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Telangana imposes 60-day ban on Paraquat pesticide

Hyderabad: The Agriculture and Cooperation Department has issued a notification imposing a 60-day ban on chemical pesticide Paraquat in Telangana. "The sale/stock/distribution/manufacturing/use of Paraquat and its derivatives/formulations is hereby banned in the State of Telangana for a period of 60-days with immediate effect from the issue of this order," the notification, which was issued on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, said. On receipt of feedback and reports from various sources on the adverse effect of chemical pesticide, Paraquat and its derivatives/formulations in human health and animals and keeping in view of Public Health and Farmers Safety, and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 27 of the Insecticides Act, 1968, the State government has hereby made the order," the notification said.

Lok Sabha passes Bill for statutory status to Amaravati as Andhra's sole capital

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday unanimously passed a Bill to grant statutory recognition to Amaravati as the sole capital of Andhra Pradesh.

The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was passed by a voice vote after a two-hour-long debate, which saw the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Congress, Samajwadi Party and others supporting the Bill.

However, Dharmendra Yadav of Samajwadi Party while supporting the Bill said if Visakhapatnam was developed as the state capital, there would have been no need to acquire lands from farmers and this would also have saved huge amounts of money.

Meanwhile, YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) members staged a walk-out during the debate while opposing the Bill in its present form.

The Bill is aimed at amending the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, affirming Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

The proposed amendment to Section 5 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 replaces the earlier provision of "a new capital" with "Amaravati shall be the new capital," thereby embedding Amaravati firmly within the statutory framework.

This legislative move follows the unanimous resolution passed by the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on March 28, enabling the Bill's introduction in Parliament.

As per the explanation of the Amendment Bill, the expression "Amaravati" includes the capital city areas notified under the provisions of the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority Act, 2014.

Members of TDP, BJP and Jana Sena, which are partners in the NDA government in Andhra Pradesh, strongly advocated for the Bill.

Minister of State for Rural Development and Communication, Dr. Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, TDP MP Appalanaidu, BJP MPs C.M. Ramesh and Daggubati



Purandeswari, and Jana Sena MP Vallabhaneni Balashowry spoke in support of Amaravati as the capital.

Congress, Samajwadi Party, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar), Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde), and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) supported the Bill.

Participating in the debate, BJP member Daggubati Purandeswari said keeping the spiritual and historical significance of Amaravati in mind, it was identified to be the state capital.

She noted that while Telangana began its journey with Hyderabad as the capital which was ready, functional and globally recognised, Andhra Pradesh did not have a capital.

She said that February 8, 2014 was a black day in the annals of India's parliamentary history as the Bill to bifurcate a state was passed without healthy discussion, with doors of the Parliament shut and cameras switched off.

She claimed that the bifurcation was driven by sheer and pure political gains by the then UPA government. Stating that Andhra Pradesh was subjected to deep humiliation, she said it was probably the first instance in India's history where a residual state was left with no capital at all.

Government says domestic LPG, petrol and diesel price unchanged despite global surge



GNS News Agency, April 1

New Delhi: The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas clarified on Wednesday that only the price of commercial LPG have been increased in the country, while that of domestic LPG has been left unchanged to protect households from the sharp rise in the cost at which the cooking gas is being imported amid disruptions due to the Iran war. "Prices of commercial LPG cylinders, used by industries and hotels, are deregulated, market determined and revised normally on a monthly basis. Their consumption is less than 10 per cent of the total LPG consumed in the country," the Ministry said in a statement posted on X.

The April 1 price increase in commercial cylinder price is due to a 44 per cent surge in the Saudi Contract Price: from \$542/MT in March to \$780/MT for April, as 20-30 per cent of global LPG supplies are stuck in Strait of Hormuz, the statement added. "In line with the commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the domestic con-

sumer continues to be comprehensively protected with the price of a 14.2 kg domestic cylinder at Rs 913 remaining unchanged. Similarly, the subsidised price of LPG cylinders for the poor under PMUY scheme remains unchanged at Rs 613," the statement explained.

It further stated that at current prices, the public sector oil marketing companies are incurring an under-recovery of Rs 380 per cylinder. Cumulative losses by end-May will reach approximately Rs 40,484 crore. Last year also, out of total losses of Rs 60,000 crore as much as Rs 30,000 crore were absorbed by the oil PSUs and Rs 30,000 crore by the Government of India, in order to insulate Indian citizens from high international LPG prices, the statement said. The Ministry also pointed out that India's domestic LPG price remains one of the lowest in the world as compared to Pakistan where the price is Rs 1,046 per cylinder, Sri Lanka at Rs 1,242 while in Nepal it is at Rs 1,208. The statement also clarified that regular petrol and diesel prices are unchanged at Rs 94.77 per litre and Rs 87.67 a litre, respectively (Delhi prices). With global petroleum prices up by up to 100 per cent in the last one month, the public sector oil marketing companies are incurring under-recoveries of Rs 24.40 per litre on petrol and Rs 104.99 a litre on diesel at retail selling price level as on April 1, 2026. The recent Rs 2 per litre revision applies only to premium petrol variants — XP95, Power95, Speed — high-octane performance products, the prices of which are revised on a fortnightly basis and their sales constitute only 2 to 5 per cent of total volume. They are purchased by motorists, at a premium, by choice, the statement explained. Every pump in India continues to offer regular petrol and diesel at unchanged prices, even as prices in countries all over the world have risen by 30-50 per cent, the statement added.

Owaisi accuses TMC and others of ignoring Muslims in Bengal

GNS News Agency, April 1

Kolkata: AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday alleged that the ruling TMC and other parties used Muslims for votes in Bengal, but did nothing for the community's development. Owaisi, addressing a poll rally at Naowda in support of candidates of Humayun Kabir-led AJUP, also claimed that in the past 50 years, members of the Muslim community had voted for the Congress, Left Front and the TMC, but their condition did not improve. "For the sake of Muslims in West Bengal getting greater representation in political decision-making, and for their true development, we have joined hands with Kabir. Together, we will give a jolt to Mamata Banerjee and her party," he asserted. "The time has come to elect leaders from the Muslim community who can ensure our economic development," Owaisi said. Elections to the 294-member West



Bengal Assembly will be held in two phases — April 23 and April 29. Votes will be counted on May 4.

ideaForge, IIT Bombay launch deep-tech Programme for young innovators

Hyderabad: With the aim of identifying and nurturing early-stage deep-tech entrepreneurs, ideaForge Technology Limited, in collaboration with the IIT-Bombay, has launched an innovative programme — "Who Are the Next Idiots?". Both organisations have signed an MoU to encourage future tech leaders to develop ideas that solve real-world problems while demonstrating strong technical depth and entrepreneurial intent. The six-month programme has been designed to attract participants working on concept-stage or early prototype ideas rooted in deep technology. The initiative focuses on domains such as robotics, energy systems, advanced materials, and autonomous technologies.

PM Modi visits tea garden in poll-bound Assam, interacts with women workers



GNS News Agency, April 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (April

1, 2026) visited a tea garden in Dibrugarh district in poll-bound Assam and interacted with women workers there. Mr. Modi is on a day-long visit to the State to address two campaign rallies for BJP candidates. "We are very proud of the efforts of each and every tea garden family. Their hard work and perseverance have enhanced Assam's pride," the PM said on X after visiting the Manohari Tea Estate.

Mr. Modi was also seen plucking tea leaves with a group of women attired in traditional white and red bordered sarees. "The plucking of tea leaves was followed by the women talking about their culture and of course, a selfie!" he said in another post on the social media platform. The PM shared some photographs on social media, stating that these are some glimpses from a tea garden in Dibrugarh.

Lok Sabha passes Bill declaring Amaravati as Andhra Pradesh capital

GNS News Agency, April 1

New Delhi: A Bill seeking to recognise Amaravati as the sole and permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh was passed by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, with the opposition Congress also supporting it along with the NDA. The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) opposed the Bill during the debate and walked out of the House in protest when it was passed.

The Bill, which would prevent any future bid to alter the decision to make Amaravati the sole and permanent capital, was passed by a voice vote, fulfilling an aspiration of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, whose party TDP is a key constituent of the ruling NDA.

Responding to a nearly two-hour debate on the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai thanked members for supporting an Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly resolution that urged the Centre to provide legal backing to Amaravati as the state capital. Once the Bill becomes law, Amaravati will be the sole and permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh with effect from June 2, 2024. Earlier, initiating the debate, Congress member B. Manickam Tagore said his party fully supports the legislation but reiterated the demand for special category status for Andhra Pradesh. "Let Amaravati develop like Bengaluru, Chennai or Hyderabad. Let Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Kurnool also develop. We support Amaravati as the permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh," he said.

During his tenure as chief minister, YSRCP leader Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had proposed a three-capital model for Andhra Pradesh — executive capital at Visakhapatnam, legislative capital at Amaravati and judicial capital at Kurnool — instead of a single capital city. After Naidu returned to power in 2024, he reinstated Amaravati as the sole capital.

Participating in the debate, TDP member and Union



Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani appealed to the House to pass the Bill unanimously, saying it would ensure a permanent capital for Andhra Pradesh.

Supporting the Bill, BJP member C.M. Ramesh said this was the first time in independent India that a Bill had been introduced in Parliament to declare a specific place as a state capital. From now onwards, "no one will be able to play" with the capital of Andhra Pradesh as Amaravati will be its sole and permanent capital, he said. Ramesh termed the three-capital proposal "illogical and irrational".

"This Bill will ensure that no one will play with the capital of Andhra Pradesh. We want a permanent capital for Andhra Pradesh and then there will be revenue and the state will flourish," he said. However, the TDP's arch-rival YSR Congress Party strongly opposed the legislation, saying it lacked clarity on protecting farmers' interests and timelines for compensation for land acquired for Amaravati. YSRCP member P.V. Midhun Reddy said 34,000 acres were acquired for the capital with promises of developed plots, housing and free education for affected families, but alleged that these had not been fulfilled.

Rajnath Singh accuses LDF of betraying Lord Ayyappa



GNS News Agency, April 1

Kochi: Senior BJP leader and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday alleged that "God was not secure in Kerala", which is known as God's own country, as the ruling LDF betrayed Lord Ayyappa for a few pieces of gold, a reference to the Sabarimala gold loss

cases. Singh, speaking at a public meeting in Paravur Assembly constituency, said that just like Judas betrayed Jesus Christ, the LDF betrayed Lord Ayyappa.

He also accused the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) of betraying the people of Kerala, dividing society, "destroying" the state's economy and not fulfilling their promises to the public. The Defence Minister, during his election campaign speech, also alleged that the "front" word in both LDF and UDF means "front of corruption". He further alleged that LDF means "loot, division and failure", while UDF means "untrustworthy, dishonesty and fraud".

During his speech, he alleged that state-sponsored gold smuggling occurred in 2020 and people close to Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan were involved in it. He also said that someone in the CM's family was allegedly found to be involved in money laundering in connection with a case related to Cochin Minerals and Rutile Ltd (CMRL). There were several "scams" during the UDF tenure also and it was just as bad as the LDF, Singh claimed.

BRS MLAs slam Congress over disruption in Assembly session

Hyderabad: BRS MLA K Sanjay accused the Congress government of reducing the Telangana Assembly's Budget Session to a political slugfest instead of a meaningful debate. He said the government ran the House for merely nine days, with diversionary and abusive addressing a press meet at Telangana Bhavan here on Wednesday, Sanjay said issues plaguing the State, including declining IT jobs and falling revenue collections, were ignored, with the ruling party members indulging in personal attacks on opposition MLAs. He said as the BRS raised people's issues and questioned the government on corruption, the Assembly proceedings were deliberately derailed. He criticised the Congress members for defending defectors like Kadiyam Srihari without accountability. He also took exception to re-

marks made against senior BRS leader T Harish Rao and his family, alleging that even family members were being dragged into political attacks. He said even government whips like Adi Srinivas, who were expected to liaise with the opposition members, indulged in personal criticism of BRS MLAs. Separately, MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy alleged that the Assembly witnessed threats and abusive language from ruling party members. He questioned why Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was not inclined to constitute a House Committee on illegal mining involving a company belonging to Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's family. He also raised concerns over the fairness of a proposed CB-CID probe, suspecting that it could be biased as it functions under the government.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Public Policy doesn't just have jobs. It has careers

Every year, hundreds of young graduates enter public policy classrooms across India carrying equal parts hope and unease. Hope, because public policy promises proximity to power, intellectual engagement, and the opportunity to contribute to nation-building. Unease, because they quickly encounter a familiar refrain from seniors, relatives, and sometimes even well-meaning academics: "Public policy has jobs, but not a career." Delivered as advice, it often lands as a warning. Beneath it lies a deeper question: Does public policy offer only short-term roles, or is this belief a myth shaped by our limited imagination of what a career should look like?

The anxiety is understandable in a society that still equates success with stability, linear progression, and institutional permanence. Public policy, with its short-term contracts, shifting titles, and cross-sector mobility, appears to defy this expectation. Many early-career roles in think tanks, NGOs, foundations, and even government advisory units are project-based or fixed-term. Titles change quickly, vertical mobility can seem opaque, and lateral movement becomes common.

For families accustomed to traditional career narratives, this fluidity feels risky. The conclusion often follows that policy may provide work, but not a lifelong profession. Yet this view frequently mistakes organisational structure for professional substance. Public policy as a professional field outside the civil services is still relatively young in India. Unlike medicine, law, engineering, or the bureaucracy, it lacks a single, clearly demarcated ladder where one starts as a junior and retires at the top. There is no universally recognised "partner track" or uniform promotional hierarchy.

Former MP Nama Condoles Journalist's Family



"Avnreddy Khammam Town Reporter April 1, (Indian Chronicle): "Former BRS Lok Sabha party leader and ex-MP Nama Nageswara Rao expressed his condolences to the family of a journalist from Tallada mandal. Nageswara Rao, husband of Papineni Ananthalakshmi—who works as a desk journalist for a private news website and hails from Kalakodima village—succumbed to injuries sustained in a recent road accident while undergoing treatment in Hyderabad. Upon learning of the tragic news, Nama Nageswara Rao spoke to Ananthalakshmi and her family members over the phone and conveyed his deep sympathies. He expressed profound sorrow over the demise and prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace.

Residents of Ram Reddy Nagar Meet MLA Seeking Resolution of Issues

Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): "Residents of Ram Reddy Nagar met Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and submitted a representation requesting the resolution of long-pending issues in their locality. The delegation, led by former BRS Division President Dr. B.V. Chary, along with colony association representatives, highlighted several unresolved problems. They explained that issues such as drainage, roads, and drinking water have been persisting for a long time in Ram Reddy Nagar. Responding to their concerns, the MLA assured that he would visit the colony within the coming week, personally inspect the problems, and take



necessary steps to resolve them. "The residents expressed their gratitude to the MLA for promptly responding and promising a field visit to address their issues. Those present at the meeting included Chetukuri Dinesh Kumar, Battula Nagaraju Yadav, Srinivas Chary, Putta Krishna, Raja Ram, and others.

School Annual Day Celebrated Grandly

Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 01. Wankidi The Annual Day celebrations of Mandal Parishad Primary School, Arjiguda, located in Wankidi mandal headquarters, were held in a grand manner on Wednesday. On this occasion, Mandal Education Officer Shiva Charan Kumar, who attended as the chief guest, addressed the gathering and emphasized that students should excel not only in academics but also in all other fields. He urged parents to send their children to school regularly and highlighted that quality education is being provided in government schools. He also encouraged parents to enroll their children in government schools. "As part of the Annual Day celebrations, students presented various cultural programs and dance performances, which impressed and entertained the audience. The event was attended by School Headmaster Chunarakar Dharmabai, Headmasters of Zilla Parishad High School Wankidi Complex and Kiridi Com-



plex—Nataraj and Prabodh Kumar, Wankidi Gram Panchayat Deputy Sarpanch Deepak, Ward Member Shankar, Amma Adarsha School Chairman and Ward Member Sandhya Rani, teachers Srinivas, Jagadeesh, Prashanth, CRPs Durgam Sandeep, Sunil, Vijay Babu, Anganwadi teacher Pratima, along with villagers and parents of students. The program concluded successfully with active participation from students, teachers, and the local community.

Efforts by Aakarapu Arun Patel to Resolve Low Voltage Issue

Uppal Youth Congress President Aakarapu Arun Patel stands by the residents of Venkata Sai Nagar Colony in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): "Residents of Venkata Sai Nagar Colony under Venkat Reddy Nagar Division have been facing severe difficulties for several years due to a persistent low voltage electricity problem. In response to these issues, Uppal Youth Congress President Aakarapu Arun Patel stepped forward with the aim of resolving public concerns. After personally assessing the situation in the colony, Arun Patel, along with Colony President Vijayender Reddy and team members, submitted a representation on Wednesday to Electrical Department Assistant Engineer Kiran Kumar. Responding positively, AE Kiran Kumar assured that immediate steps would be taken to address the issue. "Speaking on the occasion, Arun Patel stated that under the guidance and support of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, they are committed to resolving every public issue in the Venkat Reddy Nagar Division. He further mentioned that the low voltage problem in Venkata Sai Nagar Colony has been brought to the attention of the authorities and that necessary actions have already been initiated for a swift resolution. "He emphasized that the Congress Party will continue to stand by the people and fight for the provision of essential basic amenities until all issues are resolved. "Colony committee members including R. Govind, G. Ashok, CH Srinivas Goud, Naveen, Vidyasagar, Ramesh, Raju, Ramakrishna, Bhoopathi Narasimha, Shivakumar, Ramesh Yadav, Lakshman, Parashuram, Ailesh Yadav and others participated in the program.



Temporary Disruption to 'Mee Seva' Online Services

Implementation of Fee Hike. (MeeSeva services will be unavailable from 08:00 PM on 03-04-2026 until 08:00 AM on 05-04-2026.)

Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, April 01, Indian Chronicle: In a statement, E-District Manager Saideswara Rao announced that 'Mee Seva' online services in the district would experience a temporary disruption due to scheduled server maintenance work. Speaking on the occasion, he revealed that the server maintenance operations would be carried out from 5:00 PM on April 3rd until 8:00 AM on April 5th. He stated that this maintenance is being undertaken to enhance server performance, upgrade security systems, and resolve technical issues. He stated that during this period, all online services, digital transactions, and web portal services pertaining to various departments would be temporarily suspended. Officials advised the public to avail themselves of any urgent services in advance. They noted that services would return to normal functioning once the maintenance is completed. He added that these measures would prove instrumental in providing faster and uninterrupted services in the future. Furthermore, he announced that the government has revised the service charges applicable to various certificates and other services provided through 'Mee Seva' centers. These revised charges have come into effect starting today. He stated that the minimum service charge, which previously stood at ₹35, has been increased to ₹62. He specified that the charges have been fixed at ₹62 for 'Category A' services and ₹80 for 'Category B' services. Additionally, he announced that the revised charges would also apply to electricity bills, e-pass services, biometric services, and services related to driving licenses. He urged the public to take note of these changes and avail themselves of the services.

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కాపున గమనించగలరు.

Vehicle Owners Must Clear Challans and Submit Documents to Reclaim Seized Vehicles, Else They Will Be Auctioned: Uppal Traffic CI G. Nagaraju

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): "Uppal Traffic Circle Inspector G. Nagaraju stated that 47 vehicles have been seized under various traffic violation cases within the Uppal Traffic Police Station limits. "He explained that since the time of seizure, the vehicle owners have neither paid the pending challan fines nor come forward to claim their vehicles. Notices have already been sent to the respective owners through post, along with prior intimation. Despite this, as no one has approached the police so far to reclaim the vehicles, a final announcement is being made through print, electronic, and social media. "Vehicle owners are advised to visit the Uppal Traffic Police Station, submit valid vehicle documents, clear all pending challans, and take back their vehicles. Failing which, the vehicles will be auctioned as per legal provisions and regulations. For further information, owners may contact: 8712662421, said Traffic Inspector G. Nagaraju.



Check on Electricity Issues in Gandhi Nagar, Ramanthapur..! 8 Electric Poles Installed as Part of Basti Bata Program Issue Resolved with Initiative of Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): "A long-pending issue of electricity poles in Gandhi Nagar area under Ramanthapur Division has finally been resolved. This problem, which persisted for several years, has now found a permanent solution. "As part of the Basti Bata program led by Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq, the issue was identified and brought to the attention of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy. After discussions with officials, immediate action was taken. "As a result, 8 new electricity poles have been installed in the Gandhi Nagar area. Local residents expressed their happiness and extended their gratitude to Mohammed Rafiq for resolving the issue. "The program was attended by Gandhi Nagar Welfare Association President Mogili Lingam, General Secretary Laghusani Srinivas Goud, Ramanthapur Division Mahila Congress President Sandhya Rani, along with Mohammed Matheen, Surya, Aikon Swamy, Naresh, Sheikh Khaja Ahmed, Syed, and others.



Woman Missing in Kushaiguda Police Station Limits

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, April 1 (Indian Chronicle): "Kushaiguda: A 33-year-old woman has been reported missing under the limits of Kushaiguda Police Station. The complaint was filed by her husband, Gampa Srinivas, 40, a security guard at a Central Government KV School, residing at H.No. 1-8-22/8, North Kamalanagar, Kushaiguda. According to the complaint, Srinivas married Gampa Krishnaveni in 2012, who is his maternal uncle's daughter. The couple has two children. Over the past 15 days, the couple had been facing frequent domestic disputes. On March 31, 2026, at around 5:30 AM, Srinivas left for work. Their children left for school at around 9:00 AM. At about the same time, Krishnaveni called her father, Pativarna Nagaraju, stating that there were ongoing disputes between her and her husband and that she would be going to work late that day. When the children returned home, they found their mother missing. Upon contacting her, she informed them over the phone that she had gone out for shopping and would return soon. However, when Srinivas returned home at around 2:30 PM, she had still not returned. Repeated phone calls to her went unanswered. Despite searching in the surrounding areas and contacting relatives, no information about her whereabouts could be found. Krishnaveni is described as being approximately 5 feet 4 inches tall, fair in complexion, and able to speak Telugu and Hindi. Kushaiguda Police have registered a case and initiated an investigation.



Rebranding or Risk? The ERZL Debate Raises Serious Questions

Hyderabad, April 1, 2026: ORS — Oral Rehydration Salts — has a precise, life-saving purpose. It is a clinically formulated solution, standardised by the WHO, designed to reverse dehydration caused by diarrhoea. In a country where diarrhoea still kills over one lakh children every year, ORS is not a product category. It is a medical intervention. And the line between it and a flavoured sugar drink is not a matter of opinion — it is a matter of biochemistry, clinical evidence, and ultimately, survival. "This is precisely why what has unfolded over the past eight years around ORSL — and now ERZL — is not a branding controversy. It is a public health emergency disguised as a marketing dispute. "For nearly eight years, Hyderabad-based paediatrician and nutrition advocate Dr. Sivaranjani Santosh raised consistent, documented concerns about ORSL — an electrolyte drink sold by Kenvue, the consumer health company spun off from Johnson & Johnson. Her central argument was precise: ORSL's name, packaging, and pharmacy placement closely mimicked ORS — Oral Rehydration Salts — a WHO-standardised, life-saving formulation used to treat dehydration and diarrhoea in children. ORSL, however, is not ORS. It contained substantially higher sugar, and in Dr. Sivaranjani's clinical experience, children given ORSL by well-intentioned parents continued to deteriorate — because the product was not meeting the physiological threshold of genuine ORS. "Her concerns eventually found legal traction. A case filed in the Delhi High Court by concerned parents and paediatricians resulted in a significant outcome: the Court ordered a full product ban and directed the company to recall existing stocks of ORSL. It was, by any measure, a landmark moment for consumer accountability in India's health products market. "What followed the ban, however, has reignited the controversy. Kenvue relaunched the product under the name ERZL. Dr. Sivaranjani has publicly and specifically stated that the visual logic of the rebrand is deeply problematic: the letter 'E' in ERZL appears to echo the roundness of the 'O' in ORSL, while the 'Z' functions as a near-mirror image of the 'S'. The overall packaging design, colour language, and pharmacy positioning remain strikingly similar to the banned product. "Kenvue has stated that ERZL carries an improved formulation with significantly reduced sugar. However, Dr. Sivaranjani's public position is unambiguous: consumers who were misled into believing ORSL was ORS will carry that same misperception to ERZL, because the visual and phonetic scaffolding of the brand has not meaningfully changed. Approximately 85 to 90 percent of consumers, she argues, will continue to mistake the product for genuine ORS. "A widely reported and deeply concerning pattern has emerged on social media in recent weeks. Multiple posts and videos, shared by consumers and health advocates, appear to show ERZL stickers affixed directly over existing ORSL packaging — with peeled-back stickers revealing the original banned branding underneath.

Road Safety Awareness – “Arrive Alive” Program Conducted



Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 01. “An “Arrive Alive” road safety awareness program was conducted at the Asifabad District Police Office under the directions of District SP Nitiika Pant. The program was organized by Asifabad Town Police as part of efforts to prevent road accidents. Free eye check-ups were conducted for auto and trolley drivers from the town. “Speaking on the occasion, Asifabad ASP Chittaranjan emphasized that road accidents can be reduced only by strictly following traffic rules. He stated that negligence, over-speeding, and drunk driving are the main causes of accidents. “He advised auto and trolley drivers to be more cautious and warned that carrying overload in vehicles can lead to serious accidents. He clearly stated that heavy loads should not be transported, espe-

cially on national highways. Drivers were instructed to carry passengers only within the permitted limits, keeping their safety in mind. “He also stressed the importance of regularly checking vehicle fitness, brakes, and lights. During nighttime, reflective stickers and proper lighting are essential for safety. He advised drivers to avoid dangerous habits such as wrong-side driving, sudden stopping, and sharp turns at high speed. “He warned that giving vehicles to minors and driving without a license are punishable offenses. He urged every driver to follow traffic rules to protect not only their own lives but also the lives of others. DCRB Inspector Sridhar, IT Core Inspector Ravinder, Asifabad Town Sub-Inspectors Kamalakar and Chandrasekhar, Senior Resident Ophthalmologist Dr. G.Pawan, and House Surgeon Abbas Ali also participated in the program.

Strike Begins as Patience of Mission Bhagiratha Workers Wears Thin



Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 01. “The patience of Mission Bhagiratha workers has run out, and an indefinite strike has begun from today Wednesday demanding the immediate release of pending wages. “As part of the ongoing protest, workers submitted a memorandum to Vankidi Mandal Tahsildar Kavitha, highlighting that salaries have been pending for the last four months, which is caus-

ing serious concern. Speaking on the occasion, AITUC District Council member Vorkol Rakesh said that workers engaged in the crucial service of supplying drinking water to the public must be paid on time, and it is the responsibility of the government to ensure this. He expressed anger over the delay in wage payments, stating that workers and their families are facing severe financial difficulties due to the prolonged delay. He urged the concerned authorities to treat the issue as a priority and take immediate action. He demanded that the pending four months’ wages be released without further delay to provide relief to the workers. He also warned that if the issue is not resolved soon, dissatisfaction among workers may increase and the protests could intensify further. He appealed to the government to respond immediately and address the legitimate demands of the workers. “Workers including Vanesh, Tirupati, Harish, Arun, Istari, Subhash, Mahesh, Shankar, and others participated in the protest.

Public Administration Progress Plan 99 days of operation

“The village meetings to be held on the 2nd should be conducted in a disciplined manner. “Wanaparthi District Collector Adarsh ??Surabhi “Wanaparthi correspondent Indian Chronicle “District Collector Adarsh ??Surabhi gave instructions on the organization of village assemblies and municipal wards in Wanaparthi district to be held on April 2 through video conference with Mandal Special Officers, MPDOs, Tehsildars and Municipal Commissioners on Wednesday. He directed that arrangements should be made to hold village assemblies and municipal assemblies in a festive atmosphere and that people and public representatives should be involved in the village assemblies. Similarly, it was suggested that tom-toms should be played in the villages. The government has undertaken many development works in the last two and a half years since its formation, and it is going to undertake some new ones. Development works have been carried out to this extent in the respective gram panchayats, wards and municipalities through these development and welfare schemes. It was suggested that the funds spent and other matters should be explained to the people during the gram sabha. It was suggested that awareness should be created about the new schemes. It was suggested that how many beneficiaries have received free electricity up to 200 units, cylinders for only Rs 500, development works undertaken in the villages, etc., should be prepared and given to everyone who comes



to the gram sabha. It was also suggested that the names of the beneficiaries should be read out. He said that a special officer is being appointed for each village council. Additional Collector Local Bodies N.Khimya Nayak explained the minute-by-minute activities such as taking steps to start the council at 10 am and how the council should be organized. CPO Harikrishna, PD DRDO Umadevi, district officials, tehsildars, MPDOs and municipal commissioners participated in the video conference.

Support for Children’s Future – Uniforms Distributed at Anganwadi Centers



“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 01. “Uniforms were distributed to children at the Anganwadi centers in Enoli Kolanguda, under Pataguda Gram Panchayat of Wankidi Mandal. The Sarpanch, Soyam Sridevi-Sanjeev, attended the program as the chief guest and handed over the uniforms to the children. “Speaking on the occasion, she said that Anganwadi centers play a key role in the physical and mental development of children. She also advised parents to make proper use of the facilities provided by the government. “Panchayat Secretary Annapurna, Anganwadi teachers Munjam Sushila and Jade Rakeshwari, along with others, participated in the program. The event was conducted in a simple yet enthusiastic manner.

Minister “Adluri” birthday celebrations at Collectret

“Jagjal Correspondent April 1 (Indian Chronicle): The birthday celebrations of Telangana State Welfare Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar were held grandly at Jagjal Collectorate on Wednesday. Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar arrived with Jagjal MLA Dr. Sanjay Kumar to participate in the Telangana Employees Parents Protection and Monitoring Bill 2026 program organized at the Collectorate meeting hall. District Collector Sathyaprasad, Additional Collectors Latha, Rajagoud, and other employees wished the minister a happy birthday. Afterwards, Minister Laxman Kumar cut the birthday cake.



Minister Jupally Krishna Rao's visit to Ammaipalli village “Face to face with the people – guidance to the authorities

“Wanaparthi correspondent Indian Chronicle “Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, along with senior leaders of the Mandal Congress Party, visited Ammaipalli villages under the Chinnambavi mandal of Kollapur constituency. When the minister arrived at the village, village sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud and village upasarpanch Arepalli Madhavi Madhavareddy welcomed Minister Jupally Krishna Rao and felicitated him with a shawl. Later, Minister Jupally Krishna Rao held a face-to-face meeting with local officials and people on the issues of the village, ongoing development works, implementation of welfare schemes, selection of beneficiaries and other issues. People expressed their village problems to the village sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud and village upasarpanch Under the leadership of Arepalli Madhavi Madhavareddy, each issue related to the construction of a new water tank, school ground, village library building, pending issue of BC house sites, well near the temple, IMAX lights, side canals on Veepanagandla road, and the need to cooperate and sanction these issues to be completed quickly and made available to the people was explained to Minister Jupally Krishna Rao. Minister Jupally Krishna Rao instructed the officials to take immediate steps to resolve these issues. He advised that the speed of development works should be increased and there should be no compromise in quality. He directed the officials to ensure that the implementation of welfare schemes should be transparent and that the benefits of the government reach everyone who is eligible. Senior leaders of Chinnambavi



Mandal Congress Party, Village Sarpanch Madagauni Kavitha Prabhanjan Goud, Deputy Sarpanch Arepalli Madhavi Madhavareddy, Village President Mohan Reddy, ward members, Village Congress Party senior leaders, activists, village people and others participated in this program.

Telangana Betrayed Again; Centre Ignores AP Reorganisation Promises, Diverts Water & Funds: MP Vamsi

“New Delhi: Peddapalli MP Gaddam Vamsi Krishna, on Wednesday, raised the issue of continued injustice being meted out to Telangana in the Parliament, pointing out that even after the formation of the separate state, several promises made in the AP Reorganisation Act remain unfulfilled. “In 1969, when Telangana agitation took place, then former MP Kaka Venkateswamy along with others, withstanding bloodshed, fought for the rights for Telangana. Vamsi said, recalling the historical struggle for justice on Neellu, Nidhulu, Niyamakalu (water, funds and jobs) for locals. “He said that despite the promises made in the AP Reorganisation Act, injustice continues even today. “We fought for justice for the Telangana youth. But till today, injustice is being meted out to us,” he added. “Vamsi highlighted the Banakacherla project being taken up by Andhra Pradesh on the Krishna River. “About 1 lakh crore rupees has been allocated for that project. If that project comes, about 200 TMCs, which rightfully should come to Telangana, will be diverted. North Telangana area, where I come from, will be drought prone,” he warned, stating that the Centre is supporting the project favouring the Chandrababu Naidu government in the name of double-engine sarkar. “On airports, Vamsi pointed out the disparity. “There are 7 to 9 airports in Andhra Pradesh. But there is only one airport in

Telangana. Why are you doing injustice to Telangana?” he asked. “He also mentioned that the proposed airport in Peddapalli has not moved forward. “On railways, Vamsi said thousands of crores are being given to Andhra Pradesh while Telangana is getting only small projects worth around 100 crores. “Fund distribution is going on unfairly,” he said. “Vamsi also raised the serious backwater issue due to the Polavaram project. “Because of the Polavaram project, for about 2 lakh people, there is a backwater issue in Kottagudem and Bhadrachalam. Their lives are in danger. We need to build a flood bank for their safety immediately,” he demanded. “Vamsi also mentioned unfulfilled promises like the Bayaram Steel Factory and the 20,000 crore power bill that Andhra Pradesh still owes Telangana. “He also highlighted the urea crisis at RFCL Ramagundam in his constituency. “There is also a Urea crisis in RFCL, Telangana, but there is no crisis in Andhra Pradesh. Farmers are continuing to suffer,” he said. “The MP concluded by pointing out that even the industrial corridor and the semiconductor facility were denied to Telangana. “The industrial corridor and the latest semiconductor facility that has also not been sanctioned to us,” he noted. “He concluded firmly, “There will be no compromise on Telangana’s rights. The government must address these issues immediately.”

Support for Chicken Shop Owners’ Protest: Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle) “Representatives of the Uppal Chicken Shop Owners’ Association met Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and expressed their concerns over the difficulties they are facing in the poultry sector. They alleged that corporate companies are cutting down their rightful profit margins, causing financial strain to small business owners. The association members informed that they are voluntarily observing a shutdown of chicken shops on Wednesday as a mark of protest against these issues. “Speaking on the occasion, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy assured that he would bring the problems faced by chicken shop owners in Uppal to the attention of the government as well as higher authorities and work towards a resolution. He also appealed to the shop owners to cooperate in ensuring that the public does not face inconvenience. “Members of the Chicken Shop Owners’ Association from Uppal constituency participated in the program.



Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Participates in Special Ayyappa Swamy Pooja



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle) “Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy participated in a special (pooja) on the occasion of the 26th anniversary celebrations of Sri Ayyappa Swamy Temple located in RTC Colony, Ramanthapur Division. “Speaking on the occasion, the MLA appreciated the temple management for providing all necessary facilities to devotees over the past 26 years. He stated that their continuous efforts for the welfare and convenience of devotees are commendable. He also expressed his wish that the blessings of Lord Ayyappa be upon everyone. “Bandari Lakshma Reddy assured that he would extend his full support for the development of the temple in the future. On this occasion, the temple committee members felicitated the MLA with great honor. Several BRS leaders and local representatives including Gantham Nageshwar Rao, Babu Yadav, Sooram Shankar, Chand Pasha, Bosani Pawan, Dayakar Reddy, JCB Raju, Kittu, Mandapati Srinivas Reddy, Madduri

Srinivas, Ravi, Santosh Gupta, Anand, and others participated in the program.

Kovvur Sangameshwar appointed as BJP State Executive Member

“Sangareddy April 1, Indian Chronicle Correspondent “Senior BJP leader Kovvur Sangameshwar from Sadashivapet town of Sangareddy district has been given a key post. BJP state president Ramachandra Rao issued orders appointing him as BJP State Executive Member. Speaking on the occasion, Kovvur Sangameshwar thanked the people for the trust placed in him. He said that he will work for the development of the BJP party. He said that he will take Prime Minister Modi’s schemes to the people. On this occasion, MP Raghunandan Rao MLC Anireddy.



Demand to Immediately Repeal 4 Labour Codes – Call by National Trade Unions



“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas, April, 01.” “A protest program was organized today in front of the District Collector’s office in Komaram Bheem district under the leadership of national trade unions. Speaking on the

occasion, various labour union leaders stated that the Central Government led by Narendra Modi has officially announced the implementation of the four Labour Codes from April 1, 2026. They expressed strong opposition, stating that despite a nationwide general strike held on February 12 as a last effort by the working class, the government did not change its rigid stance. The leaders made it clear that protest programs will continue under the leadership of trade unions until the four Labour Codes are completely repealed. “As part of the protest, copies of the four Labour Codes were burned in front of the District Collector’s office to register their dissent. “Leaders who participated in the program include: “Gogarla Tirupati, District President (TUC) Rajender, District President (CITU) Chiranjeevi, Vice President (AITUC) Along with other trade union leaders and workers.

Kalyana Lakshmi & Shaadi Mubarak beneficiaries should also receive one tola gold along with cheques

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy “– Cheques distributed to beneficiaries by MLA and MRO” Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): “Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that the state government should provide one tola of gold along with the cheques to beneficiaries of the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes. He emphasized that beneficiaries should receive maximum benefits under these welfare programs. He participated as the chief guest in a cheque distribution program held at the Uppal Municipal Office, where 172 Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak cheques were distributed to beneficiaries from Uppal mandal. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that the cheque distribution process should be conducted transparently, as directed by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, and suggested that along with the financial assistance of ₹1,16,000, one tola of gold should also be provided. “Uppal MRO Pool Singh Chauhan, addressing the gathering, said that the state government is committed to the welfare of the poor and assured that eligible beneficia-



ries will receive the benefits of the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes. “Deputy Tahsildar D. Sunil Kumar, RIs M. Ashwini Goud and A. Veerendra Sai, junior assistants, attenders, revenue staff, and BRS party leaders and workers also participated in the program.

Section 30 of Police Act Imposed Across Komaram Bheem Asifabad District – SP Nitika Pant, IPS



“Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas, April, 01.” “Section 30 of the Police Act 1861 has been imposed across Komaram Bheem Asifabad district from April 01 to April 30, 2026, in

view of maintaining law and order, announced District SP Nitika Pant in an official statement on Wednesday. The SP stated that the decision has been taken to ensure peaceful conditions and smooth public life across the district. During this period, strict restrictions will be in place, and any violations will invite legal action under the Act. Key Restrictions: “No public meetings, rallies, dharmas, or gatherings are allowed without prior permission from DSP/ASP or higher police authorities. “Possession of prohibited weapons or any objects that may incite violence is strictly banned. “Any public assembly or activity that may cause inconvenience, disturbance, or disruption to normal life is completely prohibited. SP Nitika Pant warned that anyone violating these orders will be liable for punishment under Section 30 of the Police Act, 1861. Citizens have been instructed to strictly follow the imposed regulations. She further advised that those intending to organize any event must apply in advance and obtain necessary permissions from the concerned authorities. Unauthorized rallies or gatherings during this period will lead to strict legal action.”

Conference with Bhoodan Land Victims at Velugumatla “Arvapalli Nagesh



Khammam Bureau April 1, (Indian Chronicle): “A conference was organized at the CPI (ML) New Democracy party office in Khammam town with the Bhoodan land victims of Velugumatla. The meeting was chaired by Khammam district secretary Bandari Ailayya. Speaking at the event, state secretariat member Avunuri Madhanna stated that the entire 62 acres and 7 guntas of land is Bhoodan land and demanded the immediate constitution of a Bhoodan Board. “He alleged that nearly 30 acres of this land had been handed over to real estate developers by the government and demanded that it be taken back immediately and the encroachers removed. He criticized that land worth nearly ₹500 crore was given to private individuals, while the huts of poor people were demolished using bulldozers, JCBs, and heavy machinery before sunrise by police, private persons, revenue officials, and municipal authorities. He questioned whether this reflected true democracy. “Madhanna further said that despite legal provisions and even observations by authorities like a Bhoodan Board chairman and judge Chandrakumar that such land should belong to the poor, and even though the Supreme Court had granted status quo, these were ignored. He accused ministers and officials, under the supervision of the district collector, of forcefully clearing the land. He questioned whether the collector was serving the people or the government, and under what law such forced evictions were carried out. “He warned that the poor would not remain silent if they were treated unjustly and called for unity and struggle. He criticized the government for promising housing under “Indiramma” schemes after demolishing existing shelters without providing compensation. He termed it irresponsible that authorities claimed to have identified 311 affected people only after the demolitions, questioning why this was not done earlier to prevent such damage. “He highlighted that many poor families had lost shelter, access to food, and basic needs, and children’s education had been disrupted. He demanded that land titles (pattas) be distributed to 1,895 beneficiaries as per legal provisions and that basic infrastructure be provided to ensure their livelihood. “He warned that the situation in the village was tense and could



erupt at any time, urging the government to immediately allocate land and housing to the poor and ensure their safety. Otherwise, CPI (ML) New Democracy would launch phased protests, potentially escalating to demonstrations at the state secretariat with the support of victims and various political parties. “Bhoodan victims including Kurapati Ramarao, Ramanjaneyulu, Khadeer, Pasha, Jayamma, Anjaneyulu, Pullamma, and Satyavathi participated in the program. Party leaders including Mandula Rajendra Prasad, Kola Lakshminarayana, Bajjuri Venkata Ram Reddy, and others were also present. “– Bandari Ailayya “CPI (ML) New Democracy “Khammam District Secretary”

PRTU leaders congratulate District Library Chairman

Jagithyal Correspondent, April 1 (Indian Chronicle):

PRTU leaders congratulated Sanganabhatla Dinesh on his appointment as Chairman of Jagithyal District Library Organization. “Jagithyal District President, General Secretary Boyini Pelli Anand Rao, Yalla Amarnath Reddy, State Associate President Uthuri Mahesh, District Associate President Kannaveni Mallareddy visited the district library office and presented a plant to congratulate Dinesh on his appointment as Chairman.



Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Inspects Road Works in New Ramnagar Colony



“– Former corporator fulfills promises made to residents” KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): “Former Corporator Bannala Geetha on Wednesday inspected the ongoing CC road construction works in New Ramnagar Colony, located behind Peerla Kottam in Chilkana Division. The road is being constructed at an estimated cost of ₹23 lakh. Speaking on the occasion, former corporator Geetha Praveen said that they are moving forward by fulfilling every promise made during the elections. She stated that new CC roads are being laid



in the streets behind Peerla Kottam in New Ramnagar Colony as part of development works in the division. “She also instructed the contractor to strictly follow quality standards during construction and warned that strict action would be taken in case of any delay in completing the work. BRS party state leaders Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, Eddula Kondal Reddy, Jilla Praveen, and local residents including Shankaraya Chary, Krupakar, Tirupati, Sai Charan, Manjula, Jyothi, Navaneetha, and Renuka participated in the program.

Collector Cracks Down on Illegal Sand Mining in Kagaznagar

Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas, April, 01. “Kagaznagar: In a strong move to curb illegal sand mining in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, District Collector K. Haritha personally stepped into the field and took strict action against offenders looting riverbeds. “On Wednesday, the Collector conducted a surprise inspection at Rampur outskirts in Rebbena mandal, creating a stir across the district. Illegal sand transportation, which was being carried out freely without any permits along the Kagaznagar Pedda Vagu, was caught red-handed. The Collector herself intercepted three tractors transporting sand from the stream near Rampur village. Upon inspection, none of the vehicles had valid permission documents. Expressing serious anger, she immediately ordered officials to seize the vehicles. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stated that there would be zero tolerance towards the sand mafia, which is causing damage to both government revenue and the environment. She warned that strict actions, including cases under stringent laws like the PD Act, would be taken against those involved in illegal transportation. “She further added that strict surveillance is being maintained over all streams in the district and inspections will be intensified in the coming days. She made it clear that authorities will not just remain in offices



but will actively come onto the roads to prevent illegal activities. With the Collector directly entering the field and taking action, illegal sand operators in the district were taken by surprise. She firmly stated that whether such activities are carried out openly or secretly, strict action is inevitable if any illegality is found. “The Collector’s proactive approach to protecting government resources has been widely appreciated by the public. People are hopeful that this strong action will put an end to the illegal sand mafia in the district.

Collector Village Assemblies Must Be Successful: District Collector Ankit.

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, April 01, Indian Chronicle: In a statement, District Collector Ankit announced that Village Assemblies must be successfully organized as part of the implementation of the “Praja Palana Pragathi Plan” (People’s Administration Progress Plan)—a 99-day action plan—across the district. Speaking on this occasion, the Collector directed that village assemblies in all gram panchayats across the district and ward assemblies in municipal towns must be mandatorily conducted on Thursday. Keeping the summer season in mind, he ordered officials to ensure that drinking water facilities are provided for the people attending these assemblies. Furthermore, he instructed that all necessary arrangements for conducting the assemblies be completed in advance. He directed officials to widely disseminate details regarding the development and welfare schemes being implemented by the state government to the public at the village and ward levels. To this end, he stated that every department should prepare comprehensive reports regarding their respective schemes and explain them to the people. He ordered that measures be taken to ensure the assemblies commence at 9:00 AM and that shamanias (tents) be erected to ensure comfort for the attendees. Additionally, he directed that health camps be organized under the aegis of the Medical & Health and Women & Child Welfare departments to conduct medical check-ups for pregnant women and children. He stated that the Education Department’s programs should be implemented effectively and that the Agriculture Department should create aware-



ness among farmers regarding profitable crops and horticultural produce. He further revealed that special programs focusing on various themes, such as health, education, and agriculture, would be implemented across the district starting from April 2nd. The collector emphasized that the primary objective is to provide effective solutions to the people’s issues by ensuring the success of these assemblies at the village, mandal, and constituency levels. He appealed to the people of the district to attend the meetings on time and participate in resolving local issues.

Congratulations to Gona Philip on Receiving the International Icon Award



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 01 (Indian Chronicle): “Gona Philip, a resident of Swaroop Nagar in Uppal, has been honored with the “Best Seva Ratna” award at the International Iconic Awards program organized by the Holy Spirit Christian Association at Horeb Church, Uppal. The award was presented by Bishop Anand, Chancellor of HSC Theological University. This prestigious International Icon Award, which is announced at the national level to recognize individuals for their outstanding service in various fields, being awarded to Gona Philip from Telangana, Hyderabad, Uppal, is a matter of great pride. Prominent Christian leaders Abraham and Jawahar Kennedy stated that Philip’s 40 years of dedicated service has now received well-deserved national recognition. Speaking on the occasion, Philip said that receiving the Seva Ratna and International Award has increased his sense of responsibility. He expressed his commitment to continue serving people beyond caste and religion, especially focusing on Dalit, Bahujan, and minority communities. On this occasion, the UCPW Committee felicitated him grandly under the leader-

ship of Uppal Churches Pastors Welfare Association Chairman Gona Philip. The event was attended by Pastors Ashok Rathi, Tejomaya, G.D. Yohan, Bhaskar, Jerusalem Matthai, Agrippa Raju, M.J. Prasad Rao, B. Jaji, S. Anka Rao, Enoch, J. Swami Das, and others.

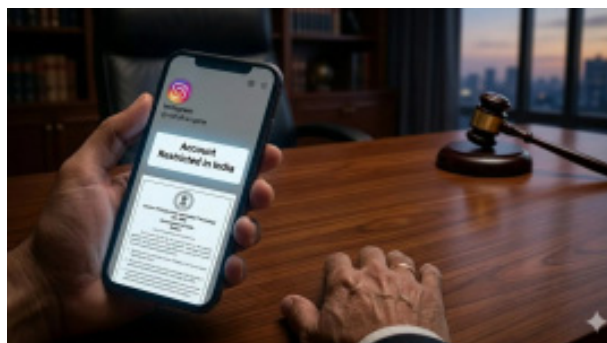
Councilor Anitha - Gangadhar MLC condolences.

“Jagthial Correspondent, April 1 (Indian Chronicle): Jagthial Municipal 37 Ward Councilor, BJP leader’s aunt

K o k k u H a n m a k k a passed away, and Karimnagar Graduates MLC Chinnamail Anjireddy visited to offer condolences. On Wednesday, MLC Anjireddy visited the residence of BJP Councilor Kokku Anitha - Gangadhar in Jagthial town’s Pochamawada and expressed deep sympathy to the family members.



'Attempt to silence my voice': Maharashtra educator Vitthal Kangane to move HC after Meta restricts his Instagram account in India



GNS News Agency, April 1

Vitthal Kangane, a private educator from Parbhani in Maharashtra with a massive social media following, announced Tuesday that he would move the Bombay High Court against Meta after his Instagram account was restricted in India, an action Kangane claims is an attempt to silence his criticism of the BJP-led Mahayuti government. Kangane, who provides career guidance to 17 lakh followers, recently posted content regarding the case of Ashok Kharat, a self-styled godman currently facing multiple FIRs for extortion and sexual assault. Speaking to The Indian Express, he said, "Instead of deleting my account, Meta could have deleted that particular post. This attempt to silence my voice on public issues has caused me immense mental agony." On March 28, I got calls from a few followers who told me that my Instagram account was not visible to them. Later, I found that my account was not visible to my followers in India but was accessible in other parts of the world," said Kangane, who has uploaded 1,700 posts, most of which focus on social and civic issues affecting citizens.

Kangane said that after he found his account had been disabled in India, he emailed Meta. "Meta replied that they have restricted my content in India in pursuance of a notice

from the Government of India under Section 79 (3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000." This section requires intermediaries, such as Meta, to remove or restrict access to content upon receiving actual knowledge of a government order or court directive. Meanwhile, a Meta spokesperson told BBC News Marathi, "After getting valid blocking order, we have restricted this account as per the current legal requirement." How did Ashok Kharat become such a big shot? Kangane said that a few days ago, he had posted a video criticising Ashok Kharat and the politicians associated with him. "The question is, how did Ashok Kharat become such a big shot? How was he able to run his shady activities for nearly ten years? How was he allowed to do this so brazenly?" Obviously, this cannot happen without the blessings of those in power. Did anyone see him in pictures with common people? No. Instead, we all saw his pictures alongside ministers, political leaders, and even the Deputy Chief Minister. This is what I aimed to highlight in my post," he said. Kangane said in his posts that he has only criticised the government's misguided plans and policies. "Now, I will have to approach the Bombay High Court. This is not just for me, but for everyone who raises their voice against the government's wrong decisions and faces attempts to silence them." "If the government takes a wrong step and the media remains silent, but the common person speaks out, will they then try to silence his voice by deleting their accounts? This is what I want to bring to the high court's attention. I hope the court will provide its guidance in this matter."

Kangane said his legal challenge leans heavily on the landmark 2015 Shreya Singhal vs Union of India ruling. In that case, the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act, which had previously criminalised "offensive" online messages, calling it unconstitutionally vague. "But my message was not offensive; it only highlighted the wrong measures and inaction of the government, which allowed a monster like Kharat to hold fort for long," said Kangane, who has worked with the state forest department but later left that position to start his own private teaching academy.

How BMC Drove a 23% Jump in Property Tax Collections in Mumbai

GNS News Agency, April 1

At a time when the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has recorded a consistent dip in its reserves, civic records show that for the financial year 2025-26, which ended on March 31, the BMC recovered ₹7,610 crore in property taxes—the highest in its history. Officials have attributed this surge largely to the consistent crackdown on property owners who had long pending dues. It marked a significant rise of 23.29% compared to last year's collection of ₹6,172 crore, reflecting a sharp improvement in recovery. The recovered amount however was only 3.68 per cent above the ₹7,341 crore target that the BMC had set to attain in the last financial year.

Officials said the turnaround was driven by a stricter approach towards defaulters. From last year, the BMC initiated a crackdown that included seizing properties and listing them for auction to recover dues. In many cases, property owners came forward to clear their pending taxes soon after their properties were seized. At the same time, these actions sent a wider message, prompting other defaulters to make payments voluntarily. "The moment we initiated seizures and auction proceedings, many owners cleared their dues. It also created awareness and urgency among others," a senior civic official said.

In October last year, the BMC issued notices to auction four properties to recover pending dues worth ₹120 crore—marking the first such move since 1984. More recently, the civic body also seized multiple properties in South Mumbai, including two at Kamala Mills, for non-payment of dues, further reinforcing its stance. Civic records show that the highest recovery this year came from K East (Andheri East) ward at ₹719 crore, followed by G South (Worli, Prabhadevi) with ₹670 crore and K West (Juhu, Vile Parle) with ₹622 crore. H East (Bandra East, Khar) and H West (Bandra West) also contributed significantly with ₹572



crore and ₹536 crore respectively. In contrast, the lowest recovery of ₹47 crore was recorded in B ward covering Dongri and Sandhurst Road areas, while C ward (Kalbadevi-Chirabazar) saw collections of ₹90 crore. Property tax remains one of the biggest sources of revenue for the BMC, with Mumbai having among the highest property tax rates in the country. Despite the improved recovery, outstanding dues still stood at ₹10,899 crore as of December 2025, underlining the scale of the challenge. Officials also pointed out that the absence of large-scale elections last year worked in their favour. Without election duties, staff were able to focus on systematic tax recovery, ensuring better follow-ups and enforcement. Even as collections rose, the BMC's financial records show that its reserves have declined by nearly ₹10,000 crore over the past five years. From ₹91,690 crore in 2021, reserves stood at ₹81,774 crore in 2025-26, after having peaked during the previous decade. For now, officials see the record-breaking recovery as a result of consistent enforcement and a clear message to defaulters. Whether this momentum continues will depend on how firmly the civic body sustains its action in the coming years.

'PM Modi likes Punjabis, and me too': Joining BJP, HS Phoolka recalls 1984 trauma, targets Congress and AAP

GNS News Agency, April 1

"Modi ji likes Punjab and Punjabis a lot. Modi ji likes me a lot too, as I fought for the justice of the 1984 genocide victims. The BJP fought for the 1984 victims from the front as their own personal issue. I assisted them legally in fighting the cases." Phoolka said, signalling an ideological alignment with the BJP while underlining his long association with the cause. "I can understand the pain of the 1984 victims as I myself was a victim. I cannot forget November 2, 1984, when a mob entered the house where I was living on rent... Our landlord, a Punjabi Hindu family, saved me and my pregnant wife... had they not hidden us in their store-room... we would not have been alive today," he recalled.

Rejecting the narrative of communal conflict, he added, "Congress has time and again said that it was Hindus versus Sikhs... no, it was Congress versus Sikhs, as Congress supporters did not spare even the Hindus who were helping Sikhs." Phoolka went on to allege that former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had planned the action against Sikhs during her lifetime, "but it was executed after her death".

He also highlighted his past association with the BJP, stating, "BJP leader Madan Lal Khurana was so committed to the 1984 victims that he was involved in all the cases against the victims. In addition to this, he even made me his advisor when he became Delhi chief minister in 1992. From 2003 to 2013, I guided the BJP's Delhi team legally, without taking any fees." Reflecting on his political journey, Phoolka said his decision to join AAP in 2014 was a "mistake". "I committed a mistake in 2014 and joined a party which claimed to bring change..." he said, adding "haathi ke daant khane ke aur dikhane ke aur the", suggesting that appearances can be deceptive. "I even became Leader of Opposition in 2017... but the Bar Council told me I could not fight cases while holding a political post. I had to choose between justice for 1984 victims and the LoP post, so I quit politics," he said, adding that it was after this Congress



leader Sajjan Kumar was convicted and "is still behind bars". Turning to present-day Punjab, Phoolka painted a grim picture. "The condition of Punjab is deplorable... extortion calls are being made to every second person in Punjab; law and order has collapsed; groundwater is falling... Punjab can become barren. Only one party can save Punjab, and that is the BJP," he said, alleging that "Kejriwal has placed his people in government offices in Punjab and corruption is widespread." He also referred to his proximity to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, recalling, "During the 350th martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji at Red Fort last November, PM made me sit next to him... Congress never made such efforts organise such programmes." He added that recognition of Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacrifice was corrected in textbooks only after Murl Manohar Joshi became the Union education minister. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, welcoming Phoolka, said he is "a household name among Sikh families" for his role in securing justice for 1984 victims. BJP Punjab chief Sunil Jakhar, along with party leaders Ashwani Sharma and Tarun Chugh, was present at the induction. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann reacted to the development, saying, "He was my former colleague. I was in Parliament, and he was in the Punjab Assembly.

From a bookseller on Red Fort pavements to a 'publisher': How one man churned out thousands of fake copies of bestselling books



GNS News Agency, April 1

In 2010, Jwala Prasad was a regular fixture on the pavements near Delhi's Red Fort, which petered out to the cramped lanes of Chandni Chowk Market. He was among the booksellers who sat on the pathways, their stacks of fake copies of best-sellers beside them. Last week, the 67-year-old was arrested for allegedly running a full blown printing press, churning out fake copies of popular books — mostly by publisher Penguin Random House — and supplying them en masse, the Delhi Police had said. After over a decade of book selling, police officers said Prasad had established contacts across the supply chain of fake books. "He soon started hoarding these books, and got a godown in Fatehpuri to store them. He started selling them in bulk to other stall owners," a police officer investigating the case said. In 2011, the police were tipped off about Prasad's venture and he was arrested by the Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi Police under the Copyright Act.

"He got out on bail later that year, and took a hiatus from the business. Both his sons were also getting settled at that time, so he stayed out of trouble," the officer said. During the Covid pandemic years, one of his sons went to Australia while the other married a woman police officer of UP Police. "In 2021, he came up with the idea of reviving his business. This time, as a publisher. He bought two second-hand printing machines and rented a two floor house in Anand Parbat area, where he set up the press," a police officer said. Prasad's sons, according to a police officer, said in their statements that they asked their father to stop. They were earning decent money for Prasad to pass his days of old age in comfort.

But, police said, Prasad's business plan was all mapped out: he hired three workers to look after his new godown in Rohini, two to run the printing press, and ordered metal plates to copy original books. Explaining how Prasad worked, a police officer said, "First, he ordered original copies of the books. He then prepared the negatives of these books. The negatives were placed on the plates, and were used to print the pages. One negative could print about 1,000 copies."

This way, original books worth Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 would be turned into soft copies costing just Rs 150 to Rs 200. A police officer said Jwala started to supply these books

to wholesalers across North India: Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh. From there, these books would reach roadside corner stores, and even old and established book shops. On March 13, a team led by Inspector Sohan Lal, Inspector Satender Punia and ACP Ramesh Lamba got a tip-off about a godown near G3S mall, Rohini, which had stacks of fake books. To verify it, one of the investigators got a copy of the book from the godown, and called a representative of Penguin Random House to verify it. "In one glance, he verified that it was a fake. He then filed a complaint, stating that an unknown person, in the name of Penguin Random House, has been publishing pirated books," a police officer said.

"A total of 8,593 pirated books were recovered and seized. During further investigation, another raid at a nearby premises led to recovery of 11,544 more pirated books, taking the total seizure to over 20,137 books," DCP (Crime) Aditya Gautam said. Prasad was arrested the same day. During questioning, he told the police about his factory in Anand Parbat. A raid was conducted there too, and police uncovered the printing press. "Two printing machines from a press located in Anand Parbat Industrial Area, negatives of four pirated books, 12 printing plates used for reproducing copyrighted material, and dyes to colour code the books were recovered from the press," DCP Gautam said. Prasad has been arrested under the Copyright Act, but the menace of pirated copies has hardly ended for publishers.

Fake copies have been piling up losses for publishers in an already volatile industry. A publishing professional, associated with Penguin Random House, with over 25 years of experience in verification of original books, said fakes have become a major dent in publishers turning a profit on any book. "One of our latest publications, Arundhati Roy's 'Mother Mary Comes to Me', was only launched as a hardcover initially. But within a day of its launch, its soft cover was also available in the market. A Rs 800 book was being sold for Rs 150," he said. "Dan Brown's Secret of Secrets was launched in September last year. It was expected to do better... And though it seemed a lot of people were liking it and reading it, the sales were not reflecting that. Its soft copies were easily available at traffic signals of CP. Online platforms have made it worse. There is no mechanism through which they verify if books sold on their website are from authorised retailers or not," the publishing professional said.

He said that on behalf of Penguin Random House, he filed multiple complaints with the Delhi police last year, like every year, about fake copies of books being hoarded. The difference between the quality of the original and the fake is glaring, he added. "Paper quality, bind quality, colour pallet, even the font size. Most copies have smaller fonts, as they are trying to print fewer pages. We also run campaigns before the launch of a book, trying to make booksellers, and library owners more aware about this," he said. "It's (fake books) been growing year by year. And sales are decreasing because of that. At least we should turn a profit on a book, before it's rolled out for cheap. It's a very expensive business," said the professional.

From 'Digital Democracy' dialogue to 'Samajwadi TV': Inside Samajwadi Party's digital game plan for 2027 polls



GNS News Agency, April 1

A YouTube channel, a 'digital democracy' dialogue with influencers, and a talk show in the works: The Samajwadi Party and its leaders in Uttar Pradesh are upping their digital game as the state goes to polls next year, with sources saying these initiatives will gain momentum over the next six months. The goal, sources said, is to build a structured network to amplify the party's message via digital mediums and engage specific voter segments.

One of the initiatives launched last August is Samajwadi Party TV. A YouTube channel handled by party spokesperson Naved Siddiqui, it gives daily updates about the party's point of view on prevailing issues and statements by party chief Akhilesh Yadav. From 8 pm to 9 pm, Siddiqui, a former popular radio jockey and voice-over artist, gives daily updates about "Samajwadi news". "It was observed that many times, the party's message was not being effectively conveyed through print or other mediums. So, I suggested this platform and it was approved by the party chief.

Stalin says AIADMK will surrender TN to BJP; seeks clean sweep for DMK

GNS News Agency, April 1

Tiruchy: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the opposition AIADMK, alleging that its leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) would "pledge" the state to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) if voted to power. Addressing a public meeting in Tiruchy, Stalin campaigned for candidates of the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) across nine Assembly constituencies, urging voters to deliver a "100 per cent victory" for the DMK-led front in the upcoming elections.

He framed the contest as a decisive battle to protect Tamil Nadu's political identity and governance model. The Chief Minister said the people had placed their trust in the DMK during the 2021 Assembly elections, enabling the formation of what he described as a "Dravidian Model" government. According to him, the administration has largely fulfilled its electoral promises and ensured social harmony across the state.

Contrasting Tamil Nadu with BJP-ruled states, Stalin claimed that the state has remained free from conflicts based on caste and religion. He alleged that the BJP was

attempting to create divisions along religious lines in Tamil Nadu and accused Palaniswami of facilitating such efforts. "If the BJP contests alone here, they would secure fewer votes than NOTA. That is why they are relying on the AIADMK," he said. Stalin further alleged that the AIADMK was functioning under the influence of the BJP, citing an incident during an NDA meeting in Madurai where a portrait of Dravidian icon Periyar E.V. Ramasamy was reportedly removed. He questioned whether former AIADMK stalwarts like M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) and J. Jayalalithaa would have allowed such an act. The DMK president also cast doubt on Palaniswami's leadership within the alliance, noting that key decisions were being made in New Delhi. Referring to statements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Stalin said the BJP leadership had projected the formation of an NDA government without clearly endorsing EPS as the chief ministerial candidate. Reiterating his central charge, Stalin warned that an AIADMK government would effectively hand over Tamil Nadu's autonomy to the BJP, and called on voters to reject the opposition alliance decisively at the polls.

'Make him famous' post: Why Delhi HC castigated Richa Chadha, news platforms for 'unverified' allegations against PwC partner



GNS News Agency, April 1

The Delhi High Court castigated news platforms as well as actress and producer Richa Chadha for amplifying alleged unverified allegations against a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), saying such amplification "acts as a catalyst for public shaming and digital vigilantism". While Chadha had sought that she be deleted from among the defendant parties in the suit, given that she has deleted her post, the court refused to accede to the request on March 20.

Justice Vikas Mahajan observed, "The endorsement and amplification of an unverified allegation, accompanied by the instigatory text 'Make him famous', transcends mere free expression and acts as a catalyst for public shaming and digital vigilantism. A public figure, such as (Chadha), bears a legal and moral responsibility to verify... facts before leveraging her platform to amplify grave accusations. The Court is, prima facie, of the view that endorsement of unverified allegations has inflicted immediate, exponential, and incalculable harm on the plaintiff's reputation." In his plea, the partner at PwC sought permanent injunction and damages owing to alleged unverified accusations of misconduct on an IndiGo flight by a co-passenger on social media. He sought damages to the tune of Rs 2.01 crore for the "grave and irreparable harm" caused to his reputation and professional standing, and public apologies from the defendants as well. As an interim measure, Justice Mahajan

has now directed social media intermediaries — Google LLC, X Corp and Meta Platforms — to take down social media posts in this regard.

The co-passenger, a female journalist, had accused the man of allegedly inappropriately touching her mid-flight while she was asleep and had posted about the incident on social media on March 11. It was subsequently amplified across the media, including being reposted by Chadha, with the remark 'Make him famous'. News platforms such as NDTV Hindi, ABP Live; and OBNews, which is an online platform operating on Google LLC, too had published articles reproducing the alleged unverified allegations. Noting that the complainant had taken to social media before lodging an FIR, Justice Mahajan observed that such conduct transgresses on the plaintiff's right to live with dignity and a fair trial.

"The overhasty public disclosure, prima facie, suggests an attempt to sensationalise the issue and subject the plaintiff to a trial by public opinion, rather than a bona fide pursuit of legal redress. While defendant no. 1 (complainant) has an unhindered right to report a grievance, but using social media to circulate allegations of inappropriate touching and revealing the identity of the plaintiff, along with his photograph, before a formal investigation even commences, in a prima facie view of this Court, is a severe transgression of the plaintiff's fundamental right to live with dignity and have fair trial," Justice Mahajan recorded. Also castigating news platforms amplifying such social media posts as news, the court noted, "The narrative set by media houses and digital platforms has clearly breached the contours of the FIR. The publications do not merely report the allegations in the FIR; they prematurely adjudicate the matter. By suggesting the plaintiff to be the 'culprit' and categorically labelling him a 'molester', the defendants have effectively usurped the adjudicatory function of the competent courts. Such pronouncements grossly violate the foundational principle of criminal jurisprudence viz. the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, and create an unwarranted parallel investigation that has the potential of severely prejudicing the ongoing investigation in the aforesaid FIR."

1984 anti-Sikh riots survivor, 'messiah' for other victims', Vajpayee admirer: Who is HS Phoolka, who joined BJP

GNS News Agency, April 1

A prominent Sikh voice who has fought the cases of 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims pro bono for over three decades, Harvinder Singh Phoolka said he is returning to politics to work for Punjab, as he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday. Phoolka, 70, a senior Supreme Court Advocate and human rights activist, known as "messiah" of 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the 2027 Punjab assembly polls. "I have been fighting the fight for the 1984 riots (victims) for the last 40 years, and I have been supported by the BJP since then... I have fought my fight together with them," he told reporters after joining the saffron party. A graduate in agricultural sciences from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, and a law graduate from Panjab University, Chandigarh, student politics played a crucial role in shaping Phoolka's pro-people ideology.

He often mentions the 1972 Moga police firing incident as the "turning point of his life", in which two students were killed. The students were protesting against black marketing of tickets at the Regal Cinema in Moga. Phoolka said he participated in the protests and was also jailed for seeking justice for victims. A native of Bhadaur in Barnala district of Punjab, Phoolka entered politics in 2014, when he joined the then-newbie Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and contested the Lok Sabha polls that year from Ludhiana. Though he lost to Congress's (now in the BJP) Ravneet Singh Bittu by a whisker, he polled the highest votes in the rural segment of Dakha. In the 2017 Punjab Assembly polls, the AAP fielded him from Dakha. Phoolka won even as Congress came to power in Punjab. The AAP, the main opposition party, named him Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Punjab Assembly. However, in 2018, Phoolka first resigned as LoP and then as Dakha MLA the same year, necessitating the Dakha bypoll in 2019 (won by SAD). The same year in 2019, he even resigned from the AAP altogether and left active politics.

He had cited two major reasons for resigning as Dakha MLA and eventually leaving AAP: the Punjab government's inaction in the sacrilege cases and his commitment to the 1984 cases as an advocate. Speaking to The Indian Express in an interview with this correspondent, Phoolka while commenting on his resignation as LoP in 2018, had said: "The case of Congress leader Sajjan Kumar, an accused in 1984 riots, was coming up for final hearing in Delhi High Court and the Bar Council wasn't allowing me to appear as I had the status of a Cabinet minister. I had to resign as LoP to appear in that case. The AAP leadership told me not to resign in the party's interest and asked whether the 1984 cases were more important. I said yes, they are, as I have spent my whole life fighting them. So I told them I will quit politics." Eventually, when he resigned as Dakha MLA in 2018, Phoolka attributed his decision to "inaction in sacrilege cases" by the Punjab government. Termed a "dhokebaaz" (traitor) by several AAP colleagues for resigning mid-term, Phoolka, while justifying his decision, told this correspondent in an interview: "I did not ditch the people of Dakha. In fact, I sacrificed my MLA's post for a larger cause. My resignation as an MLA was for a larger cause, to protest against the inaction of the Capt Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in the sacrilege cases. I first resigned as Leader of Opposition as the Bar Council was not allowing me to fight the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case pertaining to (former Congress leader) Sajjan Kumar".

"Then on August 28, 2018, the Congress government created a drama in Vidhan Sabha and refused to take any action on the enquiry report of Justice (retired) Ranjit Singh in sacrilege cases. It was then that I announced my resignation as MLA to protest this injustice, as not only I but also the people of Punjab were hurt. Finally, when Sajjan Kumar was convicted in December last year in a landmark judgment, I resigned from the AAP and politics because I did not want this landmark victory for the 1984 riots victims to be used for political gains by any party, not even the AAP."

In 2018, when Phoolka was still the MLA from Dakha, he raised BJP stalwart and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for "releasing the actual number of 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims." He said BJP-led governments "have



Having previously served as the Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, Phoolka's return to active politics marks a departure from his 2019 "retirement" from the electoral space.

always supported his battle for justice for 1984 victims". Phoolka told this correspondent after Vajpayee's demise: "In November 1984, the Congress government in Parliament claimed that only 600 Sikhs died during the riots in Delhi. But it was then Delhi MP Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who went on to release the actual number of Sikhs killed during the riots. The Congress had then called Vajpayee saab "anti-national" for releasing a higher number, but he had replied 'I don't care what they call me'. That list of 2,700 Sikhs killed in riots was compiled by BJP leader Madan Lal Khurana after visiting relief camps and riot-affected areas in Delhi and was released by Vajpayee on November 16, 1984.

"Vajpayee saab had strongly opposed and rejected the claims of the Congress government that only 600 Sikhs were killed. Later on, the number of 2,700 Sikhs killed in Delhi came on record in the Ahuja committee report. Later, after becoming the Prime Minister in 1999, he asked me what could be done best to get justice for victims and their families. By then, Congress had already buried most of the cases against its leaders who led mobs to kill Sikhs. I told him to appoint a commission for re-enquiry and take action. He then constituted the Justice GT Nanavati Commission in 2000, which reopened all cases for a thorough probe." In another press conference in 2019 after leaving the AAP, Phoolka said the BJP has "always always supported us in our fight for justice for 1984 victims". "I met law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and home minister Rajnath Singh for support, and they backed me. Even the Vajpayee government supported my battle. My proximity with the BJP existed even when I was with AAP. After leaving the AAP in 2019, Phoolka announced that he would not contest any polls again, nor would he join any political party, but would continue his activities as a social activist and support non-political groups.

However, in December 2024, Phoolka expressed his wish to join Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) to "strengthen a strong regional party". He clarified that he would join as a volunteer ("sewadar") to help strengthen the party and that he was not seeking any designation or planning to contest future elections. In 2017, Phoolka told The Indian Express in another interview that "Hindus did not kill Sikhs, but the 1984 riot was a well-planned mass murder against the Sikhs led by the then ruling Congress party." "That is the reason why the riot was a genocide," said Phoolka, who was honoured with Padma Shri in 2019. Speaking to The Indian Express, Phoolka said that there cannot be a better example than him and his family, who were saved by their Hindu landlord when riots broke out in Delhi, following the assassination of former prime minister Indira Gandhi. "We lived in the South Extension area of Delhi and my wife was four months pregnant. The mob attacked our rented accommodation, and it was our Hindu landlord who hid us in his storeroom. The mob came and searched his entire house, but our landlord stood as a shield," he added. "Later, on November 5, we were safely sent to Punjab with the help of another friend in an Air India flight. My daughter Prabh Sahay Phoolka was born in April 1985 and had it not been for our landlord, we would have been killed that very day. How can you say that those riots were Hindus vs Sikhs? No, they were not. Hindus saved many Sikh families. It was Congress vs Sikhs," said Phoolka.

How a pink line on an Android phone led to a Mumbai judge losing Rs 93,000 in cyber fraud



GNS News Agency, April 1

Within a month of a Bombay High Court judge losing more than Rs 6 lakh to a credit card scam, another Mumbai judge has fallen prey to cyber fraud and lodged a First Information Report saying he was duped of Rs 93,000.

According to a complaint by a small causes court judge, on the afternoon of March 30, while he was in the court premises, he observed a pink line on his Android phone, after which he searched online for the customer care service number of the mobile manufacturer, which was busy. A few hours later, he reportedly got a call from another number from a person posing as a representative of the mobile company, and the judge conveyed his grievances

about the mobile display. The person told the judge to register an online complaint and sent an APK file to his WhatsApp number.

The judge clicked on the said file, after which a customer support application was downloaded. The person then told the complainant to send Rs 10 twice through the Google Pay (GPay) app to register the complaint, which the judge reportedly followed. Thereafter, he received a 'request in progress' message, and after he reached home, when he checked his GPay account, he found that Rs 90,000 and Rs 3,000 were deducted from the bank account registered with the mobile payment service in which his mother is a joint holder. As per the complainant, the funds were traced to a PhonePe account in the name of one Pappu Sachin Yadav. After that, the judge called the cybercrime helpline and was asked to file a complaint with the Mumbai police.

The FIR was registered on Tuesday against an unknown person under offences punishable under sections 318(4) (cheating) and 319(2) (cheating by personation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and sections 66C (identity theft) and 66D (cheating by personation using computer devices) of the Information Technology Act. Earlier this month, a Bombay High Court judge had lodged a police complaint over losing Rs 6.02 lakh in a credit card scam. In December 2023, a retired chief justice of the Bombay High Court had lodged an FIR with the cyber cell of the Mumbai police after he lost nearly Rs 50,000 to cyber fraud.

They came looking for discount, but got disappointment — and bouncers

GNS News Agency, April 1

The rush led vendors to deploy bouncers at multiple locations to manage crowds and avoid disorder. The rush led vendors to deploy bouncers at multiple locations to manage crowds and avoid disorder. With the new excise policy set to roll out from April 1, liquor vendors across the city saw a surge in customers on Monday, as many city residents turned up expecting end-of-financial-year discounts and to stock up in advance. While heavy footfall was reported at several outlets, the usual last-day price cuts remained largely absent. Unlike previous years, most vendors refrained from offering official discounts, leaving many buyers disappointed. Naveen Sharma, a Manimajra resident, said, "I came to buy liquor at a vend, thinking the prices would be very less, but there is hardly any discount. There is no relaxation in price, rather the liquor is sold at similar prices." Another Sector 33 resident, Saurabh Sharma, said, "None of the liquor vends offered any discounts. I went to a couple of the vends in the city. Only on buying a 12-bottle box, a little discount was offered." A liquor contractor said that operators who have secured vends for the upcoming policy period chose not to slash prices, whereas some others with unsold inventory offered informal rebates to clear their remaining stock. The rush led vendors to deploy bouncers at multiple locations to manage crowds and avoid disorder.

Under the new excise regime, 94 liquor vends will operate in Chandigarh. Three vends, which remain unallotted, are likely to be put up for auction next week. The administration has already crossed Rs 500 crore in revenue from this year's auction of liquor licences. UT officials said the



policy is aimed at streamlining operations while maintaining revenue levels. Among the highlights, the vend at Palsora village attracted the highest bid at Rs 16.71 crore, driven in part by its proximity to Mohali. The policy also brings changes to service norms for hospitality establishments. A-category hotels will be allowed to serve liquor round the clock, while B- and C-category hotels can opt for 24-hour service by paying an annual licence fee of Rs 30 lakh. Bars, meanwhile, will operate from 11 am to 1 am, with last orders at midnight. Establishments can extend service till 3 am on payment of an additional ₹8 lakh, though final orders in such cases will close at 2 am. The quota for country liquor, IMFL and IFL remains unchanged, keeping the policy revenue-neutral compared to 2025-26. The administration has also reintroduced the L-10B licence, allowing liquor sales through organised department stores, a move aimed at improving accessibility for consumers, including women and senior citizens.

From bookshops to a bibliomystery, Pradeep Sebastian on finding joy in collecting rare books

GNS News Agency, April 1

Dotted with bookstores, Bengaluru has no shortage of avid readers. But when it comes to collecting old and rare books—those with unique plate illustrations and more than a century old—such bibliophiles are few. Bengaluru-based author and book collector Pradeep Sebastian is one such exception. Uniquely, all his books are what he calls "books about books"—dedicated either to the love of reading or the journey of finding rare and old volumes.

While The Book Beautiful (2023) is a memoir of his journey as a book collector and how it began, The Book Hunters of Katpadi (2017) is something Sebastian describes as India's first "bibliomystery". Like many works of fiction, it is a mystery, but one rooted in the world of rare books and book collecting.

Recalling where his love of books came from, Sebastian says, "I have been a bibliophile since childhood. I used to scour private circulating libraries—there were many in the 1980s. Since then, spending time in Bengaluru bookshops is something I have been doing a lot... interacting with the owners and the people who come there." However, the rare book bug bit him elsewhere. It was while he was living in America that he came across book fairs and shops dedicated to antiquarian books and met fellow collectors. "In India, we don't really have a culture of rare book collecting and dealing. When you go to our bookshops, they don't have something like a rare book section. Second-hand bookstores like Select (on Brigade Road) had some antiquarian and rare material which scholars accessed—but not a full-fledged antiquarian bookshop," he says. Recently, Sebastian, collector V R Ferose, and others established the 'Antiquarian Bookworm', a space dedicated to rare and historically significant books, along with Krishna Gowda, proprietor of the Bookworm Bookstore (which also houses the Antiquarian Bookworm). Sebastian has also founded a society in Bengaluru devoted to collecting rare books—the Book Hunters of Bengaluru. "It is less than a year old and people are already showing interest in it. We are hoping that it will get people interested in collecting," he adds. On the process of actually finding these rare books, Sebastian says that one may spot the occasional lucky find in the corner of a bookstore. (This journalist, for instance, once found a 130-year-old volume of Roman history in a Bengaluru bookstore).

But more often than not, today, the online medium is where one finds collectibles—on platforms such as AbeBooks and viaLibri, he says. "It could be a book dealer

somewhere in Japan, South America, or Australia," Sebastian explains. "They are all there, and you have access to their inventory and can speak to them." As far as expenses go, Sebastian says one can start at a reasonable price by collecting books that may be old and rare, but not highly sought after. As one moves into rarer titles and special editions, however, the prices rise. On his latest endeavours with The Book Hunters of Katpadi, Sebastian said, "If you are a book collector or very attached to the world of books, the best kind of mystery you can read is a bibliomystery. There has never been one in India... though there have been very fine mysteries. I wanted a book that is very intensely bibliophilic, and so in a very uncompromising way, I made it a hard-core bibliomystery." He adds frankly, "There were some mixed reviews. People found that there was too much that slowed down the narrative through bibliographic details. I wrote the kind of book that I would like to read, and I know several people who enjoyed the very things that others found frustrating."

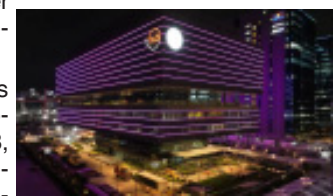
T-Hub, IN-SPACE host InveSt Space Hyderabad to boost SpaceTech funding

GNS News Agency, April 1

Hyderabad: T-Hub, in collaboration with IN-SPACE (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre), hosted InveSt Space Hyderabad Edition, bringing together SpaceTech founders, venture capital funds, angel investors, policymakers, and international delegations to bridge the gap between policy momentum and on-ground capital formation.

India's space sector is at an inflection point. With IN-SPACE having authorised over 250 private entities to participate in the space economy, and policy momentum building through dedicated funding mechanisms for space and deep tech startups, the conditions for private capital formation in the sector have never been stronger, a press release said.

As the sector scales from \$8.4 billion to a projected \$44 billion by 2033, Hyderabad is at the forefront of SpaceTech innovation and enterprise. T-Hub is playing a critical role in accelerating this ecosystem, enabling access to capital, mentorship, and market linkages to high-potential startups, including Sanyark Space, Azista Space, Spantrik, CosmoServe, Red Balloon Aerospace, ADT Core, and Stardour. The event convened more than 30 SpaceTech startups spanning the full value chain.



9 Maoist cadres surrender in Gadchiroli ahead of Centre's March 31 deadline



GNS News Agency, April 1

All those who surrendered from Chhattisgarh. They included Dasari alias Pide Sannu Veko (area committee member (ACM)– National Park Doctor Team, 35); Ramaji Adama Potam (ACM – Sandra local organising squad (LOS), National Park agriculture team, 40); Shanti Vanja Wadde (ACM–Indrawati LOS, 35); Manaku Maso Podyam (member–Sandra LOS, 35); Sarita Rama Velkam (member–National Park mobile political school (MOPOS), 25); Lakshmi Ayatu Kunjam (member–National Park MOPOS, 26); Rakesh Korake Majji (member–Sandra LOS, National Park, 30); and Sukki Bami Kunjam (member–Pamed Area LOS, 22)—all from Bijapur district. Nande Joga Made (member–MOPOS, Maad Area, 22), who surrendered, is from Sukma district.

The cadres surrendered before the Gadchiroli police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Among them, Wadde surrendered with an AK-47 rifle and 30 live rounds, while Kunjam surrendered with a carbine rifle. The police recovered arms and materials from the Kumnar forest area along the Maharashtra–Chhattisgarh border, including an AK-47 rifle, three magazines, 57 live rounds, three walkie-talkies, four batteries, and 20 pen drives. The police recovered arms and materials from the Kumnar forest area along the Maharashtra–Chhattisgarh border, including an AK-47 rifle, three magazines, 57 live rounds, three walkie-

talkies, four batteries, and 20 pen drives

Based on information provided by the cadres, the police recovered arms and materials from the Kumnar forest area along the Maharashtra–Chhattisgarh border, including an AK-47 rifle, three magazines, 57 live rounds, three walkie-talkies, four batteries, and 20 pen drives. A joint operation by Gadchiroli and Chhattisgarh Police led to the recovery of two 7.62 SLR rifles, a single-shot weapon, 50 detonators, and other materials from the Gundapuri forest area in the National Park region. According to the police, Maoist activity in Gadchiroli is now on the verge of complete eradication. Following the surrender of senior CPI (Maoist) leader Mallojula Venugopal Rao on October 15 last year, 940 Maoist cadres across the country have laid down arms along with 569 weapons. "There is no movement of even a single armed or unarmed Maoist cadre in entire Gadchiroli district in the last 12-15 days. Still, we have the last remaining six cadres of Coy No. 10 on our record, whom we have not removed from our list, out of which five are from Chhattisgarh. We are coordinating with adjoining districts to trace their whereabouts," Neelotpal, Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police, said. The police said that the surrendered cadres include long-time members active since 2005, as well as newer recruits from recent years. Their involvement in violent incidents and cases in other states is being verified, they added.

The Maharashtra government had announced rewards ranging from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 6 lakh on the cadres. Following the surrender, they will receive rehabilitation assistance of Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 5.5 lakh each under central and state schemes, along with Rs 4 lakh as collective support for the group. Officials said the surrenders come amid intensified anti-Maoist operations. Since 2022, 166 hardcore Maoists have surrendered before the Gadchiroli police, including 132 since 2025. Senior officials from the CRPF and Gadchiroli police attended the ceremony. Ajai Kumar Sharma, DIG (Ops), CRPF; SP Neelotpal; Parvidar Singh, Commndt. 192 Bt. CRPF; Chanchal Parwana, Staff Officer, DIG office CRPF; M Ramesh, Additional SP (Ops.); Karrthik Madhira, Additional SP Aheri; Gokul Raj G, Additional SP (Admn.); and Aniket Hirde, ASP Gadchiroli were present during the ceremony.

Rotten tomatoes and obscene photos: Why a parcel sent to Bengaluru airport led to a Dutch national's arrest

GNS News Agency, April 1

Subhash Hajji, a 65 year old dutch national was arrested by Bengaluru Police for sending a bizarre "ritual" package to the administrative office of Kempegowda International Airport. Subhash Hajji, a 65 year old dutch national was arrested by Bengaluru Police for sending a bizarre "ritual" package to the administrative office of Kempegowda International Airport. A 65-year-old Dutch national of Indian origin has been arrested in Bengaluru for allegedly sending a bizarre "ritual" package to the administrative office of Kempegowda International Airport, claiming it was meant to ward off potential disasters.

The accused, identified as Subhash Hajji, an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder, is suspected of having couriered the parcel in January. The package left airport authorities baffled, as it contained rotten tomatoes, decaying flower garlands, pieces of iron, a toothpaste cover, and obscene photographs. After weeks of confusion over the intent behind the parcel, officials lodged a complaint on March 4, prompting an investigation. Using CCTV footage, the airport police tracked down Hajji and took him into custody.

According to the police, Hajji had frequented several locations within the airport premises between January 6 and January 22. During this period, he allegedly used the airport's post office to send a parcel addressed to the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) office. After weeks of confusion over the intent behind the parcel, officials lodged a complaint on March 4, prompting an investigation. Using CCTV footage, the airport police tracked down Hajji and took him into custody. After weeks of confusion over the intent behind the parcel, officials lodged a complaint on March 4, prompting an investigation. During interrogation, Hajji allegedly told the police that he had no malicious intent and had sent the package as part of a ritual to "protect" the air-



port from untoward incidents. He also claimed to have dispatched similar parcels to other airports across the country, allegedly to prevent disasters like the Ahmedabad plane crash incident. "He stated that the parcel was meant to ward off evil and ensure safety at airports. At this stage, we have found no evidence of any intent to cause panic or harm. However, his actions fall under the provisions of the law, and we are verifying his claims about sending such packages elsewhere," a police official said.

Police said Hajji, who has Indian roots but was born in a South American country, is fluent in multiple languages and worked in Europe before retiring. He currently survives on a monthly pension and has been travelling across countries, frequently visiting India. In Bengaluru, he was found staying near a temple in Madivala. Investigators noted that he has also travelled extensively across states, including Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. "He is in judicial custody, and we have requested a medical examination to assess his mental condition. The investigation is ongoing," a police officer said. A case has been registered under the Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Act, 2017.

CBI books Anil Ambani and RCom in Rs 3,750 crore LIC case



GNS News Agency, April 1

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday registered a case against Reliance Communications Ltd (RCom), Anil Ambani, unknown public servants, and unknown others on allegations of causing wrongful loss of Rs 3,750 crore to Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India. The case has been registered on the basis of a complaint received from Life Insurance Corporation of India Ltd. for offences of conspiracy, cheating, misappropriation, and offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, according to an official statement.

It is alleged that LIC was fraudulently induced to subscribe to Non Convertible Debentures (NCDs) worth Rs 4,500 crore on the basis of false representations made by Reliance Communications Ltd. and its management regarding the financial health of the company, and security and asset cover offered to LIC while subscribing to the NCDs. The LIC has made this complaint on basis of a forensic audit report dated October 15, 2020 conducted by BDO India LLP, which reported that RCom and its management had resorted to misutilisation of funds raised from banks and financial institutions, routing of funds through

subsidiaries, misuse of sale invoice financing, discounting of fictitious bills, systematic siphoning of funds through inter-company deposits and shell related entities, creating and write-off of fictitious debtors and receivables and gross overstatement of security. There was a mismatch between the charges and the assets. Investigation of the case is in progress, the statement added. The CBI had earlier registered three cases against RCom Ltd, Anil Ambani, and others on allegations of defrauding a number of banks. Anil Ambani was also interrogated by the CBI at its head office in Delhi for two days in a row in connection with the alleged Rs 2,929.05 crore SBI fraud case. The CBI had registered an FIR on August 21, 2025, following a complaint filed by the SBI, in which Reliance Communications Limited, Anil D. Ambani and others, including unknown public servants, are accused. The State Bank of India (SBI) is the lead bank in the consortium of 11 banks — Bank of India, Central Bank of India, UCO Bank, Union Bank of India, e-Corporation Bank, Canara Bank, e-Syndicate Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, IDBI Bank Limited, and e-Oriental Bank of Commerce that had extended loans to the Anil Ambani group. The complaint is based on a forensic audit report that alleges large-scale diversion and misutilisation of loan funds through interlinked and circuitous transactions among group entities during the period 2013-17, resulting in wrongful loss of Rs 2929.05 crore to the SBI out of total exposure of Rs 19,694.33 crores involving 17 public sector banks, according to an official statement. Subsequent to the registration of the case, separate complaints were received from the Punjab National Bank, the Bank of India, the Union Bank of India, the UCO Bank, the Central Bank of India, the IDBI Bank, and the Bank of Maharashtra. Further, another case has been registered against Reliance Communications Limited, Anil Ambani and others unknown, including unknown public servants, on February 25 on the basis of a complaint dated February 24, received from the Bank of Baroda, which includes exposure of e-Dena Bank and e-Vijaya Bank.

Fire and explosions cause panic near military camp in Burundi



GNS News Agency, April 1

Bujumbura: Residents of an area near a military camp in Burundi fled on Tuesday night after explosions were heard coming from the camp, due to what the army spokesperson later said was a fire caused due to an electrical fault at

the armory. A fire caused by a short circuit in the ammunition storage room led to the detonation of explosives at the military camp located in Musaga, in the suburbs of the commercial hub of Bujumbura, said army spokesperson Gaspard Baratuza.

The huge fire was visible from miles away, and residents could be seen fleeing from areas near the camp in videos shared on social media. "We would like to reassure the public that this is in no way an enemy attack, despite some rumours that have begun to circulate," Baratuza said. Electricity within the camp and neighbouring areas was cut off as civilians moved away from the camp. "We ask residents of the Gasekebuye, Kanyosha, Kinindo areas and surrounding neighbourhoods to remain calm and not give in to panic," Baratuza said. By Wednesday morning, calm was returning to the area, and the local government administrator said some children who fled during the incident were at the Buhonga Catholic Parish waiting to be reunited with their families.

Australia's Anthony Albanese says war's economic shock will be felt for months as West Asia crisis continues

GNS News Agency, April 1

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese warned the economic shocks of the war in the West Asia would be felt for months and encouraged citizens to take public transport in a rare address to the nation on Wednesday (April 1, 2026). The address was broadcast simultaneously across major television and radio networks at 7 p.m. (0800 GMT). Similar addresses were made by previous Prime Ministers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2008 global financial crisis. Australia, which imports about 90% of its fuel, has seen petrol prices surge and experienced localised shortages as a result of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

"I understand that right? Now it's hard to be positive," Mr. Albanese said. "The war in the Middle East has caused the biggest spike in petrol and diesel prices in history. Australia is not an active participant in this war. But all Australians are paying higher prices because of it. The economic shocks caused by this war will be with us for months."

Mr. Albanese encouraged citizens to "do their bit" to ease pressure on fuel supplies, such as not stockpiling fuel ahead of the Easter holidays, which begin this week, and taking public transport. "If you're hitting the road, don't take more fuel than you need - just fill up like you normally would. Think of others in your community, in the bush and in critical industries," he said. "And over coming weeks, if you can switch to catching the train or bus or tram to work, do so." Fuel stocks below recommended levels

The month-long conflict has spread across the West Asia, killing thousands, disrupting energy supplies and



threatening to send the global economy into a tailspin. Mr. Albanese said the coming months "may not be easy" but said the government would do everything it could to help Australians. Earlier this week, the government announced it would halve the excise on petrol and diesel and remove the heavy-road-user charge for three months to help households cope with a surge in costs driven by the war, at a cost to the government of around A\$2.55 billion (\$1.75 billion). Australia has its highest fuel stocks in 15 years, but they are still far below the International Energy Agency recommendation of 90 days. Treasurer Jim Chalmers said on Wednesday (April 1, 2026) small businesses affected by the war would be given easier access to credit. "We know that the fallout is affecting everyone, but we believe that by working together, if everybody does their bit, we can get through this difficult period," Mr. Chalmers told reporters.

Iran executes two more convicted of links to banned opposition

GNS News Agency, April 1

Iran executed two men on Tuesday (March 31, 2026) convicted of membership in a banned opposition group and plotting to overthrow the Islamic Republic, the judiciary said, a day after two others were hanged on similar charges. "Babak Alipour and Pouya Ghabadi... were executed by hanging on Tuesday (March 31, 2026) after legal procedures were completed and their sentences upheld by the Supreme Court," the judiciary's Mizan Online website said. The men were found guilty of attempting "rebellion through involvement in multiple terrorist acts", as well as membership of the banned People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) and carrying out acts of sabotage aimed at overthrowing the Islamic republic. The executions come with Iran at war with the United States and Israel following strikes on February 28 that triggered a wider regional conflict.

On Monday (March 30, 2026), Iranian authorities announced the execution of two other men convicted of links to the MEK and attempting to overthrow the Islamic republic. It was not clear when the four men were arrested. The MEK, which opposed the rule of the shah and initially supported the 1979 Islamic revolution before falling out with the leadership in the 1980s, has since been in exile



and is designated a terrorist organisation by Tehran. Iran is the world's most prolific executioner after China, according to rights groups. It has carried out several executions since the war began. On March 19, Iran executed three men accused of killing police officers during mass protests, which peaked in January — the first executions related to that unrest. In the same month, Iran also executed Kouroush Keyvani, a dual Iranian-Swedish national, on charges of spying for Israel, drawing condemnation from Stockholm and the European Union.

U.S.-Israel targeted major pharmaceutical company: Iran govt



U.S.-Israeli airstrikes on Tuesday (March 31, 2026) hit one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in Iran which produces anaesthetic and cancer drugs, the Iranian government said. "During the U.S. and Zionist regime attacks on civilian centres, on the morning of Tuesday, one of the largest companies producing anti-cancer, anaesthetic and specialised medicines was damaged and the drug production line was damaged," the government said in a post on X.

The pharmaceutical company was named as Tofigh Daru Research & Engineering Company, which is owned by the Social Security Investment Company, a state-run holding firm. On LinkedIn, Tofigh Daru says it develops and produces active pharmaceutical ingredients "in the anticancer, narcotics, cardiovascular to immunomodulatory segments." Iran has long faced chronic shortages of medicines, partly due to UN sanctions imposed over its nuclear programme.

The sanctions have crippled essential trade services such as banking, while scaring off drug companies from doing business in Iran, even though humanitarian products are exempt. The Islamic republic relies for the most part on its own domestic production, while importing limited quantities of ingredients and specialised drugs from countries such as India and Japan. The U.S. and Israel have broadened their strikes beyond the strictly military sphere since the two allies launched the war on February 28. In recent days, targets have included steel production facilities and universities in Tehran and central Isfahan. Iran has vowed in each case to retaliate with strikes on similar targets either in Israel or neighbouring Gulf countries.

Paediatrician Sivaranjani Santosh refuses to back down amid pressure

Hyderabad-based paediatrician Dr Sivaranjani Santosh during a virtual press conference on April 1 defended her campaign against certain electrolyte drinks. Credit: Screengrab Hyderabad-based paediatrician Dr. Sivaranjani Santosh on Wednesday (April 1, 2026) defended her campaign against certain electrolyte drinks, alleging that misleading branding and high sugar content in products such as ORSL and its rebranded version ERZL pose a risk to children's health.

The West Asia cauldron of conflict and its fallout



U.S. has gone wrong. What is surprising also is that, apart from U.S. support to Israel's devious plans, much of the rest of the civilised world has not upbraided Israel for embarking on a patently illegal conflict, which has no merit whatsoever. The world continues to remain a mute spectator, notwithstanding the price it is paying due to the escalating cost of oil.

Israel's obsession about seeking fulfilment of the 'Biblical Promise of the chosen land', notwithstanding the huge cost in human and economic terms, is unfortunately proving costly for the world at large as well. However, Israel remains adamant in pursuing the war with little regard for the costs involved, and, with Mr. Trump's backing, hopes to expand the ambit of the conflict across West Asia to include Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. All this, despite the already apparent severe maritime disruptions and retaliatory steps taken by Iran such as the closing of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Iran war today has entered a phase of 'no peace, no large-scale war', one defined not merely by military confrontation but through the weaponisation of the infrastructure underpinning the global economy. Energy prices, shipping lanes and logistical systems provide the essential backdrop to the current conflict and are, in a sense, central to the strategy of those involved. The U.S. has far more to lose than Israel if the world plunges into prolonged chaos — but the economies of most nations across the globe are already being, and would continue to be, adversely affected by the disruption of the oil economy and its fallout in every sphere. Notwithstanding the opinion of military experts that Israel's objective of effecting a regime change in Iran is impossible without a ground invasion, Israel is pursuing such an objective with vigour. Neither the U.S. nor Europe display any enthusiasm for this. The economies of most nations concerned are, once again, in no position to undertake such a conflict — including the U.S. Both China and Russia are almost certain to oppose it. A war of this kind is, moreover, certain to throw up many other issues often lost sight of in the Councils of the World. The fact that Iran is a large country is often ignored, as also that Iranian forces are better acclimatised to carry out a war of attrition. Reliance on air power provides no significant advantage to any 'aggressor'.

On Shia resistance Additionally, one must add a symbolic dimension to any conflict that is aimed at overthrowing a Shiite regime. Shiite political culture draws heavily on the memory of the 'Battle of Karbala' that symbolises civilisational resistance, and not just geopolitics. The narrative emphasises patience, sacrifice, resistance and strategic endurance. A war intended to change the present dispensation in Iran by outside forces such as Israel, would only provide an opportunity to enhance the religious, political and transnational aspects of Shiite Islam. Expansion of the current war launched by the U.S. and Israel is more likely to be perceived as approximating to striking at the roots of political Shiism — in Iran and elsewhere. Western military superiority does not guarantee strategic victory. Nor will a war automatically result in altering geopolitical outcomes inside Iran and across the region, or to a regime collapse in Iran. All this would pave the way for a long drawn-out war, irrespective of the consequences.

The appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei as the Supreme Leader following Ali Khamenei's killing on February 28, should again be viewed not as a mere rite of passage but as a triumph for the radical messianic-apocalyptic aspect of Shiite Islam. In a sense, it is triggering a revival of Shiite militancy — and in an aggravated form. This leaves little room for any expectation that the revolutionary fervour will diminish with the killing of additional Ayatollahs. The U.S. and Israel, hence, need to be careful before venturing into the 'spider's web', for the cost of delusion could be grave not only for Israel and the U.S. but also for the world at large. There is still time, at least for the U.S., to retrieve the situation and alter the policy direction that has been initiated under Mr. Netanyahu's instigation. Israel's deliberate provocation, including its latest attack very close to Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant (built with Russian collaboration) was a needless — and perhaps a deliberate — act of provocation by Israel. Such issues need to be avoided lest the world is plunged into third world war, with untold sufferings for mankind.

An impeachment move with no winners

A win-win situation benefits all stakeholders even if a compromise is reached in search of a workable alternative. It could even be a way in which the winning side deduces the losing side to perceive its loss as a necessary price it paid for survival. The impeachment motion of the Opposition parties against the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is one such example. It is a motion destined not to carry. Yet its prime movers may not see the loss as a defeat. But can the CEC see their loss as his victory? The move of the Opposition parties is doubtlessly dramatic. However, the question that needs to be pondered by the well-wishers of the Election Commission of India (ECI) is what prompted them to don the gloves for a fight with no chance of victory. Perhaps, sometimes one fights not to win but to wound the opponent. And the troubling part is that political parties treat the CEC as an opponent.

Steadfast defiance The move to impeach the CEC is a first in the history of an institution that is supposed to be a vanguard of Indian electoral democracy. "India built many institutions after attaining freedom and adopting a Republican constitution... If anyone were to conduct an opinion poll on which of these institutions rendered the best service to Indian democracy with the highest degree of integrity, I have no doubt that the ECI will be our people's first choice," said Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister at the ECI's golden jubilee celebrations on January 17, 2001.

And now, 25 years later, 193 parliamentarians of the Opposition have submitted notices for an impeachment motion against the CEC citing charges of "partisan and discriminatory conduct", "obstruction of investigation into electoral fraud" and disenfranchisement via the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The notice is as unprecedented as the manner in which the revision of electoral rolls has been undertaken despite serious challenge by most political parties, except the ruling dispensation. Such an alignment of thinking disconcerted the Opposition, which sharpened their attack against the CEC. The repeated press conferences by the Leader of the Opposition (LOP) exposing discrepancies in the electoral rolls of States where elections had been held, further eroded trust in the body.

While the aggressive style and severity of the LOP's attack on the poll body, questioning its integrity was surprising, what was more surprising was the poll body's obduracy in not providing a credible response to the doubts raised on its functioning and impartiality. As the attacks became more and more bitter, communication channels between the poll body and the opposition political parties seemed to choke. The nation had seldom seen such a re-

lentless campaign against a CEC even as the Supreme Court heard endless petitions against his decisions. As the petitions failed to yield any substantive relief, frustration mounted and so did the CEC's apparent indifference. The CEC persisted with the SIR despite the fortnight-long Vote Adhikar Yatra just before the Bihar State elections.

Not that there was no dialogue. The one between the poll body and the Trinamool Congress caused more rancour culminating in the theatrical presence of Mamata Banerjee in the Supreme Court. Never before had a Chief Minister appeared in Court arguing against the ECI's unfair decisions. The dharnas against the SIR in West Bengal or officials dying in the course of conducting the SIR failed to deter the CEC or change his avowed commitment to "purify" the electoral rolls. The ECI invented the "logical discrepancy" tool that pitted electors against the AI used to detect discrepancies. West Bengal saw 58,20,899 electors deleted at the draft stage and 60,06,675 "under adjudication" in the final list. But the ECI went on to announce elections in the State, where the fate of nearly 10% electors remained undetermined. It employed micro-observers for finalising the revised rolls, something never done in the past. The SC also took the extraordinary step of appointing over 500 judicial officers to decide the fate of these electors in a short span. It is unusual for a constitutional body mandated with electoral rolls preparation to involve another constitutional body in discharging its routine functions by disregarding the elector's voting right, which it was created to protect. The exclusion of even a single eligible voter due to the way the SIR has been conducted would legitimise the criticism of this arbitrary and aggressive exercise. However, does all of this justify the impeachment move? The answer depends on which side of the divide one stands. The crores of voters who figure in the final electoral roll might not protest, treating the tension and trauma during the revision process as part of the routine struggle that helpless citizens go through to secure their rights. The voice of those excluded doesn't count in the elections in any case.

Eventually, the valid concern of protecting the right to vote turns into the lament of losers who are left with no choice but to resort to the ultimate constitutional weapon against the CEC. Meanwhile, the ECI has sounded the poll bugle asking players to contest against each other rather than against the referee. It is now in full control. The successful completion of the poll process will justify all its decisions. Victors will exult; losers will find reasons to complain. What the nation would be left with will be a poll body in which the Opposition, representing more than half the voting population, has expressed no confidence.

Telangana Govt plans regulatory authority like EAGLE and HYDRAA to curb food adulteration: CM



Expressing serious concern over the growing menace of food adulteration in Telangana, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has said the State government is considering establishing a dedicated monitoring and enforcement authority on the lines of Telangana Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE) and Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA).

In an informal interaction with reporters in Hyderabad on Monday (March 30, 2026), the Chief Minister observed that food adulteration had spread across sectors and was no longer confined to hotels and restaurants. "People are increasingly worried about the large-scale adulteration of food products, which is leading to unexplained and dangerous diseases. There is a growing demand for quality food materials," he said.

His remarks come in the wake of recent cases unearthed in Telangana, in which police and food safety officials uncovered large-scale adulteration through a series of raids. Authorities have seized adulterated cooking oil, spurious spices, synthetic milk, artificially ripened fruits, and misbranded packaged food products. Officials have also detected the sale of adulterated chilli powder mixed with artificial colours, turmeric laced with starch and chemicals, and edible oils diluted with cheaper industrial substitutes. The Chief Minister said a comprehensive regulatory and monitoring mechanism would be put in place. The proposed authority would function with focused enforcement powers, similar to EAGLE, which targets drug-related offences, and HYDRAA, which acts against illegal encroachments of lakes and lake beds in Hyderabad.

The Chief Minister noted that while the government had ensured the availability of nutritious food through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and maintained surplus food stocks, the primary concern now was the quality and safety of food reaching consumers. "There is no shortage of food. The worry is about adulteration. Even households are unknowingly purchasing adulterated food materials for daily consumption," he said.

Mr. Reddy warned that continued consumption of adulterated food could have long-term health consequences, contributing to the rise in lifestyle and unexplained illnesses. "It directly impacts public health. People are falling sick due to contaminated and substandard food," he observed.

Gender and identity: New questions arise

The biggest news story this week, forget health story, was the effort to fix the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill that went south quickly. The government introduced the Amendment Bill in Parliament claiming it intended to correct the flaws of the original Act. It created a huge storm in India, with the Opposition walking out and the LGBTQIA+ community across the country protesting on the streets. Their main complaints were that the new amendment removed the principle of gender self-determination, there was an unfortunate conflation between the concepts of sex and gender identities, and that the community that it was meant to benefit was not consulted at all in a move that would affect their quality of life drastically.

We have reported this extensively, in our columns. Gopi Shankar Madurai writes a striking critique of the Transgender Persons Amendment Bill, calling it a flawed fix. The article lists: "It narrows the definition of 'transgender person' to only specific socio-cultural identities such as kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta, eunuch, or biologically-defined intersex variations, or persons forcibly compelled into such an identity through mutilation, castration, amputation, or any surgical, chemical or hormonal procedure." "It explicitly excludes persons with different sexual orientations and non-heteronormative gender fluid identities. The Bill removes the right to 'self-perceived gender identity' from Section 4(2), replaces the simple District Magistrate process with a medical board 'authority' headed by a Chief Medical Officer, and mandates hospitals to report every transgender surgery to the District Magistrate and the authority."

Notwithstanding this very strong opposition, the Parliament passed the Bill, as we have reported, without any meaningful debate or discussion, or addressing the elephant in the room. However, that is not all: the protests continue. And as Abhinav Lakshman reports, in a further development, the Supreme Court-appointed panel asks Centre to withdraw Transgender Bill that removes right to gender self-determination. They have made the plea on the grounds that the proposal to "deny self-identification" of gender went against the decision of the Supreme Court in the 2014 NALSA v Union of India verdict.

Meanwhile, Ragavi M. and Ashna Butani report that two members from the National Council for Transgender Persons - southern representative Kalki Subramaniam and north east representative Rituparna Neog resigned. They called the amendment Bill "a step backward for our fundamental rights to self-identification and dignity". Read here. Organisations have also written to the President of India, urging her not to grant assent to the Transgender Amendment Bill. The letter was written by All-India Feminist Alliance (ALIFA), a pan-India collective of grassroots organisations, along with the National Alliance for Justice, Accountability and Rights (NAJAR); the groups said they were 'extremely alarmed and distressed at the undue and unjustifiable haste' with which the Bill was passed in Parliament. However, President Droupadi Murmu has given her assent to the Bill, the Union Law Ministry said in a gazette notification on March 30, 2026.

There has been another issue that has exercised people across the world, and that is to do with social media addiction and children. A Los Angeles jury found Alphabet's Google and Meta liable for \$3 million in damages on March 25, 2026, in a landmark social media addiction lawsuit. This might set the stage for other successful trials against these large companies, as more and more evidence emerges that they have deliberately ignored or aided in addiction-causing behaviour among teens and children. Additionally, a New Mexico jury also said Meta harms children's mental health and safety, violating state law. Some part of that discussion is happening in India as well, particularly in Karnataka: in



the State, a draft policy on 'Responsible Digital Use Among Students' sets goals for parents, schools. For a lowdown on what this is all about do watch this video by Rishita Khanna, Ravichandran N. Afshan Yasmeen writes about the recent NIMHANS study that flags rising parental concern over children's screen time. Researchers say that parents are increasingly reporting difficulties in regulating their children's technology use, especially when it begins to interfere with sleep, studies and daily routines.

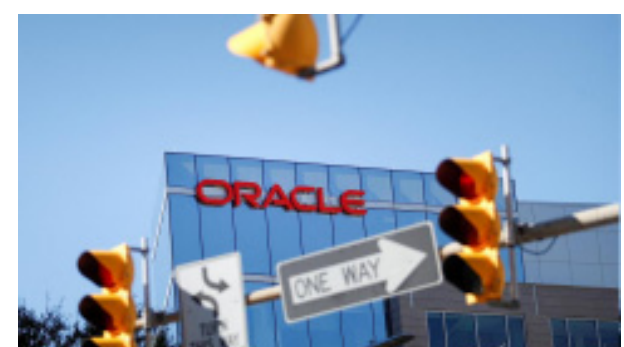
For the flip side of it, here is a story from Telangana, where Lavpreet Kaur writes about Meta alerts and the local police's response in stopping suicides. Do read, here. There is some regulatory action that cannot have come sooner. As Semaglutide slipped off patent and Indian pharma will now be able to manufacture the drug, there has been a sudden uprising of concern about quality of the drugs and fakes reaching the market. Bindu Shajan Perappadan reports that the Centre intensifies regulatory surveillance over GLP-1 weight loss drugs. Telangana, too, cautions against unsupervised semaglutide use amid rising drug demand for weight loss.

Moving on to the topic of infectious diseases, here's a study that says antibiotic resistance fuels 87% of India's typhoid economic burden. Antibiotic-resistant typhoid infections accounted for at least 87% of India's disease-related economic burden in 2023, according to a study in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia. The total economic burden due to typhoid fever was estimated at ₹123 billion. Divya Gandhi reports that Nipah virus could turn into something "far more severe", scientists warn. Kyle B. Entfield in The Conversation warns that a new COVID-19 variant BA.3.2 is spreading quickly across U.S.—and explains what you need to know. This election season, we had better be mindful of the heat. We know in 2024, the heat turned out to be fatal for many polling officers on the field. In order to avoid the same situation, one needs to be watchful As Kerala goes to vote on April 9, the State's Health department has issued guidelines. Others will do well, including the Central Election Commission, to put out such guidelines.

This article is for those who follow make up trends, going by social media hype. Athira Elssa Johnson explains how your skincare routine maybe wrong: experts flag increasing skin damage from misinformation. She also explains why the tendency to overlook and dismiss perimenopause must change Zubeda Hamid in the In Focus Podcast finds out: How to make a living will? In another episode, she discusses: Does India have enough health professionals to care for its rising senior population? And with the Shigella cases in India, do check out all you need to know about: shigellosis A.S. Jayanthi writes on the surging cost of health care in Kerala Abhilasha Semwal points out that as digital health gets a push, there is a price to pay and asks who will bear these costs for the underpaid ASHA workers Aditi Prasad Apte brings an important issue to the limelight: Are we over-supplementing with vitamins?

Oracle begins layoffs affecting thousands: Report

Cloud computing firm Oracle is laying off thousands of employees, CNBC reported on Tuesday (March 31, 2026), citing two people familiar with the matter. Late on Tuesday, Oracle said it will lay off 491 employees working remotely in Washington state and at its Seattle offices effective June 1, according to a notice filed under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act. The job cuts are part of a "reduction in force and other terminations," Oracle said, adding that "its Seattle sites will remain open. The company had about 162,000 full-time employees globally as of May 2025. The WARN Act requires employers to provide at least 60 days' notice ahead of layoffs. Oracle declined to comment on the CNBC report, although several social media users on Reddit, X and anonymous workplace network Blind, shared details of the potential cuts, fuelling uncertainty and confusion among employees. The layoffs come amid Oracle steps up spending on artificial intelligence infrastructure in an effort to better compete with cloud rivals, such as Alphabet and



Amazon. In a March filing, Oracle said it expects total costs tied to its fiscal 2026 restructuring plan to reach up to \$2.1 billion, largely driven by employee severance and related expenses. Shares in the company climbed more than 5% in afternoon trade, but remained down about 29% this year so far.

Illness is more than just biological – medical sociology shows how social factors get under the skin and cause disease



Health and medicine is more than just biological – societal forces can get under your skin and cause illness. Medical sociologists like me study these forces by treating society itself as our laboratory. Health and illness are our experiments in uncovering meaning, power and inequality, and how it affects all parts of a person's life. For example, why do low-income communities continue to have higher death rates, despite improved social and environmental conditions across society? Foundational research in medical sociology reveals that access to resources like money, knowledge, power and social networks strongly affects a person's health. Medical sociologists have shown that social class is linked to numerous diseases and mortality, including risk factors that influence health and longevity. These include smoking, overweight and obesity, stress, social isolation, access to health care and living in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Moreover, social class alone cannot explain such health inequalities. My own research examines how inequalities related to social class, race and gender affect access to autism services, particularly among single Black mothers who rely on public insurance. This work helps explain delays in autism diagnosis among Black children, who often wait three years after initial parent concerns before they are formally diagnosed. White children with private insurance typically wait from 9 to 22 months depending on age of diagnosis. This is just one of numerous examples of inequalities that are entrenched in and deepened by medical and educational systems. Medical sociologists like me investigate how all of these factors interact to affect a person's health. This social model of illness sees sickness as shaped by social, cultural, political and economic factors. We examine both individual experiences and societal influences to help address the health issues affecting vulnerable populations through large-scale reforms.

By studying the way social forces shape health inequalities, medical sociology helps address how health and illness extend beyond the body and into every aspect of people's lives. Medical sociology formally began in the U.S after World War II, when the National Institutes of Health started investing in joint medical and sociological research projects. Hospitals began hiring sociologists to address questions like how to improve patient compliance, doctor-patient interactions and medical treatments. However, the focus of this early work was on issues specific to medicine, such as quality improvement or barriers to medication adherence. The goal was to study problems that could be directly applied in medical settings rather than challenging medical authority or existing inequalities. During that period, sociologists viewed illness mostly as a deviation from normal functioning leading to impairments that require treatment.

For example, the concept of the sick role – developed by medical sociologist Talcott Parsons in the 1950s – saw illness as a form of deviance from social roles and expectations.

Under this idea, patients were solely responsible for seeking out medical care in order to return to normal functioning in society. In the 1960s, sociologists began critiquing medical diagnoses and institutions. Researchers criticised the idea of the sick role because it assumed illnesses were temporary and did not account for chronic conditions or disability, which can last for long periods of time and do not necessarily allow people to deviate from their life obligations. The sick role assumed that all people have access to medical care, and it did not take into account how social characteristics like race, class, gender and age can influence a person's experience of illness.

Parsons' sick role concept also emphasised the expertise of the physician rather than the patient's experience of illness. For example, sociologist Erving Goffman showed that the way care is structured in asylums shaped how patients are treated. He also examined how the experience of stigma is an interactive process that develops in response to social norms. This work influenced how researchers understood chronic illness and disability and laid the groundwork for later debates on what counts as pathological or normal. In the 1970s, some researchers began to question the model of medicine as an institution of social control. They critiqued how medicine's jurisdiction expanded over many societal problems – such as old age and death – which were defined and treated as medical problems. Researchers were critical of the tendency to medicalise and apply labels like "healthy" and "ill" to increasing parts of human existence. This shift emphasised how a medical diagnosis can carry political weight and how medical authority can affect social inclusion or exclusion. The critical perspective aligns with critiques from disability studies. Unlike medical sociology, which emerged through the medical model of disease, disability studies emerged from disability rights activism and scholarship. Rather than viewing disability as pathological, this field sees disability as a variation of the human condition rooted in social barriers and exclusionary environments. Instead of seeking cures, researchers focus on increasing accessibility, human rights and autonomy for disabled people. A contemporary figure in this field was Alice Wong, a disability rights activist and medical sociologist who died in November 2025. Her work amplified disabled voices and helped shape how the public understood disability justice and access to technology. By focusing on social and structural influences on health, medical sociology has contributed significantly to programmes addressing issues like segregation, discrimination, poverty, unemployment and underfunded schools. For example, sociological research on racial health disparities invite neighborhood interventions that can help improve overall quality of life by increasing the availability of affordable nutritious foods in underserved neighborhoods or initiatives that prioritize equal access to education. At the societal level, large-scale social policies such as guaranteed minimum incomes or universal health care can dramatically reduce health inequalities. Medical sociology has also expanded the understanding of how health care policies affect health, helping ensure that policy changes take into account the broader social context. For example, a key area of medical sociological research is the rising cost of and limited access to health care. This body of work focuses on the complex social and organisational factors of delivering health services. It highlights the need for more state and federal regulatory control as well as investment in groups and communities that need care the most. Modern medical sociology ultimately considers all societal issues to be health issues. Improving people's health and well-being requires improving education, employment, housing, transportation and other social, economic and political policies.

Trump pushes 1-year, 10% cap on credit card interest rates, banks balk



Reviving a campaign pledge, President Donald Trump wants a one-year, 10% cap on credit card interest rates, a move that could save Americans tens of billions of dollars but drew immediate opposition from an industry that has been in his corner. Mr. Trump was not clear in his social media post Friday (January 9, 2026) night whether a cap might take effect through executive action or legislation, though one Republican Senator said he had spoken with the President and would work on a bill with his "full support". Mr. Trump said he hoped it would be in place January 20, one year after he took office. Strong opposition is certain from Wall Street and the credit card companies, which donated heavily to his 2024 campaign and to support his second-term agenda. "We will no longer let the American Public be ripped off by credit card companies that are charging interest rates of 20 to 30%," Mr. Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

Researchers who studied Mr. Trump's campaign pledge after it was first announced found that Americans would save roughly \$100 billion in interest a year if credit card rates were capped at 10%. The same researchers found that while the credit card industry would take a major hit, it would still be profitable, although credit card rewards and other perks might be scaled back.

Americans are paying, on average, between 19.65% and 21.5% in interest on credit cards according to the Federal Reserve and other industry tracking sources. That has come down in the past year as the central bank lowered benchmark rates, but is near the highs since federal regulators started tracking credit card rates in the mid-1990s. The Republican administration has proved particularly friendly until now to the credit card industry. Capital One got little resistance from the White House when it finalised its purchase and merger with Discover Financial in early 2025, a deal that created the nation's largest credit card company. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which is largely tasked with going after credit card companies for alleged wrongdoing, has been largely nonfunctional since Mr. Trump took office. In a joint statement, the banking industry was opposed to Mr. Trump's proposal.

"If enacted, this cap would only drive consumers toward less regulated, more costly alternatives," the Ameri-

can Bankers Association and allied groups said. The White House did not respond to questions about how the President seeks to cap the rate or whether he has spoken with credit card companies about the idea. Senator Roger Marshall, R-Kan., who said he talked with Mr. Trump on Friday (January 9) night, said the effort is meant to "lower costs for American families and to reign in greedy credit card companies who have been ripping off hardworking Americans for too long." Legislation in both the House and the Senate would do what Mr. Trump is seeking. Senators Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Josh Hawley, R-Mo., released a plan in February that would immediately cap interest rates at 10% for five years, hoping to use Mr. Trump's campaign promise to build momentum for their measure. Hours before Mr. Trump's post, Mr. Sanders said that the President, rather than working to cap interest rates, had taken steps to deregulate big banks that allowed them to charge much higher credit card fees. Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., and Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., have proposed similar legislation. Ocasio-Cortez is a frequent political target of Mr. Trump, while Ms. Luna is a close ally of the President.

Forces that opposed Somnath temple reconstruction still active, need to defeat them: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday (January 11, 2026) said the forces that had opposed the reconstruction of the Somnath temple in Gujarat after independence are still active, and India needs to remain alert, united and powerful to defeat them.

The history of Somnath is not that of destruction and defeat but of victory and renewal. This is the cycle of time that fundamentalist invaders are now reduced to pages of history, but the Somnath temple still stands tall, he said.

Mr. Modi was speaking at the Somnath Swabhiman Parv held to mark 1,000 years since Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion of the Somnath temple in the year 1026. Despite multiple repeated attempts for its destruction over centuries, the Somnath temple stands today as a powerful symbol of resilience, faith and national pride, owing to the collective resolve and efforts to restore it to its ancient glory. PM Modi said, "The true history of hatred, atrocity and terror was concealed from us, and we were taught that the attack was an attempt to loot the temple." After independence, when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took the oath of rebuilding the Somnath temple, his path was obstructed, he said.

EU countries override France to greenlight Mercosur trade deal



The EU gave a long-delayed go-ahead on Friday (January 9, 2026) to a huge trade deal with South American bloc Mercosur championed by business groups but loathed by many European farmers – overriding opposition led by key power France. Most of the European Union's 27 nations backed the pact following an Ambassadors' meeting in Brussels, paving the way for it to be signed later this month in Paraguay.

More than 25 years in the making, supporters see the deal as crucial to boost exports, support the continent's ailing economy and foster diplomatic ties at a time of global uncertainty. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen called it "proof that Europe charts its own course and stands as a reliable partner". She said she looked forward to the signing – which Argentina said was planned January 17. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the deal sent "an important signal of our strategic sovereignty and capacity to act", a message echoed by Spain, which said it would "forge shared prosperity" with Latin America. On the Mercosur side, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva hailed "a historic day for multilateralism". And Paraguay's Foreign Minister, one of the four founding members of Mercosur, along with Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, defended the deal as "balanced".

But the European Commission, which negotiated the text, failed to win over all of the bloc's member states. Heavyweight France, where politicians across the divide are up in arms against a deal attacked as an assault on the country's influential farming sector, led an ultimately unsuccessful push to sink it. Ireland, Poland, Hungary and Austria also voted against the accord. That was not enough to block it; however, after holdout, Italy ultimately threw its weight behind the pact. "Economic clout" The deal will create a vast market of more than 700 million people, making it

one of the world's largest free trade areas. Part of a broader push to diversify trade in the face of U.S. tariffs, it will bring the 27-nation EU closer together with Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay, removing import tariffs on more than 90% of products. This will save EU businesses four billion euros (\$4.6 billion) worth of duties per year and help exports of vehicles, machinery, wines and spirits to Latin America, according to the EU. It will also help the bloc reduce its dependency on China for critical raw materials, said Agathe Demarais, of the European Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank.

"The conclusion of the EU-Mercosur trade deal is great news for Europe's global geopolitical and economic clout," she said. Germany, Spain and other backers believe the deal will provide a welcome boost to their industries hampered by Chinese competition and tariffs in the United States. But France and other critics opposed it over concerns that their farmers would be undercut by a flow of cheaper goods, including meat, sugar, rice, honey and soybean, from agricultural giant Brazil and its neighbours. French Agriculture Minister Annie Genevard argued that it was "not the end of the story", as the European Parliament had still to vote on the deal. With the deal still requiring approval from the European Parliament, France has warned against any attempt to bring it into force before then. 'Pain' vs 'benefits'

Farmers in several European countries mounted a final show of anger against the text's approval, marching in protest in Warsaw and blocking roads in France and Belgium. "There is a lot of pain," Judy Peeters, a representative for a Belgian young farmers group, told AFP at a protest on a motorway south of Brussels. "There is a lot of anger." Over the past months, the commission has been at pains to reassure farmers and their backers that pros outweigh cons. It has stressed that the accord is expected to boost EU agri-food exports to South America by 50%, in part by protecting more than 340 iconic European products – from Greek feta to French champagne – from local imitations. It also laid out plans to set up a 6.3 billion-euro crisis fund and safeguards allowing for the suspension of preferential tariffs on agricultural products in case of a damaging surge in imports. The latter were tightened further at the last minute by member states lowering the threshold for action, a late concession to Italy. Angry farmers disrupted traffic in Milan with their tractors Friday, dumping barrels of straw and pouring milk on the ground in front of the regional council building. But Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni defended an agreement she hoped would "bring benefits in many areas" and "for everyone".

Why was bail denied to Umar and Sharjeel? | Explained



The story so far: The Supreme Court on January 5 declined to grant bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case, notwithstanding their incarceration for nearly six years without the commencement of trial.

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What did the court rule?

The court held that the constitutional guarantee of personal liberty is not "absolute", and remains subject to the stringent bail regime prescribed under special statutes such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). A Bench comprising Justices Aravind Kumar and N.V. Anjaria, however, granted conditional bail to five other co-accused, observing that the allegations against them indicated conduct of a subsidiary or facilitative nature, thereby warranting differential treatment.

How was a 'hierarchy of roles' established?

The court held that prosecutorial evidence placed Mr. Khalid and Mr. Imam on a "qualitatively different footing" from the other accused, warranting a distinct assessment of the "hierarchy of participation". It observed that the two did not stand on equal footing in terms of culpability, since they were the "ideological drivers" who allegedly devised the strategy of converting protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act into disruptive road blockades aimed at paralysing the national capital.

Hierarchy of roles: The Hindu editorial on no bail for Umar Khalid

By contrast, the court held that the five accused granted bail were "local-level facilitators", whose alleged roles were confined to logistical arrangements at protest sites. It said their participation was "derivative" in nature, as they merely carried out directions from those positioned higher in the chain of command. In these circumstances, the judges found that continued custody of such "minor participants" would be disproportionate.

Why did prolonged custody not justify bail?

The accused had argued that their prolonged incarceration without trial violated their fundamental right to a speedy trial under Article 21 of the Constitution. They had relied on the Supreme Court's 2021 ruling in Union of India versus K.A. Najeer, which had held that the rigours of the stringent bail bar under the UAPA may "melt down" where there is no realistic prospect of the trial being completed within a reasonable time, as continued detention would offend constitutional guarantees. The court, however, distinguished the precedent, observing that it does not lay down a "mechanical rule" whereby delay, by itself, can override the statutory constraints governing bail under the UAPA. It emphasised that Section 43D(5) prescribes a stringent

threshold for the grant of bail, which departs from the general principles applicable under ordinary criminal law. Having found that Mr. Khalid and Mr. Imam prima facie occupied a "central role" in the alleged offence, the judges observed that the degree of circumspection required before constitutional guarantees are permitted to displace the statutory embargo on bail is "correspondingly greater". By contrast, in the case of the co-accused granted relief, the court noted that the allegations against them were confined to facilitative tasks. In the absence of any "command authority" or capacity to interfere with the trial process, it held that the balance tilted in favour of granting them liberty. The judges also rejected the defence contention that the delay in the trial was attributable solely to the Delhi Police, noting that a perusal of the trial court record showed the prosecution had, at various stages, expressed readiness to commence arguments on the framing of charges, while multiple procedural objections were raised on behalf of the accused.

How expansive is the court's reading of a 'terrorist act'?

Section 15 of the UAPA defines a "terrorist act" as conduct undertaken with the intent to threaten, or likely to threaten, the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India, or to strike terror among the people or any section thereof. While the provision refers to the use of weapons such as bombs, explosives, or firearms, it also extends to acts committed by "any other means". The defence had argued that, in the absence of overt violence, the organisation of protests and "chakka jams" (road blockades) attributed to the accused constituted a constitutionally protected form of protest and could not fall within the ambit of Section 15. It had contended that the residual phrase "any other means" must be read ejusdem generis (of the same kind) with the preceding reference to violent methods. Rejecting this submission, the court agreed with the prosecution that Section 15 cannot be read as being confined to the use of conventional weapons alone. It observed that acts resulting in the "sustained choking of arterial roads" and the "systemic disruption of civic life" could attract the provision if they threaten economic security or disrupt essential services. The judges further noted that when such blockades are timed to coincide with major international events, such as the 2020 visit of U.S. President Donald Trump, they prima facie constitute an act of terror under the UAPA.

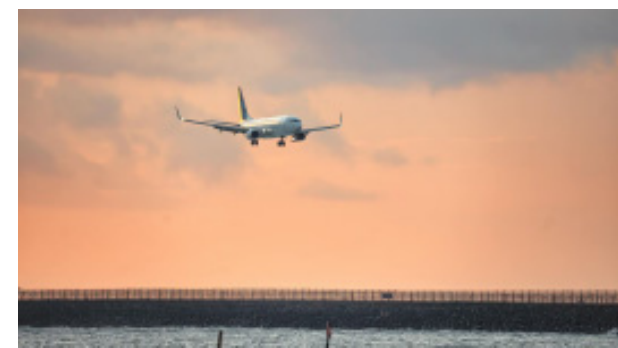
What happens next?

For the five accused granted relief, the apex court imposed onerous conditions to prevent any possibility of tampering with evidence or influencing witnesses. Each was directed to execute a personal bond of ₹2,00,000 with two local sureties and are restrained from leaving the national capital without prior permission of the trial court. Notably, until the conclusion of the trial, they have been barred from addressing or attending any gathering and from circulating any material, including posts in electronic or physical form, of any kind, not limited to the case. In the case of Mr. Khalid and Mr. Imam, the court carved out a limited window for them to revive their plea for bail, permitting them to approach the trial court either upon the completion of the examination of the protected witnesses relied upon by the prosecution or upon the expiry of one year from the date of the ruling, whichever is earlier.

What are the implications?

Advocate Vrinda Grover told The Hindu that the verdict marks a grave departure from settled judicial precedent. "When an individual is subjected to pre-trial detention, the presumption of innocence continues to operate. Any ruling that renders personal liberty subservient to state interests in such cases is anathema to the Constitution," she said. Ms. Grover further cautioned that treating allegations of road blockades as "terrorist acts" risks emboldening governments to weaponise the law to criminalise dissent. "There is no jurisprudence to support the proposition that chakka jams can be treated as acts of terror. On the contrary, past precedents consistently hold that the more draconian the statute, the greater must be the degree of judicial scrutiny to ensure that the allegations squarely fall within its four corners," she added.

To cushion Indian flyers, jet fuel price for domestic flights hiked only partially; price for international flights more than doubles



Even as the prices of aviation turbine fuel (ATF), or jet fuel, have surged globally due to the raging West Asia war, the price of the fuel for domestic scheduled flights in India has been hiked only partially by the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), according to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG). According to the ministry, given the surge in international prices of jet fuel, the price in India was expected to more than double from Wednesday (April 1), but only a "partial and staggered" increase is being passed on for now for scheduled domestic airlines. For overseas flights, however, airlines will have to pay the full market-linked price for ATF. Non-scheduled operators, like private charter operators, will also have to pay the full price, which has gone up by almost 115% from March levels.

"ATF prices in India were deregulated in 2001 and are revised on monthly basis based on a formula of international benchmarks. Due to the closure of Strait of Hormuz and extraordinary situation in global energy markets, price of ATF for domestic markets was expected to increase by more than 100% on 1 April. In order to insulate the domestic travel costs from the substantial increase in international prices, PSU Oil Marketing Companies of the Ministry of Petroleum, in consultation with Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), have passed only a partial and staggered increase of 25% (only Rs.15/litre) to the airlines. Foreign routes will pay for the full increase in ATF prices consistent with what they pay in other parts of the world," the MoPNG posted on social media platform X.

Following the announcement from the MoPNG, ATF prices listed on the website of India's largest OMC Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) were revised significantly downwards from levels that were published early Wednesday morning. The price of ATF in Delhi had jumped almost 115% month-on-month to a record Rs 2.07 lakh per kilolitre as of early Wednesday; the price listed now specifically for scheduled domestic airlines is Rs 1.05 lakh, higher by just 8.6% from March levels. The new reduced price for domestic scheduled airlines in Mumbai is Rs 98,247 per kilolitre, against the full price of Rs 1.95 lakh. For airlines on international run, the price of ATF in Delhi jumped 107% to \$1,690.81 per kilolitre. The OMCs usually revise jet fuel prices on the first of every month; ATF prices vary across the country due to differences in levies charged by states.

Jet fuel accounted for over 40% of Indian airlines' operating costs even before the war and industry insiders had cautioned that a significant jump in fuel prices and the consequent surge in airfares could lead to demand destruction, forcing airlines to cut flights on routes that see a fall in passenger footfalls. MoPNG, MoCA, and the OMCs were in talks on ATF pricing in view of the global price surge amid the West Asia war. It is not clear yet whether the government will support the OMCs in covering their under-recoveries on jet fuel sales to domestic airlines. The fuel retailers are also bearing losses on retail sales of petrol and diesel as the prices of the two fuels have remained unchanged despite the surge in international prices of crude oil and petroleum products. To cushion the OMCs, the government recently reduced excise duty on the two automobile fuels

by Rs 10 per litre each.

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said that the move to allow only a partial pass-on of ATF price hike for scheduled domestic flights is "both pragmatic and forward-looking, while ensuring that foreign routes bear the full market-aligned price". In a post on X, Naidu wrote, "This calibrated approach will help shield passengers from sharp fare increases, ease the burden on domestic airlines, and support the continued stability of the aviation sector at this crucial juncture. It will also benefit the broader economy by ensuring the smooth movement of cargo and maintaining vital air connectivity for trade and logistics". Anticipating a surge in jet fuel prices in India in line with the jump in other countries, major Indian airlines like IndiGo, Air India group, and Akasa Air had imposed or hiked fuel surcharges on tickets, varying from around Rs 200 for domestic flights to \$200 for long-haul international routes. The surcharges and fares could go further, particularly for international flights, industry insiders said.

The jump in ATF prices—except for the regulated increase for domestic airlines—in India appears broadly in line with the movement in international prices. ATF prices in India are linked to the Mean of Platts Arab Gulf (MOPAG), a price assessment by S&P Global based on jet fuel prices in West Asia. The global average jet fuel price for the week ended March 27 was \$195.19 per barrel, up 103.9% from the February average and 116.8% higher than last year's average, according to data from S&P Global Energy compiled by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Since the beginning of the West Asia war on February 28, global ATF prices have almost doubled to \$195.19 per barrel for the week ended March 27 from \$99.40 for the week ended February 28, as per the data compiled by IATA. The crack spread—difference between the price of crude oil and products like ATF derived from it—trebled to \$81.44 per barrel for the week ended March 27 from \$27.83 for the week ended February 27. Given the surge in crack spreads, which are reflective of margins, there have been calls in recent weeks from India's aviation sector to de-link ATF pricing in India from global jet fuel prices, and instead have a pricing model based on the price of crude and an agreed margin over that, it is learnt.

"The financial impact of this crisis is yet to be fully felt, as although the spot price of jet fuel has more than doubled, most of the impact will only hit us from next month. We, like other Indian carriers, have already imposed a fuel surcharge on new tickets to help mitigate this imminent cost increase, but not every customer is willing to pay higher airfares so there is a limit to how high we can price before demand drops. Additionally, given economic uncertainties, it is not certain that customers or companies will be as willing to travel as they were prior to the conflict, and may choose to stay put for a while," Air India MD and CEO Campbell Wilson wrote in an email to employees on March 20, it is learnt. "There will be pockets of new demand, such as we're seeing on—and deploying additional flights to—some Europe and North America cities, but already airlines in some parts of the world are reducing some flights due to high fuel prices. Depending on how fuel costs, airfares and customer demand moves, we may also have to adjust," Wilson wrote.

With the West Asia war effectively closing off the critical maritime chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz, crude oil and fuel prices have surged globally. In many countries, there are growing concerns of fuel shortages, including that of jet fuel. While ATF prices have increased in India as well, the country appears to be in a relatively comfortable position on the supply front as it produces significantly more volumes of jet fuel than its own consumption. Moreover, the government has also imposed an export duty of Rs 29.5 per litre on ATF to disincentivise the fuel's export and ensure adequate availability in the domestic market.

IndiGo names IATA head Walsh as chief executive, to join airline by August



India's largest airline IndiGo on Tuesday announced a high-profile appointment as its named aviation industry veteran Willie Walsh, currently the director general of the global airline trade grouping International Air Transport Association (IATA), as its new chief executive officer. Walsh's appointment comes three weeks after Pieter Elbers suddenly resigned as IndiGo CEO. Elbers stepped down three months after IndiGo faced an unprecedented operational disruption that brought civil aviation operations across India to their knees. With Elbers's exit, the airline's promoter and managing director Rahul Bhatia had temporarily stepped in to assume management of the airline's affairs.

"The Board of InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) today appointed Mr. William Walsh as the Chief Executive Officer, subject to Regulatory approvals. Mr. Walsh's tenure at IATA comes to a close on the 31st of July, 2026, and he is expected to join no later than on the 3rd of August, 2026," IndiGo said in a release.

"As we enter a new phase of transformation and growth, I am delighted to welcome Willie to IndiGo. He is an iconic and accomplished aviation leader and brings a rare combination of global perspective, operational expertise of having built strong customer-focused airlines, deep industry experience and a values driven leadership, making him exceptionally suited to lead IndiGo at this pivotal cusp of growth," the release quoted Bhatia as saying.

In an email to employees, Bhatia is learnt to have written that Walsh has the distinction of being intimately familiar with "the levers of managing" low-cost airlines, while also having led global network airlines like British Airways, and with India possibly being the last bastion of massive growth in aviation globally, there couldn't have been a "finer leader" to expand IndiGo's footprint within India and overseas. Bhatia, who had signed off the e-mail to staff announcing Elbers's departure with a reassuring "Main Hoon Naa" (I am there), signed off the mail announcing Walsh's appoint-

ment by calling himself "Kuchh Hee Dinon Kaa Mehmaan" (only a few days' guest), it is learnt.

Prior to taking over as IATA director general in April 2021, Walsh spent his entire career in the airline industry, starting in 1979 as a cadet pilot with Aer Lingus, an airline he later headed as CEO. Walsh was appointed the chief executive of British Airways in 2005. He led British Airways through the 2008-09 global financial crisis, established a transatlantic joint business venture with Iberia, Finnair, and American Airlines, and oversaw the 2011 merger of British Airways and Iberia under new parent company—International Airlines Group (IAG)—of which he was the first CEO and continued on that position till 2020.

"Mr. Walsh is widely considered as one of the most successful, respected, influential and long-lasting leaders in modern aviation history. He is admired for his pragmatic and resolute management, effective complex restructuring, and successful mergers and acquisitions... In his new role as IndiGo's CEO, Mr. Walsh will be responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of the airline with a focus on transformational initiatives to strengthen the operational performance, advance the Company's network and commercial strategy while enhancing customer experience. He will work closely with the Board and the leadership team to rightfully position IndiGo as it scales up to the next phase of its growth," IndiGo said.

Elbers, a high-profile aviation executive himself, had been IndiGo's CEO since September 2022, just as the airline came out of the pandemic. Prior to joining IndiGo, he was the President & CEO of Dutch carrier KLM for eight years. His tenure at IndiGo saw the airline expand its network far and wide beyond India, a strategy Elbers liked to call "internationalisation".

Elbers was also instrumental in the IndiGo's evolution from a typical low-cost carrier into a "fit-for-purpose" airline, which now offers a business class product on its top routes, and has even entered the wide-body long-haul segment with flights to various European cities. IndiGo is now counted among the world's top airlines by passenger volumes, and has in recent years tightened its stranglehold over India's domestic aviation market with a dense and high-frequency network. The period has also seen the airline placing world record-breaking aircraft orders, including an order for wide-body jets for long and ultra-long-haul operations. The large-scale disruption, which erupted on December 3, peaked on December 5 with over 1,600 of the airline's 2,300-plus daily flights getting cancelled in a single day. With the DGCA granting specific exemptions, the airline—with a domestic market share of 65%—was able to swiftly stabilise operations over the course of the next few days.

'Romantic films were not allowed': Aamir Khan reveals the 'strict' childhood rules that shaped his life, and why he still barely watches movies today; expert weighs in



How we engage with entertainment may feel like a matter of personal choice, but early life experiences can quietly shape these preferences in lasting ways. In a recent interview, Aamir Khan reflected on this aspect of his life, describing how his relationship with films has always been different. He shared, "This is how I've been since childhood. I've been a reader. The only films I've watched consistently are the black-and-white films or the really old ones that used to come on Doordarshan. Back in the day, I grew up in a very conservative household. And my parents were very strict about watching films and all that. We were not allowed to watch films. So, at that time, I remember, if I had asked my mom if I could watch a film, she would say yes, but romantic films were not allowed." Even when access to films became easier, his inclination leaned elsewhere, including literature and older cinema.

What stands out is how these early boundaries may have shaped not just habits, but also comfort levels and preferences over time. He further explained, "I got into filmmaking at the age of 18. I started working as an assistant. I don't want to sound patronising, but just as a joke, I'd like to say that some people play football and others watch it. That's a good way to put it. I make films, I barely watch them. That's the truth of the answer. I barely watch films. So, I

don't watch the latest movies. I have no idea what's happening in Hollywood. I'm in my own world, I don't really watch stuff."

Impact on a person's long-term preferences for entertainment, leisure, or creative expression Psychologist Rasshi Gurnani tells indianexpress.com, "Growing up in a restrictive environment often leads to what psychologists call internalised norms, beliefs and preferences shaped by early authority figures. When certain forms of entertainment are limited or discouraged, the child may either adopt those restrictions as their own preferences or develop a muted curiosity toward them." Over time, she notes that this can influence leisure choices, leading individuals to gravitate toward what feels "acceptable" or familiar. "Additionally, limited exposure during formative years can reduce sensory and emotional association with certain media, making them less engaging in adulthood. In some cases, this also fosters a stronger inclination toward solitary or cognitively engaging activities like reading, which may have been more accessible or encouraged."

Can growing up with limitations around content influence emotional comfort or openness toward those themes later in life?

"Yes, early restrictions can influence emotional comfort later in life through a process known as emotional conditioning," states Gurnani, adding that if romantic content was framed as inappropriate or discouraged, the individual may subconsciously associate it with discomfort, awkwardness, or even mild guilt. This doesn't necessarily mean avoidance, but it can create a level of detachment or reduced emotional resonance with such themes. "Eventually, this may affect how easily a person engages with or expresses emotions related to intimacy and romance. However, these patterns are not fixed and can evolve with new experiences, relationships, and conscious exposure," concludes Gurnani.

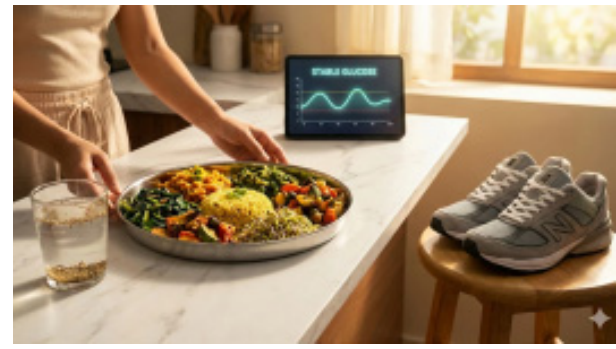
'If you don't have symptoms...': Biochemist says controlling glucose spikes reduces PCOS symptoms; we verify

In a recent Instagram post, French biochemist and bestselling author Jessie Inchauspé shared that managing blood sugar fluctuations may play a key role in reducing polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) symptoms. According to her, the condition is often misunderstood. PCOS is not a single disease but a cluster of symptoms. She explained that it includes irregular or missed periods, lack of ovulation, acne, hair loss on the scalp in women, and elevated testosterone levels. She stressed that high testosterone is believed to drive many of these symptoms, but the real trigger may lie elsewhere.

"So if you want to get testosterone levels down to try to get rid of PCOS symptoms, you gotta get insulin levels down, and to do that you need to get glucose spikes down," she noted. She further stated, "Now, in 70 per cent of the cases of PCOS, the female also has high insulin levels, whatever her body weight, this can be the case," challenging the widespread belief that insulin resistance only affects those who are overweight. According to her explanation, elevated insulin stimulates higher testosterone production, which then worsens PCOS-related symptoms. "High insulin levels produce more testosterone, and high testosterone is often the cause of PCOS symptoms," she added.

Taking the argument a step further, she suggested that symptom resolution may redefine how we look at the condition. "I would argue that if you don't have the symptoms, you don't have PCOS anymore," the biochemist noted.

To control glucose spikes, she recommended practical strategies such as pairing carbohydrates with protein or fibre, avoiding sugary foods on an empty stomach, and taking a walk after heavy meals, all aimed at improving insulin response. But how strong is the evidence linking insulin resistance and glucose spikes to elevated testosterone levels in PCOS? Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietician and diabetes educator tells indianexpress.com, "Insulin resistance and blood sugar spikes strongly drive higher testosterone in PCOS. Some studies show this link in 70% of women, regardless of weight. High insulin teams up with hormones to overproduce androgens from the ovaries, worsening hair growth, acne, and irregular periods." She adds that lowering



insulin through diet (like low-GI Indian foods such as millets and besan roti), exercise, or medications like metformin helps many reduce symptoms, but not everyone equally, due to genes and body type. Work with a qualified dietician for the best results.

Can PCOS truly be considered reversed if symptoms disappear?

Malhotra cautions, "No, medically PCOS isn't 'reversed' even if symptoms vanish. It is a lifelong genetic trait, like a predisposition that can flare up. Jessie Inchauspé's idea ignores the criteria requiring two issues (cycles, hormones, ovaries), which may persist. Lifestyle wins (e.g., balanced thalis with a rainbow food approach and regular walks) bring remission, slashing risks like diabetes by 50%. Focus on annual scans to catch silent issues early."

Should lean women with irregular periods or acne be routinely screened for insulin resistance?

"Absolutely," says Malhotra, adding that seventy per cent of women with PCOS have insulin resistance even if they are slim, so testing should go beyond normal sugar checks using Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT) or Homeostatic Model Assessment of Insulin Resistance (HOMA) for spikes causing acne and period issues. "Simple Indian swaps like jeera water, skipping maida, and doing yoga regularly can help prevent progression. Early intervention with inositol (1-2 g/day) restores cycles in most of lean cases," concludes Malhotra.

Nayanthara to feature opposite Salman Khan in Vamshi Paidipally's film



Paidipally is known for blockbuster hits such as "Yevadu", "Oopiri", "Maharshi" and "Varisu". Khan will next feature in "Maatrubhumi", which was previously titled "Battle of Galwan". The film is based on the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict between India and China and it is directed by Apoorva Lakshia of "Shootout at Lokhandwala" fame.

Mahindra reports 21 per cent growth in March auto sales

New Delhi: Indian prominent automobile manufacturer Mahindra & Mahindra on Wednesday announced that overall auto sales for March 2026 stood at 99,969 vehicles, marking a growth of 21 per cent including exports.

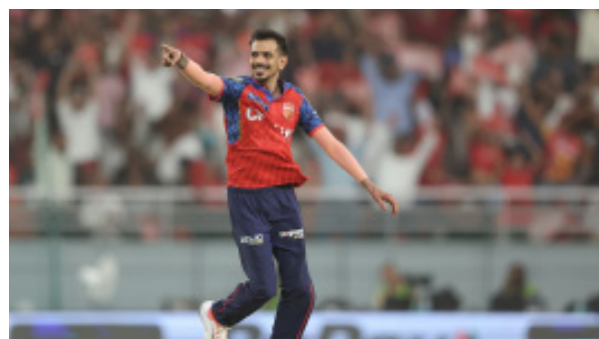
domestic sales touched 60,272 units in March, up 25 per cent, while overall UV sales including exports reached 62,109 units. Domestic Commercial Vehicles sales for the month were 24,928, marking a growth of 11 per cent.

The company reported year-to-date exports rising 18 per cent to 40,990, while total exports eased 4 per cent year-on-year to 3,968 vehicles in March. The financial year concluded with all-time-high volumes of 6,60,276 SUVs and 2,89,597 light commercial vehicles under 3.5 tonnes, delivering robust YoY growth of 20 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively, across both segments, the company said in a release. "In March, we achieved SUV sales of 60,272 units, a growth of 25 per cent and light commercial vehicles under 3.5 tonnes of 24,928 units, a growth of 11 per cent YoY," said Nalinikanth Gollagunta, CEO, Automotive Division, M&M Ltd.

Mumbai: Tamil star Nayanthara will feature alongside actor Salman Khan in filmmaker Vamshi Paidipally's next film, the makers announced on Wednesday. The action drama film is backed by producer Dil Raju under his banner Sri Venkateswara Creations. It will start production later this month.

"The Queen Arrives... The epitome of versatility and excellence @nayanthara joins #SalmanKhanVamshiPaidipallyFilm. It's an honour to have You on board for something truly special that's underway," the studio posted on Instagram. Nayanthara is one of the most recognised names in south cinema, having starred in multiple Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam films. Some of her hits include "Chandramukhi", "Ghajini", "Billu", "Raja Rani", "Naanum Rowdy Dhaan" and "Viswasam". She made her Bollywood debut with "Jawan", the 2023 blockbuster in which she starred alongside Shah Rukh Khan. The movie, which earned over Rs 1,000 crore at the global box office, was directed by Atlee.

R Ashwin hails Yuzvendra Chahal after he foxes Jos Buttler in PBKS' IPL 2026 clash against GT: 'Yuzi is back'



GNS News Agency, April 1

Kuldeep Yadav may currently be the preferred wristspinner in India's white-ball teams, but a bowler with whom he tasted a lot of success, as a pair, continues to show his worth in the Indian Premier League (IPL). Yuzvendra Chahal may have last played for India in 2023, but he continues to show his worth in the IPL, where his ability to control the game in the middle overs is arguably better than anybody in the tournament. Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin heaped praise on Chahal for the way he deceived Jos Buttler in the Punjab Kings' match against the Gujarat Titans on Tuesday, explaining the differences between him and the likes of the Mumbai

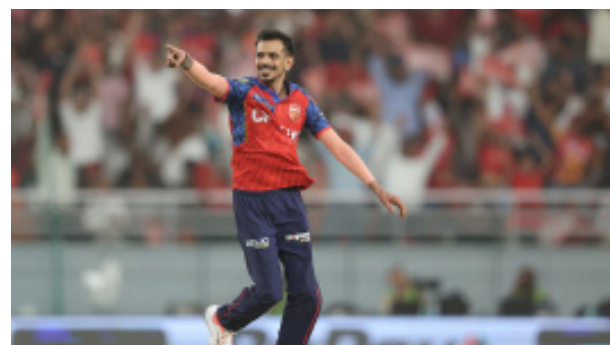
Indians spin duo of Allah Ghazanfar and Mayank Markhanda.

The 39-year-old spoke about how Chahal had managed to plan, but more crucially executed the delivery to dismiss the former England captain, adding that he could not wait to see him do well in this season of the IPL. "What Yuzi delivered yesterday against Butler was a master class in T20 spin bowling. Look at the starting line of the ball on the left and where it ends up to cut Butlers bat swing on the right." "The next picture illustrates how Markande and Allah landed deliveries in the wheelhouse of the batter. Planning to bowl a delivery is just the tip of the iceberg, while executing the desired delivery is what differentiates the best from the rest. Yuzi is back and can't wait to see him do his thing this season," Ashwin wrote on X (formerly Twitter). During the mid-innings break, Chahal, who took 2/28 in his four overs, explained that a spinner had to beat a batsman in the air on a surface like the one on Tuesday, and he focussed on varying his line and pace against the opposition batters. "Definitely, in the evening when I saw the wicket, I thought it'd be dry. And when the fast bowlers start bowling cutters, so I like a little bit of grip was there. You need to beat the batters in the flight here. I varied my pace and line, starting with some wide deliveries and then moving to the stumps line," the leg-spinner said.

R Ashwin hails Yuzvendra Chahal after he foxes Jos Buttler in PBKS' IPL 2026 clash against GT: 'Yuzi is back'

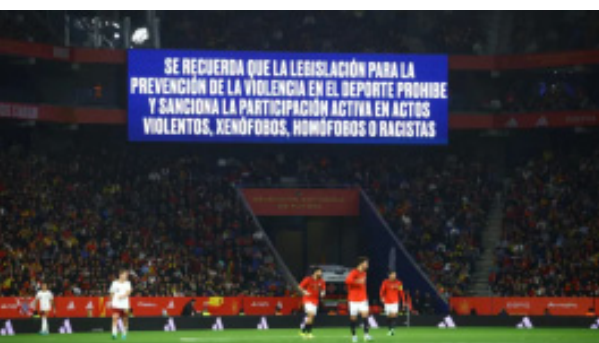
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Spain FA, coach condemn Islamophobic chants during pre-FIFA World Cup friendly against Egypt



GNS News Agency, April 1

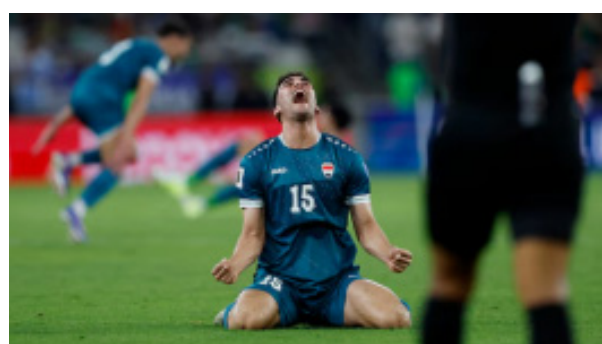
The Spanish Football Association and head coach Luis de la Fuente condemned alleged anti-muslim chants made at the RCDE stadium in Barcelona during Spain's 0-0 draw against Egypt on Wednesday. Fans were repeatedly warned to not make xenophobic remarks and songs and a message was displayed at half-time which was also read out by the stadium announcer. According to ESPN, the message was then repeated once again in the early stages of the second half and was met with jeers.

"We remind you the legislation to prevent violence in sport forbids and punishes the active participation in violent, xenophobic, homophobic or racist acts," was the message displayed on the stadium, according to the New York Times. The Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) denounced the chants in a statement put out on their social

media. "The RFEF stands against racism in football and condemns any act of violence inside stadiums," their statement read.

After the pre-FIFA World Cup friendly ended in a 0-0 stalemate in RCD Espanyol's home ground in Barcelona, Spain coach De la Fuente was asked about the repeated incidents by reporters and the Spaniard didn't mince his words. "I am repulsed by and absolutely reject any form of xenophobia or racism — it's completely intolerable," De la Fuente said in a news conference. "I don't know exactly what the protocol is, but I think it was the right decision to display the message on the scoreboard and make the announcement. Those [chanting] are a disgrace — and the majority [inside the stadium] whistled them. There's nothing else to say. He continued speaking on the issue and said, "They are not representative of football. They take advantage of football, as they do in other areas of life. They need to be removed from society — the further away, the better." Spain is one European nation where the chants made at the race and religion of footballers has been amplified, largely through the efforts of Real Madrid forward Vinicius Jr, who has faced the brunt of these attacks and has repeatedly called them out to the point where fans in and out of football stadiums are being prosecuted for their words. Last year in May, five people were handed prison sentences by the Provincial Court of Valladolid for racially abusing the Brazilian during a game in 2022. They were handed one-year prison sentences which were reduced on the condition of good behaviour for the next three years. I

Coach stuck in UAE, 20-hour road trip during war, visa trouble, cancelled training camp – Iraq's route to football showpiece



GNS News Agency, April 1

Difficulties and struggles along the way tend to make achievements sweeter. Such was the case with the Iraqi team that made it to the FIFA World Cup after 40 years after beating Bolivia 2-1 in an intercontinental qualifier in Monterrey, Mexico. The country has had a turbulent few decades, ravaged by war and sectarian violence. But the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, in which Iraq isn't directly involved, also cast a big shadow on their World Cup aspirations, and it was doubtful whether the team would even reach the venue for the all-important match. Team officials had even asked FIFA to postpone the qualifier, a request that was rejected.

Consider the situation: The war in the region forced a closure of Iraqi airspace and the team had to travel by road to Jordan, reported to be a 20-hour journey. From there, the team travelled to Lisbon, Portugal and from there to Monterrey. It needed pressure from Iraq's Australian head coach Graham Arnold to persuade FIFA to organise a chartered flight to get to Mexico.

The Aussie was stranded in Fujairah, on the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates, due to the war and only managed to meet his charges in Mexico. Arnold, who took his home country to the last 16 of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, was with his wife in a hotel in Fujairah after a series of Iranian missiles hit nearby, according to Arabic newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat. The Australian was able to move to

Dubai, but was unable to join the team for several days. A scheduled training camp in Houston had to be cancelled. "It's been very difficult being stranded, I'd rather not talk about it, I try to remove all of that from the players' brains because a lot of things are going on in the Middle East," the coach said before the match against Bolivia. Visas were another problematic issue. Mexico doesn't have an embassy in Iraq but its foreign affairs ministry facilitated the travel documents for the contingent from regional embassies in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

"I came from Europe directly to Monterrey, but for the rest of the players who play in the Iraqi local league, they had a long trip," Merchas Doski, who plays as a left-back for Czech club Viktoria Plzen, was quoted as saying. It was the final step in a long and gruelling campaign for Iraq for their only other appearance at the football showpiece. Coincidentally, that came in Mexico 1986. They had to go through as many as 21 qualifying matches over four rounds before reaching the inter-confederation playoff against their South American opponents. After the win, Arnold was hoisted on the shoulders of his players and walked around the pitch draped in an Iraqi flag. "I want to give credit to the players, whose work ethic and Iraqi mentality of fighting and putting their body on the line was why we won. I am so happy that we've made 46 million people happy. Especially with what's going on in the Middle East at the moment, I am so happy for them," he told FIFA+.

Iraq had to first negotiate a two-legged Asian playoff against the UAE to make it to the inter-confederation qualifier. They drew 1-1 in Abu Dhabi before prevailing 2-1 in Basra through a penalty in the 17th minute of added time by Amir Al-Ammari. The Iraqi team, nicknamed the 'Lions of Mesopotamia' took the scenic route to the World Cup and were the last team to qualify. They became the ninth team from the Asian Football Confederation to get there. They will be in Group I and have a tough opener in Boston against European heavyweights Norway, likely to feature the likes of Erling Haaland and Martin Odegaard. Things don't get any easier as they next face two-time champions and last edition's runners-up France in Philadelphia before rounding off their group engagements against Senegal in Toronto.

India to tour Zimbabwe for three T20Is in July

GNS News Agency, April 1

India will travel to Zimbabwe to play a three-match T20I series in July, later this year. All three matches will take place at the Harare Sports Club on July 23, 25 and 26. The assignment will be preceded by India's tour to England, where they play three ODIs and five T20Is in July. "Team India will head to Zimbabwe for a three-match T20I series in July 2026. The Indian cricket team is scheduled to play three T20Is at the Harare Sports Club, Harare. The first T20I of the series will be played on July 23, 2026. Indian team had last travelled to Zimbabwe in 2024, where they played 5 T20Is," a BCCI press release said. The Men in Blue had played Zimbabwe in a five-match T20I series after winning the 2024 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA. The series marked the debut of several youngsters, such as Abhishek Sharma, Riyan Parag, and Dhruv Jurel, and was also the first time that Shubman Gill had led India in international cricket.

The hosts stunned India in the first match, before the visitors bounced back to win the remaining four matches and clinch the series 4-1. Zimbabwe are scheduled to visit India for a three-match ODI series in January 2027. The matches will be played in Kolkata, Hyderabad and Mumbai.



The bilateral tour to India will be their first since 2002, when they played a two-match Test series and a five-match ODI series. The Chevrons surprised many by putting in a spirited performance at the recently-concluded T20 World Cup where they reached the Super 8 stage of the tournament. The Sikandar Raza-led side defeated Australia and Sri Lanka in the group stages, but could not carry that momentum into the Super 8 stage, where they lost all three of their matches to West Indies, India and South Africa.

Kamran Akmal: 'Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will play for India after this IPL'



GNS News Agency, April 1

Former Pakistan wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal believes Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is ready for international cricket and could receive his India call-up when the current IPL season concludes. Sooryavanshi has taken the IPL by storm, scoring a century off 35 balls — the fastest in the tournament's history — and the second fastest fifty. He hit a six off the very first ball he faced on debut.

His latest feat was a 15-ball fifty against Chennai Su-

per Kings, in a Rajasthan Royals chase of just 128. Akmal noted that the modest target only made the innings more striking. "In just 8 IPL games, he has been piling records — he already has a hundred. I think in the coming international games for India, he will get a chance after IPL. He will become a young player of the T20 international team. He has proved himself in every place. If he continues to perform, he will definitely get the chance," Akmal said on the YouTube show Gameplan.

Akmal was unstinting in his praise of the 14-year-old's maturity. "His presence of mind, game awareness, the way he plays — he has a counter to everything at such a young age. This is remarkable ... We are discussing his performance more because it was a (low scoring) match of 128. But his performance is visible because he scored 50 runs on 15 balls." He also credited Sooryavanshi's father for laying the foundations. "His family and his father should be proud — the way he has worked with him, the way the others too like coaches who have taught him in school cricket, in club cricket." But it was Akmal's parting thought that best captured the scale of what could be unfolding. "I am afraid — when he is 25, the bowlers will not know what to do with him."

Rishabh Pant leads LSG against Delhi Capitals in IPL 2026 opener

GNS News Agency, April 1 Lucknow: Lucknow Super Giants captain Rishabh Pant will have little room for error in a critical year as his side begins its IPL 2026 campaign against a well-rounded Delhi Capitals here on Wednesday. Pant could not deliver as a leader and frontline batter in his first year at LSG. Injuries to key players, especially fast bowlers, made his job a lot tougher. This season, he has a fully fit squad at his disposal that has been bolstered by the addition of old warhorse Mohammed Shami and Anrich Nortje. Injury prone pace sensation Mayank Yadav has worked hard on his fitness over the past 12 months and LSG would be hoping that he repays the strong faith that franchise had reposed in him.

Pacer Mohsin Khan too is making a comeback from injury while Prince Yadav has also impressed with his medium pace in the nets thus far.

Mystery spinner Digvesh Singh Rathie made a name for himself in his debut season and would be looking to build on the massive gains that he made 12 months ago.

Compared to the bowling department, the batting has

a more settled look with Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram forming one of the most lethal opening pairings in the IPL.

Pant, who could not make an impact at number four for majority of last season before slamming a hundred at number three, is set to bat in the top-order with Nicholas Pooran to follow at number four.

LSG take on a side that should have made the playoffs last year after a promising beginning. Delhi Capitals tried as many as seven opening combinations last year and this season they are confident of more stability in the top-order. KL Rahul is certain to open the innings but there is not enough clarity on his partner. The options are Prithvi Shaw, Abhishek Porel and Pathum Nissanka. They have brought in David Miller to add more muscle to the middle order comprising another South African Tristan Stubbs.

Delhi Capitals have a potent bowling attack despite the unavailability of Mitchell Starc for the opening game due to an injury. In captain Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav, they have two match winning spinners. The addition of a wily Lungi Ngidi strengthens the pace attack. Ngidi was in top

form in the T20 World Cup, foxing the batters with his deceptive change of pace.

Left-arm pacer T Natarajan is fully fit after spending last year on the sidelines due to an injury.

LSG: Rishabh Pant, Ayush Badoni, Matthew Breetzke, Aiden Markram, Nicholas Pooran, Arshin Kulkarni, Mitchell Marsh, Shahbaz Ahmed, Akash Maharaj Singh, Avesh Khan, Mohammed Shami, Prince Yadav, Digvesh Singh Rathie, Arjun Sachin Tendulkar, Mayank Prabhuv Yadav, Wanindu Hasaranga, Anrich Nortje, Josh Inglis, Abdul Samad, Himmat Singh, Naman Tiwari, Akshat Raghuvanshi, Mohsin Khan, Manimaran Siddharth, Mukul Choudhary.

Delhi Capitals: Abishek Porel, KL Rahul, Nitish Rana, Sameer Rishvi, Tristan Stubbs, Axar Patel, Ashutosh Sharma, Dushmantha Chameera, Kuldeep Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Tripurana Vijay, David Miller, Auqib Nabi Dar, Pathum Nissanka, Lungi Ngidi, Prithvi Shaw, Kyle Jamieson, Ajay Yadav Mandal, T Natarajan, Madhav Tiwari, Karun Nair, Sajid Parakh.



Rishabh Pant will lead Lucknow Super Giants against Delhi Capitals in the IPL 2026 opener. LSG has a fully fit squad including Shami, Nortje and Digvesh Rathie, while DC aim for stability with Rahul, Miller and Ngidi in their ranks

Aditya Dhar's film Dhurandhar 2 enters the elite Rs 900 crore club, eyes Rs 1500 crore globally



Dhurandhar 2 Box Office Collection Day 13 Worldwide LIVE Updates: Dhurandhar 2, now in its second week, continues to make strong waves at the box office, outperforming its prequel by a significant margin. On Day 13 (second Tuesday), the film earned Rs 27.75 crore, according to industry tracker Sacnik, taking its total net domestic collection to Rs 899.92 crore. Its total gross collection in India currently stands at an impressive Rs 1,077 crore.

Directed by Aditya Dhar and starring Ranveer Singh, Dhurandhar The Revenge on Tuesday also crossed the global Rs 1,400 crore milestone. As of now, its worldwide collection stands at Rs 1,435 crore. A closer look at Day 13 figures shows that of the total Rs 27.75 crore, Rs 26 crore came from the Hindi version, Rs 1 crore from Telugu, and Rs 55 lakh from Tamil. Dhurandhar 2 is currently running across 17,883 shows nationwide. On Day 13, it recorded an overall Hindi occupancy of 28.2 percent. The day began with 20.15 percent occupancy in the morning, rose to 34.62 percent in the afternoon, dipped slightly to 31.54 percent in the evening, and settled at 25.77 percent at night. Region-wise, Delhi NCR registered the highest number of shows at 1,562, with an overall occupancy of 34.5 percent. Mumbai followed with 1,107 shows, recording an overall occupancy of 32.5 percent. In comparison, Dhurandhar The Revenge has far surpassed its predecessor Dhurandhar, which by Day 13 had collected only Rs 437.25 crore net in the same time frame. However, it still trails behind major box office performers like Pushpa 2: The Rule, which had earned Rs 952.40 crore net in 13 days. Despite this, Dhurandhar 2 continues its strong theatrical run and is expected to break more records in the coming days. In a recent interview Suniel Shetty all praises for Dhurandhar 2. X user @BURN4DESIRE1 shared an interview clip and wrote, "dhurandhar2 - Suniel Shetty all praises for Dhurandhar 2 The actor appreciated the vision of Aditya Dhar and lauded

Ranveer Singh's performance. He also gave a special shoutout to Akshaye Khanna for his brilliant work. When asked if he would like to be part of the franchise, Suniel Shetty hinted that he'd love to collaborate with Aditya Dhar and might even appear in Dhurandhar 3 if the opportunity comes. He also revealed that he was once a part of Aditya Dhar's ambitious film Ashwatthama, which unfortunately got shelved due to certain issues. Looks like exciting collaborations could be on the way. sunielshetty dhurandhar2 ranveersingh." Actor Arjun Rampal expressed his gratitude to all his supporters following the success of Dhurandhar: The Revenge. He went down memory lane and shared a series of throwback pictures, also adding the behind-the-scenes pictures from the sets of Dhurandhar.

His post caption read, "From playing cowboys as kids, to landing my first film moksha to dhurandhar I am blessed to have been with everyone who was part of the journey. Thank you my dearest fan family for sticking with me on the ride, thank you to this incredible dhurandhar family @adityadharfilms @vik_now @ojas_gautam for being my pillars and of course mera Babbar sher @ranveersingh lokeshdhar jyotideshpande shweta @castingchhabra @actormaddy @therakeshbedi @duttсанjay @preetisheel smriti this list will keep growing."

Arjun Rampal, who essays the role of Major Iqbal in the film, also added, "I am over the moon. Patience, Perseverance, Passion stick with them and dreams come true. @dhurandhartherevenge and of course the mesmerising @shashwatology your music is phenomenal. the action team the fabulous @dokkaebi530 and @msjoeykim thank you for everything." Dhurandhar 2 Worldwide Box Office Collection Day 13 LIVE Updates: Vicky Kaushal's note for Ranveer and Dhurandhar's team Vicky Kaushal posted a special shoutout to Ranveer Singh and R Madhavan and shared, "@ranveersingh you inspire me brother. Your finesse and flare as an actor is unmatched. Honsla Eendhan Badla @actormaddy Sir you were a joy to watch! @therakeshbedi Sir tussi kamaal ho (you are great). Big hug!

@mustafa_thebull_ahmed Swaad aa gayal @shivkumarpanicker genius editing. Your toughest and best work till date. @shashwatology I'm a fan! @officialjostudios jyotideshpande @dhar_lokesh @b62studios Hat's off and mubarakaan (congratulations)! Each and every department... the whole team... kudos! Aap sabhi Dhurandhar ho (You all are Dhurandhar)." Vicky Kaushal took to Instagram Stories to share his reaction after watching Dhurandhar 2. In his note, Vicky wrote, "dhurandhartherevenge... @adityadharfilms !!! I'm so shook, so proud and in absolute awe of the craft, hard work and sincerity with which you have made this film. Nothing short of gold standard. You deserve every bit of this success. Congratulations bhai (multiple heart emojis)."

Ranbir Kapoor reveals why he initially rejected playing Lord Ram in Ramayana: 'I felt I wasn't good enough'; says fatherhood changed everything



Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana has been the talk of the town ever since Adipurush released in 2023. Soon after, reports emerged that Ranbir Kapoor would step into the role of Lord Ram. This was followed by a wave of speculation, viral videos of the actor preparing for the part, and reports about the ensemble cast. The project was eventually made official by producers Namit Malhotra and KFG star Yash, who will also be playing the role of Ravana in the film. While several actors associated with the film have often spoken about Ranbir's dedication, this marks the first time the actor himself has opened up about being offered the role, his initial fears, and how the film has been a life-changing experience. Ranbir Kapoor says he wasn't 'good enough' to play Ram

Speaking at a Q&A during the New York special IMAX trailer screening, Ranbir recalled his first reaction when Namit approached him. "Coming to play Lord Ram, I remember when Namit offered me this part around four years back, my instant reaction was: 'I am not fit enough, good enough.' I felt I wouldn't be able to do full justice. But that fear quickly turned into gratitude because opportunities like this were something I truly needed in my life," he said. He added that the timing of the role coincided with a deeply personal phase. "There was a period when I needed to change my lifestyle.

I had just become a father for the first time. The sweet coincidence of playing Lord Ram and becoming a father became a turning point in my life." On his preparation for Ramayan

"For me, the preparation began the day I watched Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana. It is so deeply etched in our subconscious and rooted in us that we feel immense pride in Lord Rama's journey. When I got the opportunity to portray him, I knew the preparation had to go beyond the physical—it had to be emotional and spiritual. One has to be truthful to the character, because he is loved by billions across centuries and will continue to be long after we are gone," he said. He concluded by expressing gratitude for the opportunity. "The responsibility is something I take very seriously. I have immense love and respect for this part and for the story of Ramayana. When that conviction is in place, everything else falls into place."

Previously, speaking on Ranveer Allahbadia's podcast, actor Ravi Dubey, who plays Laxman in the film, had shared his excitement about being part of the project. "I am just very grateful. This was never even in my foresight. The collaboration itself felt impossible—Ranbir as Ram, Sai Pallavi as Sita, Yash as Ravan, Sunny Deol as Hanuman, A. R. Rahman composing the music, and Nitesh Tiwari directing it. It's incredible. Something like this only happens in dreams," he said, adding that he would remain forever indebted to the makers. Praising Ranbir, Ravi added, "Ranbir has an incredible aura. He's quiet, graceful, and deeply committed. He carries a very soft energy, and that's something everyone who meets him can feel." Ramayana made on a Rs 4000 crore budget. The film is mounted on an unprecedented scale. Speaking to Prakhar Gupta, producer Namit Malhotra revealed, "When we set out to make this six or seven years ago, people thought I was a lunatic because no Indian film comes close to this scale. Put simply, the budget will be around \$500 million for both parts combined, which is over Rs 4,000 crore." He added, "We're making the largest film in the world for the greatest epic that deserves to be seen globally. And yet, I believe we're doing it more efficiently than some of the biggest Hollywood films. We're not being irresponsible—we're being ambitious, but grounded."

Samantha Ruth Prabhu shares her "power morning" routine for a healthier start to the day

Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu has opened up about the importance of starting the day right, revealing a simple yet effective "power morning" routine that she says has brought about a significant transformation in her life. Samantha took to Instagram, where she shared a video, where she emphasized that mornings set the tone for the rest of the day and that even issues like stubborn belly fat, skin concerns, or waking up feeling puffy could be linked to how one begins the day. The actress said: "Today let's talk about how you start your day. I've always believed that if you get your morning right, it just sets the tone for everything that follows. I have tried many different morning routines and have finally arrived at a simple formula that works for me and I call this my power morning." "If you've been doing everything right and the belly fat does not go and the skin is

acting up, maybe you wake up puffy, maybe it's time to look at your morning routine." Highlighting the role of stress, Samantha explained that cortisol levels are naturally high upon waking, and immediately reaching for phones, emails, or news can amplify that stress. "So when you wake up, your stress hormone is naturally high, this is normal but what you do next is really important and you end up reaching for your phone, news, work, emails, you double that stress." According to her, this early spike can lead to poor focus and an increased craving for instant gratification throughout the day. Sharing her routine, the actress suggested avoiding phone usage for the first hour after waking, followed by a few minutes of deep, intentional breathing to calm the nervous system. "I want to share with you some simple clear actions that have helped me tremendously."

Kayadu Lohar was 'intimidated' by Tovino Thomas on Pallichattambi: 'This film will elevate my position as an actress'



Kayadu Lohar has built a reputation for picking roles that are not very similar to each other. Her next one, in the Malayalam period drama Pallichattambi, with Tovino Thomas, seems to follow that pattern. In a recent interview ahead of the film's April 10 release, she spoke about how the project came to her, what drew her to the character. She also spoke about what it was like sharing screen space with one of Malayalam cinema's most detail-oriented actors.

Talking to SCREEN, she explained that when the film came to her, she was not the obvious choice on paper. "Director Dijo approached me after watching my Malayalam film, Pathonpatham Nootandu," she recalled and mentioned how the director was struck by a specific quality in her performance. When they met, he told her he had seen that film and loved what she brought to it, and that even though the role in Pallichattambi was nothing like it, he believed she could pull it off. "It's very different from what you did before, but it would be a good one," is how she remembered him putting it. "Pallichattambi will elevate my position as an actress." She read the script and quickly said yes. "I play a character named Rebecca, and it is extremely different from all the characters I have been doing," she said. "I immediately wanted to do it." The character, she explained, is rooted, sensitive and intelligent, and serves a significant purpose within the film's family drama. "It is written so well that you will not think about anything else but the story. You will immediately be en-

gaged. I believe this movie will elevate my position as an actress." When asked about her character, she replied, "I appear in two different looks in the film. The director had complete clarity about how my character should appear."

She was deliberate about one thing: she does not want the audience to come in looking for glamour. "There is no glamour in nothing," she said plainly. "I just hope people forget glamour about them and look at the performance and the story. That is what really attracted me as well."

Preparing for a Malayalam film presented its own challenges, given that she does not speak the language. She walked through her process with some detail. Before any shoot, she brings in a dialogue coach and an acting coach from that language, someone who travels with her before filming begins. Together, they go through the script, work on the accent and break down the emotional logic behind each line. "I speak Hindi, so I know how to pronounce words and what expression I want. But in a language I don't know, I need to understand both." She recalled how she had a dialect coach on the set who helped her learn the lines phonetically and emotionally, so that when she delivers them on set, she is not just reciting sounds but actually inhabiting the moment. That preparation was tested at least once during the shoot. She had spent five days rehearsing two pages of dialogue when the team walked in the next day with entirely new lines. "I got really stressed that day," she admitted, "but I figured out a way." Then there was the experience of acting alongside Tovino Thomas himself, which she described with unusual honesty. "He is the first actor with whom I got very intimidated," she said. "Usually I am very confident on set. I always want to give my best. But with him, I got very intimidated." The reason, she explained, was not about presence or star power. It was about how he works. "He is extremely intelligent with his acting. When he reads the script, he goes into a lot of detailing that would not even occur to most people." She watched him work and found herself thinking harder about her own choices. "It made me push to think a lot more. Maybe 10 steps more ahead of what I was doing." She describes the experience as both inspiring and, in the best way, unsettling. "I was very inspired by him. It made me want to be a better actor."

Mona Singh is 'very proud' of Gaurav Gera's cinematic journey; reveals why she hasn't watched Dhurandhar 2 yet: 'It's 4 hours'



Renowned actor Mona Singh is currently on cloud nine. That's not just because she has already had four releases — Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos, Border 2, Kohrra Season 2, and Subedar — so far this year, but also because Gaurav Gera, one of her closest friends, is basking in the tremendous success of the Dhurandhar movies, where his performance received widespread acclaim. Thus, the two amigos have literally been riding a wave of success for the past four months.

Interestingly, their camaraderie began long before

either of them became stars, dating back to their early days in the industry when they were still finding their footing. In fact, it was the TV show Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin that launched both their careers. While Mona played Jasmeet Walia alias Jassi, marking her acting debut, Gaurav appeared as her best friend Nandu. Both actors earned immense fame for their performances, and their on-screen friendship continued off-screen as well. In a recent interview, Mona spoke about her elation at seeing Gaurav earn significant praise for his role as Mohammed Aalam in Dhurandhar (2025) and its sequel, Dhurandhar: The Revenge (2026). However, she is yet to watch the second instalment of the franchise. "I watched the first film and loved it. Doosri film chaar ghante ki hai (The second film is four hours long). So I'll have to plan my day in such a way that I can watch the film," she quipped during a conversation with News18. Interestingly, she was also the one who saved him from accidentally breaching the non-disclosure agreement (NDA) he had signed for Dhurandhar. At one point, both Mona and Gaurav were in Amritsar, shooting for Kohrra Season 2 and Dhurandhar, respectively. In the excitement of meeting her one day, he almost showed her a photo of himself in his Aalam Bhai look. But an alert Mona stopped him right away. "I stopped him from disclosing his look and character graph in the film. I reminded him of his NDA and told him ki chup raho (keep your mouth shut). These things come with experience. But I'm very, very proud of his journey and the fact that he waited it out," Mona said. Commenting on how he adhered to the terms mentioned in the NDA, Gaurav said that he couldn't even reveal to his family what movie he was doing or his role in it. He told NDTV, "A lot of people asked me, 'What are you doing?' I would just say, 'I'm doing a film.' My mother also now says, 'You never told us. Tune toh kaha tha ki tu bas juicewala hai (You said you are just playing a juicewala).' I said, 'Juicewala hee toh tha, aur kya bataun ismein?' (I did play a juicewala, what else could I say?)"

'Nobody was buying this script': When Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra revealed how Aamir Khan saved Rang De Basanti

Ahead of the Chetak Screen Awards 2026, set to take place on April 5 in Mumbai, we revisit some of the most memorable moments from past editions. One such highlight came at the 2007 Screen Awards, when Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra won the Best Director award for his acclaimed film Rang De Basanti. A powerful blend of patriotism, youth rebellion, and social commentary, Rang De Basanti was both a critical and commercial success, leaving a lasting cultural impact and cementing Mehra's reputation as one of the most visionary filmmakers of his time. At the 13th Screen Awards, which honoured films of 2006, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra took home the Best Director award for Rang De Basanti. The category also featured strong contenders, including Anurag Basu (Gangster), Nagesh Kukunoor (Dor), Rajkumar Hirani (Lage Raho Munna Bhai), Sooraj Barjatya (Vivah), and Vishal Bhardwaj (Omkaara).

In his acceptance speech, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra said, "Thank you Screen for the lovely honor. It's a special award. It's a special film. Film like Rang De Basanti happens to somebody whether he's in front of the camera or behind the camera. I guess once in your lifetime. I'm blessed. I'm blessed with such a lovely team." The filmmaker thanked producer Ronnie Screwvala and said, "Thank you so much, Ronnie, for supporting us through it. Nobody was



buying this script. Thank you so very much." He then shared, "Special mention for Aamir Khan, who made it all possible when the film was in the doldrums. He told me, 'Mehra, this film will be made no matter what.' I was very lucky to come across a very special gentleman on this film. He's not here tonight but he became my soulmate AR Rahman," added Rakeysh. He concluded by saying, "And above all thank you Lord for choosing me to make this work. Thank you very much."