Virat Kohli at number one over Sachin Tendulkar, and that would raise a lot of eyebrows. But I thought his career, and what he had to do in his career, was I thought the way the game changed over the course of this last ten years, Virat's had to have deal with a hell of a lot more off the field stuff that would affect him on the field. I think for me, in the last 20-30 years, the greatest cricketer that has played the game, you take Shane Warne out, because he had come a lot before. I think it's Virat Kohli," Harmison said on talkSPORT Cricket. Harmison also touched upon BCCI chairman of selectors, Ajit Agarkar's notion of players having to play domestic cricket whenever available to stay in contention and stated the sheer workload of over a decade



has prevented both Kohli and Rohit Sharma from appearing in domestic games. "We've got to remember, these guys haven't played since 2013 and 2018 respectively, because they have been playing non-stop India. The amount of cricket they play, you look at Virat's career numbers, he made his debut in 2008-2009. The reason why they haven't played since then is that they have been constantly on the road with India," he said. "If Agarkar's looking for a fight, he might get one but he's not going to win unfortunately. This is not going the distance. This could be a heavy knock out in the first round if he tries to go in especially without Virat," Harmison remarked.

'Ajit Agarkar might have a messy end after domestic cricket comment on Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli,' says ex-England pacer

GNS News Agency, March 8

Former England pacer Steve Harmison has slammed India's chairman of selectors, Ajit Agarkar, for his cut-throat remarks on Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's ODI future ahead of the Men in Blue's tour to Australia, starting October 19. In the press conference in Ahmedabad last week where he announced the appointment of Shubman Gill as the new ODI captain, replacing Rohit, Agarkar remarked that the both senior members of the squad remained non-committal to the 2027 ODI World Cup. Agarkar also said it was imperative that the players feature in domestic cricket when available to remain in contention. Both Rohit and Kohli have not featured in a competitive match since the IPL 2025 season and last turned up for India during the Champions Trophy final in Dubai in March. Harmison, however, said the tone of Agarkar's messaging could eventually land him in choppy waters.

"Unfortunately I think there might be a messy end for Ajit Agarkar there. If anybody is going to win here I think it is the former captains rather than the former all-rounder. But it all depends on, if Agarkar is saying this, just to fuel the fire of Kohli and Sharma, then fair enough. You put your cards on the table and see what comes," he said on talkSPORT Cricket. Harmison reckoned the road to the next ODI World Cup could be relatively easier for Kohli than Rohit, who is one year his senior. "I think Kohli has got a little bit of skin in the game. Runs in the bank, his reputation. Sharma, not as much. Sharma's a little bit older. He's not been as influential in 50-over cricket as Virat has. If Virat turns around and says,



'All right, you go to the 50-over World Cup without me and leading up to it, let's see when you're chasing 350 in 50 overs to win against Australia or England, and you haven't got that bloke who averages 90 winning games at number four, see where your teams at'. There could be a messy end in that way. There could also be words that have been misunderstood in translation," he added. "He might just have said I want them to play because they are not going to be playing. That's the problem.

They're not playing Test cricket, they're not playing T20 cricket. They're only going to play the IPL. And if 50-over cricket is at the back end of the year, not when the IPL is, we could do with them playing a couple of domestic games. That could possibly be the way it was put across by Agarkar and it has been blown out of proportion," remarked Harmison.

Tilak Varma named Hyderabad Ranji Trophy captain for first three matches

Hyderabad: Tilak Varma has been named captain of the Hyderabad Ranji Trophy for the first three matches this season to be played here

The team: Tilak Varma (captured), Rahul Singh (vice-captain), C.V. Milind, Tanmay Agarwal, M. Abhirath Reddy, Himateja, Varun Goud, Tanay Thyagarajan, Rohit Rayudu, Saranu Nishant, Punnaiah, Aniketh Reddy, Kartikeya Kak, Ali Kachi Diamond (wk) and Rahul Radesh (wk).

Stand-byes: P. Nitish Reddy, Sai Pragay Reddy, Rakshand Raddi, Nitesh Kanala and Mickhil Jaiswal.



Tilak Varma will lead Hyderabad in the opening three Ranji Trophy matches of the season starting October 15. The squad includes key players Tanmay Agarwal, Rohit Rayudu, and C.V. Milind, with Rahul Singh serving as vice-captain.

The Malayalam actor alongside whom Amitabh Bachchan made his debut was overlooked for Dadasaheb Phalke Award, irking many despite love for Mohanlal



It's been 92 years since Marthanda Varma (1933), the second film ever made in the Malayalam film industry, was released. Helmed by PV Rao and adapted from CV Raman Pillai's 1891 novel of the same title, Marthanda Varma was a silent film that followed Vigathakumaran (1930), which marked the birth of Malayalam cinema. The year 1933 holds another special place in the industry's history, as it was on September 23 of that year that a man named Madhavan Nair was born at Gowreesapattom in the erstwhile Kingdom of Travancore. If that name doesn't ring a bell, don't worry. For anyone familiar with Malayalam cinema, it's impossible not to have heard his more well-known stage name, Madhu, as his life story is inseparable from that of the industry. Every year on September 23, Malayalam megastar Mammooty extends heartfelt wishes to the industry icon by sharing a photo of him on social media, accompanied by the words, "Happy Birthday, My Superstar." While Madhu may not fit the conventional definition of a superstar, especially when compared to other superstars of Indian cinema and the way they carried their fame, his contributions to the Malayalam industry and his profound influence on its development and aesthetics justify Mammooty's words. With over 370 films to his credit, spanning various languages, many of which are now considered classics, Madhu also made his mark as a director and producer, making him worthy of the title "the juggernaut of Malayalam cinema."

Madhavan was the eldest and only son among five children of Parameshwaran Pillai and Thankamma. After completing his graduate and postgraduate studies in Hindi at University College, Trivandrum, and Banaras Hindu University, respectively, he joined Hindu College in Nagercoil as a Hindi lecturer before moving to Scott Christian College in the same role. Over time, his interest in the performing arts, drama, and cinema blossomed into a deep passion. This prompted him to eventually resign from his job and join the first batch of the National School of Drama (NSD) in New Delhi in 1959, according to his official website. During his time there, Madhavan gained significant recognition among both the Malayalee community and theatre enthusiasts in Delhi, staging numerous plays. Besides earning the first rank, he also gained valuable connections from NSD that would help shape his future career. Meanwhile, his old friend, amateur stage and cinema actor Adoor Bhasi, introduced him to legendary Malayalam filmmaker Ramu Kariat, known for co-directing the National Award-winning film Neelakuyil (1954). This meeting with Kariat proved to be a pivotal moment in Madhavan's life. After his NSD life, he proceeded to Madras (now Chennai) to take part in a makeup test for Ramu's Moodupadam. As the film was yet to go into production, Madhavan was taken to the location of director NN Pisharady's Ninamaninja Kalpadukal for the test. There, the movie's producer, Sobhana Parameswaran Nair, chanced upon him and was impressed by Madhavan almost instantaneously, offering him a key role in Ninamaninja Kalpadukal, which thus became his debut film. Veteran lyricist-director P Bhaskaran, meanwhile, rechristened Madhavan as Madhu. In his debut movie, he played the second hero to the then-superstar Prem Nazir. Despite the movie featuring a long list of notable actors, Madhu's compelling performance as a soldier did not go unnoticed. His tall physique, measured dialogue delivery, and portrayal that was free from the exaggerated dramatics typical of that era impressed many. With the release of Moodupadam, Madhu caught the attention of even more filmmakers, who began to make a beeline for him. While Prem Nazir was the Nithyharitha Nayakan (Evergreen Hero), known predominantly for his romantic roles and charming portrayals, and Sathyan's performances were marked by intensity and precision, Madhu brought an added layer of relatability to his characters. Not that Sathyan's lacked relatability, but Madhu's performances were even more grounded, often stripped of the additional embellishments actors typically brought to their characters. His style was, I believe, very guy-next-door-ish. Whether such performances, where shades of the actor's real-life mannerisms often become visible, can be described as "good acting" is definitely debatable. However, we can't forget that the most important yardstick for any art/performance is how well it strikes a chord with the audience. And going by that logic, Madhu's portrayals often resonated with the masses, imprinting in their minds the different emotions his characters went through at any given moment. Take, for instance, A Vincent's Bhargavi Nilayam (1964), penned by path-breaking writer Vaikom Muhammad Basheer and widely regarded as the first horror film in Malayalam. Although Madhu's performance as the nameless novelist wasn't completely devoid of the influence of theatre, it wasn't overly polished like that of most of his peers. His body language and dialogue delivery, instead, contained a certain level of fluidity that one could only see in real life and not in screen/stage acting. Whenever he called out to the yakshi (Vijaya Nirmala) as "Bhargavikutty...", it felt like someone close to us was calling, and we can't help but respond immediately.

Thus, despite Nazir and Sathyan dominating the industry, Madhu quickly established himself, winning over the love of the audience and the trust of filmmakers. The subsequent years saw him demonstrating his massive acting potential through a wide range of characters. From Kesavankutty in A Vincent and MT Vasudevan Nair's Murappennu, Kunjachan in "Hitmaker" Sasikumar's Thommante Makkal, and Rajagopal in KS Sethumadhavan's Archana, to his roles in P Bhaskaran's Anveshichu Kandethiyilla, Kallichellamma, and Ummachu, Madhu demonstrated his ability to express deep, layered emotions internally without revealing everything on the surface or leaving the inner hollow.

The best example of this was his iconic portrayal of Pareekutty in Ramu Kariat's Chemmeen (1966) — widely regarded as one of the earliest tour de forces in South Indian cinema. As a fish trader grappling with unrequited love, Madhu redefined on-screen romance by channelling intensity through his eyes and voice, rather than relying on melodramatic facial expressions and mannerisms. Despite the presence of several acting legends in the movie, such as Sathyan, Sheela, and Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair, Madhu's performance became the most iconic, particularly his bit in the song "Maanasamaine Varoo." His portrayal of Pareekutty eventually became a popular routine in Kerala's mimicry scene as well. With Chemmeen's massive success and the national and international recognitions it received, Madhu rose to enormous fame across India. In 1969, while he was soaring high in Malayalam cinema, he made his Bollywood debut in Khwaja Ahmad Abbas' Saat Hindustani, playing a Bengali football coach. Incidentally, this film also marked the acting debut of a young man named Amitabh Bachchan, who would later become Bollywood's "Shahenshah." Although Madhu's performance in this movie was also appreciated, his eyes were set firmly on Malayalam cinema. And the 1970s saw him rise as the favourite of both commercial and independent filmmakers, making strides in a wide range of films and characters. Just as brilliantly as he knocked it out of the park in mainstream films like Bobanum Moliyum, Karakanakadal, Inquilab Zindabad, Manushya Bandhanga, Naadan Premam, Gandharava Kshetram, Chukku, Thekkankattu, Yakshaganam, Itha Ivide Vare, Seemanthini, and Eeta, Madhu made jaws drop with his performances in artistically superior movies like Olavum Theeravum, Abhayam, Theertha Yathra, Mazhakaaru, Agni, and Pushyaraagam, and even in the outings of notable independent filmmakers like Adoor Gopalakrishnan and John Abraham's Swayamvaram and Vidhyarthikale Ithile Ithile, respectively. Besides Malayalam, Madhu also appeared in Tamil films like Rajinikanth's Dharma Durai. He was also one of the few actors who could easily slip into any character without being concerned about its screen time and still leave a lasting impression on the audience. From Meen, Muthuchippikal, Padayottam, Pinnilavu, Kodungattu, Ithiripoove Chuvannapoove, Aparan, Witness, Naduvazhikal, Mudra, Lal Salam, Malappuram Haji Mahanaya Joji and Simhavan Menon, to Varnapakattu, Ezhupunna Tharakan, Chathikkatha Chanthu, Naran, Hallo, Kaaryasthan, and Spirit, Madhu remained a force to be reckoned with. That's why, when he appeared in substandard movies, particularly in the 2010s, there was no way anyone could criticise his acting. The mediocrity or shoddiness in his performances was, hence, quickly attributed to the makers' inability to extract the best from him. Just as unbothered as he was regarding screen time or space, Madhu was also unperturbed in playing supporting characters or even grey-shaded ones. His artistry was such that when he made his directorial debut with Priya in 1970, he played the antagonist in the movie. The film not only showcased his potential as a filmmaker but also received recognition in the form of a state award. Madhu was, in fact, among the rare few who contributed meaningfully to the industry, instead of merely benefiting from it and enjoying a life of ease. Over the years, he helmed notable movies like Sindoorecheppu, Sathi, Manyasree Viswamithran, Neelakannukal, Akkaldaama, Kaamam Krodham Moham, Theekkanal, Dheerasameere Yamuna Theere, Aaraadhana, Oru Yugasandhya, and Udayam Padinjaru. He apparently also produced and directed a movie in English, Sunrise in the West, which was entirely shot in the US. Madhu's contributions to cinema extended beyond acting and directing, as he also bankrolled several films, including Kaithappoo, Asthamayam, Shudhikalasham, Prabhaathasandhya, Vaiki Vanna Vasantham, Grihalakshmi, Archana Teacher, Njaan Ekananu, Rathilayam, and Mini. He was also the owner of the once-renowned Uma Studio in Thiruvananthapuram, which made him the first actor in Malayalam cinema to own a studio. However, as cinema moved from studio sets to open locations, Uma Studio lost its relevance, and Madhu eventually sold it to Asianet, which continues to operate from the site to date.

Raha makes a cameo in dad Ranbir Kapoor's birthday video; actor says, 'A lot of greys in my beard'

On the occasion of his 43rd birthday today, actor Ranbir Kapoor shared a special video for fans through his lifestyle label, Arks. What caught everyone's attention in the clip was Ranbir's daughter Raha making a surprise cameo.

In the video, Ranbir thanks his fans for all the birthday wishes and says, "Hi, I want to take this moment to say thank you to all of you for all the love and wishes coming to me on my birthday. I'm 43 years old today. As you can see, a lot of greys in my beard, it keeps increasing year by year. But a lot of gratitude in my heart for my family, for my friends, for my work, and mostly for all of you guys. Thank you so much for your time. You make me feel so special." In the background, fans can hear Raha speaking in her adorable voice, and at one point, she even makes a shrill sound before starting to talk again. According to reports, Ranbir Kapoor, his wife Alia Bhatt, and their daughter Raha were on a short getaway. The family returned to Mumbai on Sunday morning by private charter and were clicked at Mumbai's Kalina airport. Ranbir was seen giving flying kisses to the paparazzi after arriving at the airport. Alia was also spotted behind him, dressed in an all-black outfit. On Ranbir Kapoor's birthday, his mother Neetu Kapoor took to Instagram to wish the actor. She shared a photo of Ranbir and Alia and wrote, "Happy birthday my love. So grateful and blessed to have you." On the professional front,

Rana Daggubati on what inspires industry kids like him, Dulquer Salmaan to back films like Sabar Bonda, Lokah: 'Cinema gave us that privileged background, we should keep giving back'



Not many people know that six years before making his acting debut with Sekhar Kammula's 2010 political drama Leader, Rana Daggubati became a National Award-winning producer. He co-produced Prakash Kovelamudi's children's film Bommalata in 2004, which won a National Award for Best Feature Film in Telugu. Ever since then, Rana has backed not only Telugu and Tamil films as a producer, but also backed award-winning film festival favourites like Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light last year and Rohan Kanwade's Sabar Bonda this year, under his company Spirit Media. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, the actor opens up about what drives him to back independent films, particularly those outside his native language, what really constitutes a pan-India film, and his excitement for SS Rajamouli's Baahubali: The Epic, which combines both installments of the popular franchise, slated to release in cinemas on October 31.

You've invested extensively in multiple businesses outside of films. Conventional business wisdom would tell you not to invest in indie movies like All We Imagine As Light and Sabar Bonda. What gives you the confidence as a business guy to back these projects?

Let's take a business lens on this, and not an art lens, for some time. Most often, businesses are created when there's an opportunity or a market gap. Most people will tell you not to go into a direction because it hasn't been done before or some people have faced some failure before. That doesn't mean the system is flawed. It just means the right system hasn't been built yet. I had the privilege of growing up in different parts of India, across different film landscapes, at different points of time. We've been exposed to different kinds of cinema over time, but just that there was no consistency for parallel cinema, or anything that was away from the ordinary, in some ways. But whenever a filmmaker made cinema like that, it created an impact not only in India but across the world, and that lasted much more than any commercial cinema would. A film of Satyajit Ray would outlast any mainstream commercial film even today, and for a generation to come. If you become a film student, you'll go back to cinema that probably wasn't successful at the box office then, but became much more impactful with time. So, that's the thought behind Spirit Media.

But it would've taken years to build a system at Spirit Media, given that you said one didn't exist for the longest time?

In the early 2000s, when I started out, we were obviously very independent and naïve. We just thought if we make a film that wins awards, there'll be an audience too. We won two National Awards, but there was no audience. That film was still quite independent despite having the voices of many big stars (Shriya Saran and Allari Naresh), but it didn't do anything. I gradually discovered there were many films like that which were going all around the world before coming to India. I thought that was very odd. I thought if the world can appreciate something before we can appreciate it, there's some gap. We then did C/o Kancharapalem (2018), which took every successful mainstream route out. We kept doing films like that in Telugu and Tamil (Kaantha), and always found an audience for them.

With All We Imagine As Light, your distribution went from South to pan-India. How did that happen?

All We Imagine As Light pushed us out of our comfort zone. It's a film that first came to us because it was part-Malayalam. But then we realized it's something the whole country can watch in different manners. It's a story of Malayali nurses living in Mumbai, who had a Maharashtrian friend. It encompassed India in a very beautiful way. India is actually like that, but cinema doesn't showcase it like that. We'd always attach commercial terms to it and think

This director used to sell lamp shades at traffic signals, became a force with his Amitabh Bachchan trilogy; died before he could finish his biggest film

There are some filmmaking talents who could do wonders with the technology and sensibility of today had they been around. One of them is Mukul Anand, who died of a heart attack at the age of 46 in 1997. He had many stories left to tell and several movies yet to finish, including the one he was shooting for at that time, his biggest, titled Dus. Mukul had several Bollywood connections while growing up. His uncle Inder Raj Anand was the screenwriter of Raj Kapoor's 1948 cult classic Aag among other memorable films. Later, his cousin and Inder's son Tinnu Anand became an actor and a director, having helmed movies like Amitabh Bachchan-starrer Kaalia (1981), Shahenshah (1988), and Major Saab (1998).

Mukul Anand's father was a Chartered Accountant and a tax consultant, with the cream of Hindi cinema as his clientele. But after he fell severely ill, Mukul had to step up. While he had filmmaking aspirations, he had to keep those aside owing to his family's financial condition. Instead, he began crafting and selling lamp shades at traffic signals of Bandra Linking Road in Mumbai for Rs 25 per piece. "When I came out of school, I realised I wanted to get into films. But there was no scope since my family was in a bad state and I couldn't become a struggler at that time," he told Rediff, adding, "It was a very bad phase, and I can never forget it. I

whether a film should be dubbed in Hindi. But All We Imagine As Light did well at the box office. It had a seven-week run, which not even many mainstream films get. It collected more on its second and third weekends than it did on the first. So, you knew this cinema needed a different kind of marketing, showcasing, and communicating. Putting that hat as an entrepreneur gave much more meaning to what I was doing. Hence, Sabar Bonda comes right after.

But what is that different kind of showcasing?

There's a certain global accolade system, where a film goes from festival to festival, winning awards in different places. But otherwise, it's about how to showcase it to the right, intended audience. There's an audience out there who wants to watch, but they don't have a consistent stream of cinema. We don't have films like Sabar Bonda releasing every week or even every month. If we're able to find the right balance and make it a habit, we can have cinema like this release in the second or third week of every month. Earlier, there was a big hesitation from distributors. They said, "You're the guy who gave us Baahubali and The Ghazi Attack (2017). Why are you giving us All We Imagine As Light?" The minute they saw the success of this cinema, they realized there's another audience they can consistently cater to. So yeah, it's the beginning of a journey that's going to last for a long period of time. You were also one of the first South actors from your generation to do a Hindi film in Dum Maar Dum (2011). You were a part of Baahubali: The Beginning (2015), that kickstarted the pan-India film phenomenon. And now, you're taking Malayalam and Marathi indie films across India as a distributor. Where does this pan-India gaze come from?

When I was young, I was first exposed to Tamil cinema because I was in Chennai. Then we moved to Hyderabad, where along with Telugu movies, Hindi movies started coming into my life because Nizam is a popular territory for Hindi films. But while watching a film, we never cared if it was Tamil, Hindi, or English. As you grow up and become a part of the industry, you begin to segregate. But the audience doesn't really care. When I was in Mumbai for Dum Maar Dum, I was proposing to filmmakers to make films that are relevant to other audiences of other languages and can be released in multiple languages. But nobody believed me at that point. They asked why the Hindi audience would watch a Telugu film, and vice-versa. But today, everybody's trying to do that. Sometimes, you catch trends early on, but you've to be able to hold on to them. We've been holding on to that thread for a while now, and that's shown us consistent success.

So, you were asking everyone to make a Baahubali years before they actually made one?

That was always my intention. I didn't know much about Hindi cinema when I first came here, but I knew the language of the filmmakers was the same everywhere. It's just bound by region because somehow, the politics of your nation told you you're from one state and that's a different state. Let's take Baahubali and Sabar Bonda, on both ends, as examples. Baahubali had no North Indian cast, except Tamannaah Bhatia, who's as much a part of the Telugu film industry as we are. For all practical purposes, Prabhas and I were new people. Rajamouli had made Makkhi (2012), which only a few people knew about. But this film opened like a mainstream Hindi film would. So, it didn't matter where the audience was. Similarly, for Sabar Bonda, I knew very little Marathi and watched very little Marathi cinema. The minute I watched this film, I didn't care which region it was from. I knew the conflict and trauma of the protagonist, and I was waiting for his journey to overcome that. That goes beyond language, and is the only thing that brings us together as Indians and humans. Baahubali starred Prabhas and Rana Daggubati among others. Baahubali starred Prabhas and Rana Daggubati among others.

But since Baahubali, there has been an attempt to consciously cast North Indian faces in big South tentpoles in order to give it that pan-India appeal. Do you think pan-India cast should be curated like that? Casting somebody for the market isn't right. Casting for the role is right. It didn't matter to the audience whether Prabhas and I were Telugu or Tamil. We just looked like guys from that time who were fighting for the throne. We could be speaking any language, but you connected only because we looked the part. Sathyaraj, who played Katappa, is a veteran Tamil actor, but it didn't matter to the audience because the minute he appeared on screen, you thought he's Katappa. It's just that the casting should be authentic. If your character is Malayalam-speaking, cast someone who can speak the language. That's the care one needs to take instead. A film isn't a deal. It's a story. It never asked you for a North Indian face. It just chose the right people.