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## CM Naidu, Nara Lokesh, and Pawan Kalyan Condolence on Nadendla Bhaskar Rao's Death

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh have expressed their condolences following the death of former Chief Minister Nadendla Bhaskar Rao. They stated they are praying for his soul's repose and conveyed their deepest sympathies to his family. The Chief Minister also telephoned Bhaskar Rao's son, Minister Nadendla Manohar, to offer support and condolences. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan shared his grief on social media platform 'X', describing Nadendla Bhaskar Rao as a dedicated public servant. He highlighted Rao's active role in politics since the 1970s and praised his expertise as both a lawyer and politician. Pawan Kalyan recalled Rao's service as an MLA from Vijayawada East and Vemuru, and as an MP from Khammam.

## Former CM Nadendla Bhaskar Rao Passes Away at 90

Nadendla Bhaskar Rao, the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, has died aged 90. He had been unwell for some time and passed away while receiving treatment at Continental Hospital in Hyderabad.

Born on 23 June 1935 in Guntur, Rao served the Congress Party for many years before co-founding the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) alongside NTR. After the TDP's electoral victory in 1982, he played a significant role in the NTR government.

In 1984, Rao formed his own government with the support of MLAs loyal to his faction, serving as the 11th Chief Minister of united Andhra Pradesh for one month, from 16 August to 16 September. His contributions to regional politics are widely recognised.



## EVM Dispatch Begins With Tight Security as West Bengal Gears Up for First Phase of Polling

Berhampore, April 22

Final preparations are underway at the distribution centre at YMA ground in Berhampore as officials begin the dispatch of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) ahead of the first phase of voting for the West Bengal Assembly elections scheduled for Thursday (April 23). Election staff have been deployed at the centre to complete all formalities and ensure smooth distribution of polling materials to respective booths under tight security arrangements.

Speaking about the preparations and overall process to ANI, presiding officer Roshni Roy said all arrangements are in place and the process is running smoothly. She said, "We have received all materials. It seems that this time the election process bit strict but there is no problem with it. Everything is going well as of now... My booth is also peaceful."

Highlighting the improved security arrangements and experience, first polling officer Begum Meri said this is her second time on election duty and noted the increased security presence. Begum Meri said, "This is the second time I am doing this... This time, we are feeling safer and experiencing more strictness... CRPF personnel are present here in large numbers."

Meanwhile, Campaigning also ended for the first phase of the assembly election in West Bengal on Tuesday, with political parties giving a strong push to their campaign on 152 seats where voters will exercise their franchise. The polling will decide the electoral fate of 1, 478 candidates. The poll battle saw sharp exchanges between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP. Congress and CPI-M, who had allied in the last assembly polls, are fighting separately.

BJP repeatedly raised the issue of infiltrators, law and order situation and fear among sections of voters, while Trinamool Congress sought to portray it as "anti-Bengali". The BJP has also promised the implementation of the seventh pay commission recommendations and has made promises for women, youth and farmers. Other parties also made a slew of promises. Prominent



Trinamool Congress candidates in the fray include Goutam Deb from Siliguri, Udayan Guha from Dinhatra, Firhad Hakim from Kolkata Port area, and Pabitra Kar from Nandigram.

BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari is contesting from his stronghold Nandigram and is challenging Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur. Key BJP faces in the first phase also include Union Minister Nisith Pramanik from Mathabhanga (SC) and former state president Dilip Ghosh from Kharagpur Sadar. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is contesting from Baharampur, Mausam Noor from Malatipur, and Mrinmoy Sarkar from Alipurdhars.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed several rallies in the state to shore up the BJP's campaign and expressed confidence that the party would get a majority in the assembly polls. He addressed four rallies in the state on Sunday. On the last day of the campaign for the first phase, Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed four back-to-back election rallies. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also campaigned during the first phase of polls in the state. Trinamool Congress has been in power in Bengal for the past 15 years.

## Revanth Reddy orders fast-track land allotment for investors

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has directed officials to prioritise reputed companies in land allocation for investment projects. Reviewing MoUs signed at Davos and the Telangana Rising summit, he urged speedy land acquisition and infrastructure development, particularly in Future City.

Hyderabad, April 22

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed officials to give top priority to reputed and established companies while allocating land for investment projects in the State. Geographic Reference

He instructed authorities to categorise companies into three groups and fast-track support for those ready to begin operations.

Reviewing progress of MoUs signed during the World Economic Forum Summit at Davos and Telangana Rising summit in Hyderabad, the Chief Minister asked officials to expedite pending land acquisition and ensure timely allotment in key regions, including Future City. Emphasising a planned



approach, he called for adequate infrastructure and future-ready facilities.

He also directed officials

to prepare proposals for supply and usage of treated water from Sewerage Treatment Plants (STPs) for data centres. He

stressed that all departments must work to ensure that companies commence operations at the earliest with full government support.



## AP Ministers' Singapore Visit Focuses on Governance and Safety

SINGAPORE, APRIL 22

The delegation of Andhra Pradesh ministers is currently on a week-long visit to Singapore, where they are participating in a specialised training programme organised by the Singapore government. The initiative aims to enhance governance and improve public service delivery.

This morning, the ministers met with Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs, Shanmugam. He briefed them on the country's measures for public safety and its legal framework.

Today's sessions will focus on "Nation First Governance" and political accountability. The delegation includes Ministers Anita, Narayana, BC Janardhan Reddy, Anagani Satya Prasad, Atchannaidu, and Satya Kumar.

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## TGSRTC strike halts bus services across Telangana

Hyderabad: Public transport services across Telangana came to a near standstill as employees of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) began an indefinite strike from midnight Tuesday after talks to resolve their long-pending demands with the government failed. City & Local Guides

Bus operations were largely halted at depots statewide on Wednesday, with most vehicles remaining off the roads. Police personnel were deployed at several depots to maintain order as employees continued protests, vowing to intensify the agitation until their demands were met.

In Hyderabad, the impact was immediate and severe. Though the government arranged a limited number of hired buses, they fell short of commuter demand. Commuters across the city and districts faced major disruptions, with many forced to depend on costly private transport or walk long distances.

At key locations like Dilsukhnagar and Lakdi-ka-pul, passengers were seen struggling for public transport, while reports of auto drivers charging higher fares surfaced. At Uppal depot, only a handful of buses operated out of the scheduled services, and by morning, most trips stood cancelled. Major hubs like Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (MGBS), Jubilee Bus Station and Rathifile Bus Station also saw either no or minimal activity.

The disruption hit nearly 60 lakh daily commuters, including students, workers and employees, particularly during peak morning hours.

However, limited services continued from select de-



spots including Secunderabad, Ibrahimpatnam, KPHB, Uppal and Dilsukhnagar, with some buses operating on key routes. All electric and hired buses, and other services including Super Luxury, remained functional and were operated by hired drivers.

TGSRTC Managing Director Y Nagi Reddy said the government was open to resolving the issues and had formed a committee of IAS officers to examine employee demands, noting that some issues may take up to four weeks to resolve.

Meanwhile, the TGSRTC Supervisors' Association distanced itself from the strike, welcoming the government's initiative and expressing hope for a resolution.



## Kaleshwaram: Govt May Move SC Against HC Order; Cabinet Meets today

HYDERABAD, April 22 Following the Telangana High Court's verdict on the Justice P.C. Ghose Commission, TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud asserted that large-scale corruption in the Kaleshwaram project remains an undeniable fact.

Speaking to the media, Goud clarified that the High Court did not find fault with the Commission itself, its findings, the investigation process, or the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) report. Instead, the court's intervention was limited strictly to a procedural technicality regarding the issuance of notices.

"It is a reality that a project built at a cost of ₹1 lakh crore began sinking within just three years," Goud remarked. "The culprits behind this disaster will inevitably end up behind bars. The state government is currently reviewing the High Court's judgment and will determine the next course of legal action."

The TPCC Chief also took a swipe at the BJP leadership, questioning their silence on the matter. He reminded the public that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had previously labelled the Kaleshwaram project an "ATM" for BRS leaders.

"Union Minister Kishan Reddy once claimed that if the case were handed over to the CBI, the culprits would be in jail within two days. So why hasn't the Centre initiated a CBI probe yet? Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay must answer for this inaction," Goud demanded.

Telangana state government is reportedly considering approaching the Supreme Court to challenge the High Court's ruling. To finalise this strategy, the State Cabinet is scheduled to meet this Thursday. The council of ministers will discuss the legal implications of the verdict and decide on the roadmap for the ongoing investigation into the irrigation project.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Influence too often trumps law & fairness

THE ugly episode in Madhya Pradesh, where BJP MLA Pritam Lodhi allegedly threatened police officers after his son was accused of injuring five people on the road with his speedily driven SUV, is more than a local controversy. The reported taunt — "If your daddy has guts..." — is a chilling reminder of how casually some in public life treat the institutions meant to uphold the law. What should have remained a straightforward road accident investigation has exposed a deeper malaise of the belief that political power can browbeat the police and bend accountability. Rather than allowing the law to take its course, the police were publicly challenged, warned and mocked. Such behaviour sends a dangerous signal — that rules apply only to the powerless. Sadly, this is not an isolated incident, as some similar cases of high-handedness from last year show. In Rajasthan, an MLA was reported threatening civic officials with violence from inside a police station itself. In Bihar, a legislator faced allegations of abusing and intimidating a panchayat official over the phone. In Uttar Pradesh, the son of a political figure was seen arguing with traffic police after being asked to move a vehicle blocking the road. Different states, different parties, same entitlement. The damage extends beyond bureaucracy. Citizens watching such scenes conclude that justice is negotiable, that connections matter more than conduct and that public institutions can be bullied into submission. Democracy then becomes hollow theatre. Political parties cannot escape blame. Too often, they condemn arrogance in rivals while protecting it in their own ranks.

## Telangana Rajya Sabha state general secretary Vatte Janayya Yadav participated in the strike at Suryapet depot in support of the RTC workers' strike



“Telangana State General Secretary Vatte Janayya Yadav participated in the strike of RTC workers at Suryapet depot and expressed solidarity with the workers. “Speaking on the occasion, Vatte Janayya Yadav demanded that the government should immediately address the legitimate demands of the RTC workers. He said that it is unfortunate that the workers who have been providing services for years are being ignored. He made it clear that the struggle will continue till the problems of the workers are resolved. “He assured that the TRP party will always fight for the rights of the workers from time to time and extended full support to the strike. He urged the government to immediately come



forward for talks and find a permanent solution to the issues.

TRP district president Mamidi Anjaiah, women's wing president Konne Manjula Goud, Atmakur (S) mandal party president Bolle Saidulu, Vallala Saidulu Yadav, Lingala Saidulu, Nelacharla Madhu Prajapati, Sattu Nagaiah, SK Bari, Pidamarthy Upendu, Vatte Lingaraju Yadav, Mamidi Uday, Kadiyam Vamsi, Lachaiyah, Sudhakar, Sagar Ravi, PM Rao, DR Kumar, women leader Rajeshwari, Madhavi Savitri, Swaroopa, Sriram, Sandeep, Venkanna, and a large number of workers, trade union leaders and party ranks participated.

## The Generosity of 'Shri Vaidya Foundation' Restores Vision: Free Eye Surgeries Successful under Patel Eye Care Manthani

Indian Chronicle “Medagoni Venkatesh “Peddappalli District “Manthani: “The Shri Vaidya Foundation, Manthani, has brought new light into the lives of the underprivileged suffering from vision impairment. In a press statement, the Chairman of the Foundation, Buddharthi Satish Kumar, announced that free, state-of-the-art eye surgeries were successfully conducted at the renowned Pushpagiri Eye Hospital in Hyderabad. “Treatment with Cutting-Edge Technology”?The surgeries were performed using the highly advanced ‘Phaco’ (Phacoemulsification) method, which ensures a procedure without incisions or sutures. Prior to the surgery, every patient underwent necessary blood tests free of charge to ensure high-quality medical care and safety. “Unmatched Service and Arrangements”?Beyond medical treatment, the Foundation representatives took special care to ensure the comfort of the patients: “Free Transportation: Free vehicle facilities were provided to trans-



port patients to the hospital and back home. “Nutritious Food: Demonstrating true humanity, the Foundation arranged quality meals for both the patients and their attendants. “Restoring vision is akin to giving a new lease on life. Shri Vaidya Foundation Manthani is constantly striving toward that very goal.”

## Former Uppal MLA NVSS Prabhakar Pays Rich Tributes to Telangana Activist Soundri Dharmapuri



“---Says his services to the Telangana movement will remain unforgettable” UPPAL, APRIL 22 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “Former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar paid rich tributes to noted Telangana movement activist Soundri Dharmapuri during the dasadina karma (tenth-day memorial rites) held at Ramanthapur on

Tuesday. “Dharmapuri, a resident of Ramanthapur and a senior official of VST Company, was remembered as one of the pioneering figures who laid the foundation for the Telangana movement in the locality. On the occasion, Prabhakar offered floral tributes to the portrait of the departed leader and recalled his significant role in the second phase of the Telangana agitation. “Speaking on the occasion, Prabhakar lauded Dharmapuri’s invaluable contribution to the movement from the Ramanthapur area and said his efforts towards the formation of a separate Telangana State would remain memorable for generations. Several activists and local leaders also recalled his dedicated services and paid homage. “The former MLA later consoled the bereaved family members and expressed his deep condolences. “Among those who participated in the programme were BJP leaders Devasani Balachander, Pothagani Gopal Goud, Kakkireni Harish Rao, Vangala Santosh Gupta, Darshanala Sudhakar and Palugula Anjaiah Patel, besides several party workers and Telangana movement activists. “The gathering fondly remembered Dharmapuri’s services and his enduring contribution to the cause of Telangana.

## Congress leaders pay rich tributes to Indiramma Committee member Gundu Rajanna’s mother

“UPPAL, APRIL 22 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “Senior Congress leaders from Habsiguda division paid rich tributes to the late Gundu Anasuya, mother of Indiramma Committee member and senior Congress leader Gundu Rajanna, who passed away on Tuesday. “Former Medchal-Malkajgiri District Youth Congress president Kandi Sravan Kumar Reddy offered condolences and prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace. He also took part in the funeral procession held from Sai Sukha Vista to Mallapur Vaikuntha Dhamam. “Expressing solidarity with the bereaved family, he assured Gundu Rajanna and his family members of continued support during the difficult time. “Several senior party leaders and local representatives participated in the final journey, including former floor leader Kandi Aagi Reddy, DCC vice-president Boppanapalli Sudhakar Reddy, division president Gannaram Vijay Kumar, and leaders Babu Rao, Raju Nayak, Murali Mudiraj, Malu Nayak, Vasu Nayak, Suman Nayak and Narsing Rao, among others.



## Students and Youth Lead Anti-Pollution Drive; Sub-Collector Joins: Kagaznagar Unites for Environment!



“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, April 22: A large-scale awareness rally focusing on pollution control and environmental protection was held in Kagaznagar on Wednesday, marking the International Mother Earth Day observance. “Sub-Collector Shradha Shukla flagged off the rally from the Sub-Collector’s office and joined students and officials in the march. The rally moved through key areas of the town, drawing public attention to environmental concerns. “The initiative aimed at spreading awareness on reducing pollution, protecting natural resources, and encouraging eco-friendly practices, including cycling and sustainable living. “District Science Officer and Environmental Ambassador Katakam Madhukar, Tahsildar M. Madhukar, MEO Vasala Prabhakar, along with officials and students, actively participated in the programme.

## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy inaugurates Chalivendram in Habsiguda

-BRS leader Kaleru Jai Naveen organises summer water service point”



UPPAL, APRIL 22 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “In view of the rising summer heat, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy on Tuesday inaugurated a chalivendram (public drinking water kiosk) set up near the old petrol bunk on Habsiguda Main Road. “The facility was organised under the leadership of senior BRS leader Kaleru Jai Naveen to provide relief to the public during the scorching summer season. “Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that drinking water problems tend to intensify during summer and that such service initiatives would greatly help in providing cool and safe drinking water to the people. He noted that the facility would be particularly beneficial to daily wage workers, commuters, senior citizens, and passers-by using the busy road. “He further instructed the organisers to ensure that hygienic and clean drinking water is supplied, keeping public health in mind. “Assuring continued support for similar welfare activities, Lakshma Reddy said more such public service initiatives would be taken up in different parts of the constituency in the coming days for the benefit of residents. “Later, Kaleru Jai Naveen said that four more chalivendrams would soon be opened in different locations across the Habsiguda division. “Among those present were BRS leaders Pasula Prabhakar Reddy, C.H. Lakshminarayana, Rajitha Reddy, Manohar, Sanjay Jain, Linga Nayak, Ravi Nayak, Kishore Nayak, Mohammed Rahman, Kaiser, Nani, Ravi Prasad, Mahender, Sandeep, Faisal Babu, Mahender Nayak, along with family members Kaleru Surender and Kaleru Pranathi, party leaders, and workers.”

## Special Measures Launched for Mosquito Control in Uppal Zone; Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta Issues Directions

“UPPAL, APRIL 22 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “Uppal Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta has directed officials to undertake special measures for mosquito control in the Bhagayat area under the Uppal Zone limits. “She instructed the authorities to implement comprehensive steps to completely curb the growth of mosquitoes in the areas surrounding the Musi nala. Officials were asked to continue the daily spraying of ML oil with the assistance of drones on a regular basis. In addition, she directed that anti-adult mosquito spray (ACM spray) be carried out every day in the Bhagayat locality to eliminate adult mosquitoes. “The Commissioner emphasized that the operations must continue without interruption until the mosquito menace is fully brought under control in Bhagayat Phase-I and Phase-II, which fall under the Musi catchment region. “She also instructed the civic staff to ensure that there is no water stagnation, drains and canals are kept clean, and special attention is paid to sanitation measures in the area. “Further, Radhika Gupta called for stronger field-level monitoring so that residents do not face any inconvenience. She also appealed to the public to keep their surroundings clean and immediately inform officials if they notice any stagnant water in their locality.

## Sangareddy MLA Chintha Prabhakar welcomes HC verdict on Kaleshwaram

Sangareddy: BRS leaders from across the erstwhile Medak district welcomed the High Court judgement on petitions filed by BRS leaders K Chandrashekhara Rao and T Harish Rao, challenging the Justice PC Ghose commission constituted by the Congress government on the alleged irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) construction.

As the court said that no action should be taken based on the PC Ghose report against the two BRS leaders and officials, the BRS party celebrated the judgment.

Speaking on the occasion, Sangareddy MLA Chintha Prabhakar said that the verdict had exposed the Congress government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy’s lies on KLIP. He demanded Revanth to stop spreading false information on Kaleshwaram and take up the restoration of two damaged pillars. Dubbak MLA Kotha Prabhakar Reddy observed that all the allegations made by Congress were proved to be conspiracy with the verdict. Former Medak MLA M Padma Devendar Reddy said that Kaleshwaram had changed the face of Telangana, but the Congress tried to mislead the people. Narsapur MLA V Sunita Lakshma Reddy, Zaheerabad MLA K Manik Rao, Andole former MLA Chanti Kranthi Kiran, former Narayankhed MLA M Bhupal Reddy also welcomed the High Court verdict.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the general public at large that, my client Rajeshwar Apka S/O Ramulu R/o H. No. 1-23/2, Patnapur, Dist. Adilabad, that my client is owner of Plot No. 37, in Sy. No. 34/6, situated at Village, G.P. & Mdl; Mavala, Dist. Adilabad, newly merged into Adilabad Municipality. That it link document No. 911/2003 has lost.

If anyone has any claim, right, title or interest of any kind in the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of the publication of this Notice, with all documents of claim and title.

If any one finds the above document kindly handover to undersigned.

If anyone got/ found the above document No. 911/2003, they shall hand over to my client or can hand over to the address below. If no objection is received within 7 days, and if any claim and objection arise, it shall be deemed to have been waived. Dt. 22-04-2026.

**Bipin Kumar Patel**  
Advocate,  
ADARSH Building,  
N.H.No.44, Adilabad  
Cell: 9440005500

# No clean chit in Kaleshwaram verdict, says MLA

Seeks accountability for lapses during BRS regime; CBI probe to continue.



“Karimnagar, April 22 (Correspondent): The High Court has not granted a clean chit to any individual in connection with the alleged irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, Manakondur MLA Dr. Kavvampalli Satyanarayana said on Tuesday, asserting that accountability must be fixed for lapses during the previous BRS government. In a press statement, the MLA said the court had upheld the constitution of the Justice P.C. Ghose Commission and found no fault with its appointment. He, however, noted that the court pointed to a procedural lapse —

failure to issue prior notices to individuals named in the Commission’s report — and held that the remarks would remain inoperative on that ground. “This is a technical issue and does not amount to exoneration. The High Court has not given a clean chit to anyone,” he said. Dr. Satyanarayana maintained that the judgment does not come in the way of a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and that further investigation into the alleged irregularities in the project, executed during the BRS regime, would continue.

Referring to structural concerns, he said the subsidence of a portion of the Medigadda barrage in October 2023 had raised serious questions about the project’s design, construction and maintenance. “A barrage built at enormous public cost suffered damage within a short span, and the reasons must be established,” he said, attributing the execution of the project to the previous government. He pointed out that reports by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) and the State Vigilance Commission had flagged deficiencies at multiple levels, including site selection, design and construction. The MLA said the Justice P.C. Ghose Commission, appointed by the State government, had conducted an extensive inquiry into the alleged irregularities and identified lapses and responsibilities. Its findings were also discussed in the Assembly. Based on these reports, the State government had referred the matter to the CBI, issuing a notification on September 1 last year, he said, adding that the government would take further action after examining the full High Court judgment. “The responsibility now is to ensure a thorough investigation and fix accountability,” he said.

# Marxism–Leninism–Mao Thought is the Path for National Liberation: CPI(ML) New Democracy Leader



“Khammam, April 22: (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “CPI(ML) New Democracy Khammam Division Secretary Kola Lakshminarayana stated that Marxism–Leninism–Mao Thought is the guiding ideology for the liberation of the country. “On the occasion of Marxist leader Comrade Lenin’s birth anniversary, the CPI(ML) Formation Day was observed in Mucherla village of Kamepalli mandal in Khammam district. During the program, Lakshminarayana hoisted the party flag and addressed the gathering. “He said that CPI(ML) was formed in 1969 after ideological differences with revisionist and neo-revisionist forces, with the aim of achieving land, dig-

nity, and national liberation. Since its inception, he said, the party under CPI(ML) New Democracy has led several people’s struggles. “He claimed that lakhs of acres of land have been distributed to the poor and tribal communities and that many villages have been developed. He added that the party has consistently organized movements to resolve the daily issues faced by the people. “Lakshminarayana criticized the BJP-led central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that they are promoting communal and fascist ideologies. He accused them of attempting to alter the Constitution to promote “Manuvadi” principles and suppress dissent by imposing restrictions on those who speak out. “He further alleged that attacks on Dalits, Adivasis, tribals, and minorities are increasing and that national wealth is being handed over to corporate companies and wealthy sections. He also claimed that imperialist forces are encouraging global conflicts. “Speaking about the state, he accused the government of failing to fulfill election promises and alleged misuse and encroachment of government lands. He termed both central and state governments as “broker regimes” serving the interests of capitalists and imperialists. “He called for unity among revolutionaries to overthrow such governments and establish a classless society through a New Democratic Revolution. He urged people to prepare for struggles based on Marxism–Leninism–Mao ideology to achieve freedom and equality. “Several CPI(ML) New Democracy leaders and activists, including Kola Apparao, Angothu Lalu, Siripurapu Suryam, Kola Dargayya, Sheikh Ghaseem, Kola Venkatayya, Kola Jagadeesh, and Sheikh Ghouse, participated in the program.

# RTC Strike Disrupts Bus Services; Vehicles Confined to Depots



“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, Kumuram Bheem Asifabad, April 22: Bus services across the district were severely disrupted on Wednesday due to the ongoing TGSRTC workers’ strike, with many buses remaining confined to depots. “The strike, led by workers’ unions demanding immediate resolution of their issues, has affected transportation on several routes. Union leaders warned that the

agitation would intensify if the government fails to respond. “With buses off the roads, passengers at the district headquarters bus stand and various mandal centres faced significant inconvenience. Students, employees, and rural commuters who arrived early in the morning were left waiting for hours, only to find that buses were unavailable on most routes. “In the absence of RTC services, commuters were forced to rely on private vehicles. Autorickshaws, private buses, and other transport operators reportedly charged higher fares, leading to dissatisfaction among passengers. People travelling from rural areas to the ?????? ?????? faced even greater hardship. “Meanwhile, police deployed security at RTC depots to prevent any untoward incidents. CI Balaji Varaprasad visited the depot along with police personnel and reviewed the situation. He assured that necessary steps were being taken to avoid inconvenience to passengers and maintain law and order. “With the strike continuing, further disruption to bus services is expected in the coming days. Passengers and the public have urged the government to intervene and resolve the issues at the earliest.

# Ensure Quality Road Construction with Strict Monitoring: Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy

“Khammam, Edulapuram, April 22: (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “State Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy directed officials to ensure that road construction works are completed with high quality under strict supervision. “On Wednesday, the minister laid the foundation stone for a BT road from Chintapalli to Mutthagudem in Edulapuram Municipality, to be constructed at a cost of ₹6.5 crore. He was accompanied by Local Bodies Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja. “Speaking on the occasion, the minister instructed officials to complete the road works before the onset of the monsoon season and make it available for public use. He emphasized adherence to quality standards and timelines, and suggested that local residents and public representatives should also take part in monitoring the works. “He noted that ₹16.7 crore had already been sanctioned in the past for internal CC roads, drainage systems, and link roads in Mutthagudem. “The minister said the government is committed to developing Edulapuram Municipality as a model town in the state, ensuring both development and welfare schemes are implemented without negligence. He highlighted several ongoing welfare initiatives, including free RTC bus travel for women, issuance of new ration cards, 200 units of free electricity for poor households, loan waivers up to ₹2 lakh, ₹6,000 per acre per crop under Rythu Bharosa, and a ₹500 bonus per quintal for fine paddy in addition to MSP. “He added that the government is continuing effective schemes from previous administrations while introducing new measures to further support the poor. Education and healthcare sectors are also being given top priority, he said, adding that under the leadership of Revanth Reddy, both development and welfare are progressing simultaneously and all promises made to the people will be fulfilled. “The minister further stated that additional CC roads and drainage works are needed in the municipality and will be taken up soon. He also announced that the second phase of Indiramma housing distribution will begin shortly. “Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja said the BT road is essential for public convenience and stressed the need for coordinated efforts between officials and public repre-



sentatives to improve sanitation in the municipality. She emphasized that good roads are crucial for visible development and directed that the project be executed with continuous monitoring to ensure durability for at least 20 years. “State Irrigation Development Corporation Chairman Muvva Vijay Babu, Municipal Chairperson Anita, Special Officer Ramesh, R&B SE Yakobu, Panchayat Raj Engineering officials, and other public representatives attended the program.

# Welfare of the Poor is the Government’s Main Objective: Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy

“Welfare schemes reaching the doorstep of the poor. “Continuation of schemes despite financial constraints” Khammam, April 22: (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “State Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy stated that the primary goal of the government is the welfare of the poor. “On Wednesday, at his camp office in Khammam, the minister distributed Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak cheques to 27 beneficiaries from Khammam city’s 1st, 59th, and 60th divisions. “Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the people’s government is implementing welfare schemes effectively to ensure that citizens do not face any difficulties. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, welfare schemes are being delivered directly to the doorsteps of the poor. “He stated that despite the state’s challenging financial situation, the government is continuing all the good schemes initiated by the previous administration. In addition, several new welfare measures are being implemented, including free bus travel for women, issuance of new ration cards to all eligible families, 200 units of free electricity for every poor household, loan waivers up to ₹2 lakh, ₹6,000 per acre per crop under Rythu Bharosa for farmers, and a bonus of ₹500 along with minimum support price for fine rice. The minister emphasized that the government is giving top priority to education and healthcare sectors. He said that CM Relief Fund (CMRF) cheques are being provided to poor families during times of distress. To offer international-standard education to poor children, Young India Integrated Schools are being constructed on 20–25 acres, accommodating around 2,500 students. Diet charges have been increased by 40%, and cosmetic charges by 200% for students. “He criticized the opposition for making unnecessary allegations against the government and questioned them to specify which welfare scheme has been stopped. He alleged that the previous government deceived the poor in the name of housing, whereas the current government has already sanctioned



around 4.5 lakh houses in the first phase. He assured that the second phase of Indiramma housing will soon be implemented, providing houses to all eligible poor families irrespective of politics. “The minister said that the previous government failed to issue new ration cards and supply fine rice, and that people are aware of the baseless allegations made by the opposition. He added that in the recent elections, people have given a fitting reply to the opposition and supported the present government. “Khammam Mayor Poonukollu Neeraja stated that after the formation of the people’s government under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, several welfare schemes are being implemented for the poor. These include free bus travel for women, 200 units of free electricity, gas cylinders at ₹500, and distribution of new ration cards. “She added that the government is moving forward to fulfill the dream of owning a house for the poor by sanctioning 3,500 Indiramma houses for each Assembly constituency. Fine rice is being distributed through the ration system, and free bus travel is being provided to women. “Several officials and public representatives, including Edulapuram Municipal Chairperson Anita, Paleru Special Officer Ramesh, RDO Srinivas, Urban Tahsildar Jayachander, corporators, and others, participated in the program.”

# Government Taking Special Measures for Farmers’ Welfare: Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy

“Khammam, Nelakondapalli, April 22: (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “State Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy stated that the government is implementing special measures for the welfare of farmers. “On Wednesday, the minister inaugurated a maize procurement center set up by the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS), Nacheppalli, in Nelakondapalli. He was accompanied by Additional Collector P. Srinivas Reddy and State Irrigation Development Corporation Chairman Muvva Vijay Babu. “Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the government, under the leadership of Revanth Reddy, is committed to fulfilling every promise made to the poor despite financial constraints. He emphasized that the administration is working in favor of farmers, supporting unemployed youth, empowering women, and ensuring development and welfare across all regions. “Highlighting key initiatives, he said that unlike previous restrictions on paddy cultivation, the government is now offering Minimum Support Price (MSP) along with a ₹500 bonus per quintal for fine varieties of paddy. He added that the government is procuring more grain than before and ensuring timely payments directly into farmers’ bank accounts. “The minister also noted that while previous governments took five years to implement loan waivers of up to ₹1 lakh, the current government has released ₹21,000 crore within six months, benefiting 2.5 million farmers with loan waivers of up to ₹2 lakh. He further stated that financial assistance under “Rythu Bharosa” has been increased to ₹12,000, compared to ₹10,000 earlier under “Rythu Bandhu.” “He said plans are underway to construct warehouses with 200% higher capacity than before and to establish government-run cold storage facilities comparable to the private sector, which will soon be available to farmers. “The minister also listed several welfare schemes being implemented, including free bus travel for women, issuance of new ration cards, 200 units of free electricity, increased diet and cosmetic charges, and supply of fine rice through the public distribution system. Despite inheriting heavy debts from previous governments, he said, the administration continues to implement welfare programs while managing loan repayments. “Additional Collector P. Srinivas Reddy stated that maize cultivation is extensive in the district and that six procurement centers have already



been established in the Paleru constituency, with plans underway to open another center in Khammam Rural mandal as per the minister’s instructions. He urged farmers to bring only quality produce to procurement centers and advised using reflective stickers when drying crops on roads to prevent accidents at night. “State Irrigation Development Corporation Chairman Muvva Vijay Babu said that the minister is ensuring both statewide service and local development, addressing pending issues such as road and tank repairs after last year’s floods, and resolving long-standing problems like overhead electric lines passing over houses. “Several officials, public representatives, and farmers attended the program.

# CPI (ML) Mass Line Celebrates 57th Foundation Day; Lenin Jayanti Observed with Flag Hoisting in Ellanna Nagar

“KHAMMAM, KONIJERLA, April 22: (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “The 57th foundation day of CPI (ML) and the 146th birth anniversary of Vladimir Lenin were celebrated with enthusiasm under the leadership of CPI (ML) Mass Line in Ellanna Nagar village of Konijerla mandal. “On this occasion, senior party leader Gogula Somulu hoisted the party flag as part of the celebrations. Addressing the gathering, he stated that many martyrs had sacrificed their precious lives for the liberation of the country, inspired by the principles of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoist ideology. He emphasized that the party would continue to carry forward their sacrifices in the struggle for land, livelihood, and freedom. “Several party leaders and members, including Gandikota Ramesh, Rapolu Krishna, Gogula Venkanna, Gandikota Babu, Sunitha, Bulli Saidamma, Kimya Ravi, Venkanna, Ramesh, Bujjibabu, Veeraiiah, and others, participated in the program



## Nama Nageswara Rao Welcomes High Court Verdict on Kaleshwaram Commission



KHAMMAM APRIL 22 INDIAN CHRONICLE: "BRS former Lok Sabha floor leader and ex-MP from Khammam, Nama Nageswara Rao, has welcomed the Telangana High Court's verdict regarding the Kaleshwaram Commission. "He supported the court's observation that no action should be taken based on the report submitted by the Justice P. C. Ghose Commission. Nama described the court's clarification—that proper procedures were not followed in the functioning of the commission—as a significant development." Referring to the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, he said it is the world's largest lift irrigation

scheme. He reiterated his earlier stance that issuing notices to former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and former minister T. Harish Rao was politically motivated. "Nama stated that the Kaleshwaram project has become a lifeline for Telangana and a matter of pride for the nation. It has not only provided irrigation to barren lands and strengthened the agricultural sector but also met drinking water needs, he added. "He credited K. Chandrashekar Rao's vision for the successful execution of the project, noting that it secured all necessary approvals from the central government and set new benchmarks in India's irrigation sector. "Nama further mentioned that he had raised the importance of the project multiple times in the 17th Lok Sabha, advocating for national status and adequate funding. He said that whenever the issue was discussed in Parliament, it received support across party lines, and stressed that such a major project should not be politicized. "Describing Kaleshwaram as the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation project, he said it supplies water for irrigation, drinking, and industrial purposes to lakhs of acres. He also highlighted the increase in groundwater levels due to the project. "He concluded by stating that people will not accept attempts to undermine the development achieved under KCR's leadership, particularly through the Kaleshwaram project, which has significantly benefited farmers.

## Sathupalli Trunk Canal Works Must Be Accelerated to Supply Godavari Water Before Monsoon: Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao



KHAMMAM , SATUPALLI, APRIL 22 INDIAN CHRONICLE: "State Agriculture, Cooperation, Marketing, and Handlooms Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has directed officials to speed up the construction of the Sathupalli trunk canal, a part of the Seetharama Lift Irrigation Project, so that Godavari waters can be supplied to the Sathupalli ayacut before the upcoming monsoon season. "The minister issued these instructions during a review meeting held on Wednesday at Yatalakunta in Sathupalli constituency. The meeting was attended by Ashwaraopet MLA Jare Adinarayana, Bhadradi Kothagudem District Collector Ankit, and Khammam District Collector Anudeep Durishetty, along with other officials. "Prior to the meeting, the minister inspected the ongoing canal works from Thotti pump house in Annareddipalli mandal of Bhadradi Kothagudem district to Yatalakunta. He reviewed the progress of bridges, road crossings, and canal construction, pointing out deficiencies and instructing officials to strengthen monitoring and avoid negligence. "Speaking at the review meeting, the minister emphasized that engineering officials must shed their laxity and complete the works swiftly. The government aims to supply irrigation water to about 1.46 lakh acres through the 43-kilometer-long Sathupalli trunk canal. Of the total estimated cost of ₹700 crore, works worth ₹600 crore

have already been completed. "He instructed officials to complete the remaining 30 meters of the 1.78-kilometer Yatalakunta terminal works within 15 days. Pending works between structures 5 to 10 upstream of the terminal must be completed before Godavari floods arrive. All incomplete structures should be finished by the end of May, and construction of six structures upstream of the tunnel should be completed before the monsoon. "The minister stated that funds for land acquisition have already been fully released. Officials were told to immediately report any delays caused by court cases or land issues to district collectors and resolve minor land disputes through coordination with farmers. He warned of strict action if works are halted without timely reporting. "Despite some delays due to land acquisition issues and pending permissions, works are progressing rapidly, he said, adding that about one kilometer of canal work is pending due to court cases. Since the ayacut lies in Khammam district while construction is underway in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, he instructed officials from both districts, along with forest and police departments, to work in coordination. "The minister noted that it is unacceptable for such a massive project, costing hundreds of crores per kilometer, to be delayed due to minor issues. He urged officials to immediately escalate any problems to district collectors or public representatives. "He also mentioned that the previous government had not taken a decision on the Yatalakunta tunnel, but the current government completed it within two years. He directed irrigation officials to deploy additional staff if necessary and work round the clock to ensure water supply in the current season. "Through the stabilization of the Rajiv Canal, irrigation has already been provided to around 1.35 lakh acres. Even if waters from Nagarjuna Sagar are unavailable this year, there is scope to divert Godavari waters to areas like Wyray ayacut, Thallada, Kalluru, and Penuballi mandals. "Additionally, water can be supplied to Vemsuru and Dummugudem mandals through the Sathupalli trunk canal. Completion of the fourth pump house will enable water supply to Ashwaraopet and Dummugudem mandals next year. Overall, a 110-kilometer canal network will be completed, allowing water supply to eight constituencies across both districts using the main canal and three pump houses. "To supply water to the Paleru region, the Julurupadu tunnel must be completed, and the government is taking steps in that direction. The project also aims to supply water to medium irrigation projects in both districts and complete the Marellapadu Lift Irrigation scheme, providing irrigation to 16,500 acres in Pinapaka constituency. "Tenders for distributary canals under the Seetharama project have already been invited across all constituencies. The minister stressed that only through coordinated efforts between public representatives and officials can the project be completed on schedule and transform both districts into fertile regions. "Officials from irrigation, police, forest departments, and public representatives attended the meeting."

## A free summer health initiative was organized for lawyers by the Khammam District Bar Association



"KHAMMAM APRIL 22 INDIAN CHRONICLE: "The program, held in front of the Bar Association Hall near the lift area at 10 AM, was conducted under the leadership of EC member Tavanam Shekhar Reddy, with support from the DDL Charitable Trust. As part of the initiative, ragi porridge (a nutritious drink) will be distributed free of cost to all lawyers throughout the summer season. "The event was inaugurated by District Judge G. Rajagopal as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, he advised lawyers to take necessary precautions against the intense summer heat and encouraged them to consume healthy beverages

to stay hydrated and maintain good health. "Prominent attendees included Bar Association President Edlapalli Ramesh, General Secretary Koppula Ravikumar, Bar Council member Kolli Satyanarayana, current Bar Council member Mandadapu Srinivasa Rao, along with members Niranjan Reddy, Swami Ramesh, Sharath Kumar Reddy, Satya Prasad, Malidu Nageswara Rao, Kona Venkata Gupta, Vijayashanthi, D. Kalyani, and several senior, junior, and women lawyers.

## GHMC launches city-wide drive to rehabilitate beggars

Hyderabad: The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Wednesday launched a rehabilitation programme for beggars across all 30 circles under a special drive at railway stations, bus stations, major junctions and temple areas, with police, traffic police, GHMC officials and representatives from NGOs taking part.

A press release said the special drive was conducted at Nampally Railway Station, Kachiguda Railway Station, KBR Park, Amberpet Junction, Ameerpet Junction, Balkampet Temple surroundings, Nanal Nagar Junction and Aramghar Junction.

A total of 107 beggars were identified during the drive and of them, 37 were shifted to Amma-Nanna Orphanage near Choutupal, where they were provided with necessary medical examinations and other facilities.

## Farmers Go Smart! FPO Training Promises Higher Income!



"Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, April 22: A training programme on Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) was

conducted for farmers at the Dahegaon Rythu Vedika on Wednesday under the aegis of the ATMA organisation. "Addressing the participants, District Agriculture Officer Venkat stated that the government is promoting FPOs to enhance farmers' income, ensure better prices for agricultural produce, and provide direct market linkages. "He explained that an FPO is a collective organization formed by farmers, enabling them to procure agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides at lower costs through group purchasing. He further noted that both Central and State governments are implementing special schemes to support the development of FPOs. "Farmers were encouraged to make use of these opportunities to improve their income and strengthen their market position. "The programme was attended by ADA Manohar, AO Ramakrishna, and several farmers.

## State Agriculture, Marketing, Cooperation, Handlooms and Textiles Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has directed officials to expedite the completion of the Yathalakunta tunnel works under the Seetharama Lift Irrigation Project.

KHAMMAM , SATHUPALLI , APRIL 22 INDIAN CHRONICLE: "The minister conducted an extensive tour along with district collectors Anudeep Durishetty and Ankit,



inspecting the ongoing construction of the Yathalakunta tunnel in Sathupalli. He also reviewed the progress with officials in the presence of Khammam and Bhadradi Kothagudem district representatives, including Aswaraopeta MLA Jare Adinarayana. "Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the Sathupalli trunk canal works, part of the Seetharama Lift Irrigation Project, should be accelerated to ensure that Godavari waters are supplied to the Sathupalli ayacut before the upcoming monsoon season. He noted that the main canal and three pump houses under the project have already been inaugurated by the Chief Minister. "He stated that out of the total 1.78 km Yathalakunta terminal tunnel works, only the last 30 meters remain pending and instructed officials to complete them within 15 days. He also directed that pending works related to structures numbered 5 to 10 in the upper section be completed before floodwaters arrive in the Godavari River. All incomplete structures should be finished by the end of May, and the six structures in the upper tunnel section should be made operational before the rainy season. "The government aims to supply irrigation water to about 1.46 lakh acres through the 43-km-long Sathupalli trunk canal. Out of the estimated ₹700 crore project cost, works worth around ₹600 crore have already been completed. "The minister said funds required for pending land acquisition have been fully sanctioned. He instructed officials to immediately bring any delays due to court cases or land disputes to the notice of district collectors and resolve issues through coordination with farmers. He warned that unnecessary delays due to minor land issues would not be tolerated and that strict action would be taken if works are halted without proper communication. "Although some land acquisition issues and permissions are still pending, he said efforts are underway to resolve them quickly. About one kilometer of canal work remains pending due to court cases. Since the ayacut lies in Khammam district while construction is ongoing in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, he directed officials from both districts, along with forest and police departments, to coordinate

effectively. "The minister emphasized that it is unacceptable for such a major project involving thousands of crores to be delayed for minor reasons. He urged officials to promptly report any issues to district authorities or public representatives. "He noted that the Yathalakunta tunnel was completed within just two years after the current government took a decision, which had been pending under the previous government. He instructed irrigation officials to deploy additional staff if necessary and work round the clock to ensure water supply during the current season. "He added that through the stabilization of the Rajiv canal, water has already been supplied to about 1.35 lakh acres. Even if Nagarjuna Sagar Project waters are not available this year, there is potential to divert Godavari waters to areas like Wyray ayacut, Thallada, Kalluru, and Penuballi mandals. Similarly, water can be supplied to Vemsuru and Dammapeta through the Sathupalli trunk canal. "Once the fourth pump house is completed, Godavari water can be extended next year to Aswaraopeta and Dammapeta mandals. This will complete a 110-km canal network, enabling water supply through the main canal and three pump houses to eight constituencies across both districts. "He further stated that to supply water to the Paleru region, the Julurupadu tunnel works must be completed, and the government is taking steps in that direction. The project also aims to provide water to medium irrigation projects in both districts and complete the Marellapadu Lift Irrigation scheme to irrigate 16,500 acres in Pinapaka constituency. "Tenders have already been invited for distributary canal works across all constituencies under the project. The minister instructed the district administration to expedite land acquisition through proper coordination. "He expressed confidence that with coordinated efforts from public representatives and officials, the project can be completed within the stipulated time, transforming both districts into fertile regions. "Sub-Collector Ajay Yadav, ACP Vasundhara Yadav, Matta Dayanand, public representatives, and officials from engineering, irrigation, police, and forest departments of both districts were present at the review meeting."

## State Agriculture, Marketing, Cooperation, Handlooms and Textiles Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has directed officials to expedite the completion of development works in the city and ensure better infrastructure for the public.

"KHAMMAM , APRIL 22 INDIAN CHRONICLE: "The minister inspected the Church Compound and Prakash Nagar overbridges in Khammam along with District Collector Anudeep Durishetty and Municipal Commissioner Abhishek Agastya on Wednesday. During the visit, he reviewed the current condition of the bridges, the need for repairs, and traffic management measures, and gave several instructions to officials. "He ordered immediate steps to ensure that commuters using the Church Compound overbridge do not face inconvenience. He suggested installing rubber strips in the middle section of the bridge to make vehicle movement smoother. He also instructed officials to promptly repair potholes, cracks, and other issues on the bridge. "Emphasizing road safety, the minister directed that necessary precautions be strengthened considering heavy traffic. He also asked authorities to maintain the plants in flower pots placed on the bridge and to install warning boards and hazard indicators wherever required to prevent accidents. "The minister stressed that all development works in the city should be completed with quality and within stipulated timelines. He advised that the works be carried out in phases to avoid inconvenience to the public. "Engineering officials and municipal staff participated in the inspection program."



## RADHEY GROUP PAYS TRIBUTE TO MOTHER EARTH ON EARTH DAY WITH A GRAND PLANTATION DRIVE



Hyderabad, 22nd April 2026 – In a heartfelt tribute to Mother Earth and a reaffirmation of its commitment to sustainable development, Radhey Group, organized an Earth Day Plantation Drive at Sri Ram Nagar Community Site, Moinabad, Hyderabad in association with Sankalptaru Foundation. The event commenced at 9:00 AM and witnessed enthusiastic participation from Radhey group employees, who planted 150 saplings. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Sri Daggumalla Prasada Rao, Chairman of Radhey Group and Member of Parliament from the Chittoor constituency, who presided over the occasion as the Chief Guest along with his wife Mrs. Daggumalla Sujatha garu. Mr. Radhey Daggumalla, Managing Director of Radhey Constructions with his wife Mrs Daggumalla Esther Priyanka and Mrs. Rajivi Daggumalla, Director Radhey Group along senior officials and team members of the organization, were also present to lend their support and leadership to this important initiative.

Organized on the occasion of World Earth Day, observed globally every year on April 22nd, the plantation drive stands as a powerful testament to Radhey Group's vision of building not just homes and infrastructure, but a greener, healthier, and more sustainable world for generations to

come. The initiative is deeply rooted in the Group's core philosophy of responsible development — ensuring that every project undertaken contributes positively to the environment and the communities it serves. Sankalptaru, a widely recognized organization dedicated to tree plantation and ecological sustainability, partnered with Radhey Group for this meaningful initiative. The collaboration reflects a shared commitment to environmental conservation and corporate responsibility. Together, both organizations aim to inspire a larger community movement towards a cleaner and greener tomorrow.

Speaking at the event, Sri Daggumalla Prasada Rao emphasized the critical importance of environmental stewardship and the pivotal role each individual and organization must play in combating the growing challenges of climate change and deforestation. He commended the collective spirit of the participants and urged citizens to make tree plantation a way of life. He also praised Radhey Group's initiative in embedding environmental consciousness into its corporate DNA. Mr. Radhey Daggumalla, Managing Director, spoke passionately about the Group's long-term vision of sustainable development. He reiterated the company's unwavering commitment to giving back to nature and expressed his gratitude to Sankalptaru for being a trusted partner in this environmental journey. He made it clear that this plantation drive is not a one-time effort, but the beginning of a sustained, year-round environmental movement that Radhey Group will champion with dedication.

The event saw the planting of 150 saplings of native tree species across the community site, transforming the open space into a thriving green haven. Participants came together in a spirit of unity and purpose, inspired by the vision of a greener Hyderabad. The theme of the event, "Together, let's nurture a greener and safer tomorrow," eloquently captured the collective spirit and purpose of the day. Radhey Group's Earth Day Plantation Drive serves as an inspiring model of how businesses can and must take active responsibility for the environment. About Radhey Group Radhey Group — Built on Trust — is a leading real estate and construction company with a strong presence in Hyderabad. The Group is committed to delivering quality infrastructure while upholding its core values of integrity, community welfare, and environmental consciousness. About Sankalptaru Sankalptaru is a dedicated environmental organization focused on mass tree plantation and ecological restoration across India. With a mission to create a greener planet, Sankalptaru has successfully partnered with thousands of individuals and organizations to plant millions of trees nationwide.

## Political Row Erupts Over Kharge's Remarks on PM Modi



“Khammam, April 22 Indian Chronicle:” A political controversy has erupted in Khammam district following alleged inappropriate remarks made by Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Strongly condemning the comments, leaders and workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staged a large protest on Wednesday. “Under the direction of district president Nelluri Koteswara Rao and leadership of local 1-Town president Naresh Gadli, BJP cadres gathered at Mutyalamma Temple Center in Khammam and held a dharna. Protesters raised slogans against the Congress party and Kharge, and also burned his effigy. BJP leaders criticized the remarks, calling them an example of the Congress party's political culture. “Addressing the gathering, district president Nelluri Koteswara Rao expressed anger, stating that Kharge had forgotten the dignity of his position and made irresponsible statements. He termed such remarks against the Prime Minister as an attack on democratic values and emphasized that politics should always remain respectful, without resorting to personal abuse. He further alleged that Congress leaders were making such com-



ments out of frustration over the widespread public support for Prime Minister Modi. On behalf of the district unit, he demanded an unconditional public apology from Kharge. “State executive members Dr. Venkat Gogura and Rudra Pradeep also criticized the Congress, accusing its senior leaders of constantly targeting Modi. They said insulting a Prime Minister who has elevated India's global standing amounts to insulting the people of the country. “Other BJP leaders, including district vice presidents Veeravelli Rajesh Gupta and Ravi Rathod, remarked that such statements reflect the political decline of the Congress party. Leaders from the Dalit Morcha, including Kotamarthi Sudarshan and Regan Pratap Bandla, also condemned Kharge's comments, calling them irresponsible. “Several district and local leaders participated in the protest, expressing strong opposition. They warned that if Congress leaders continue using such language, BJP workers would intensify protests across the region. “The protest saw participation from leaders at various levels, from district to mandal, who reiterated that people from grassroots to urban areas have strong faith in Modi's leadership and attempts to undermine it would not succeed.

## Minister Ponguleti Consoles Bereaved Families in Khammam



“Khammam April 22 Indian Chronicle:” “Telangana Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy expressed deep condolences over the demise of several individuals in Khammam city. “On Wednesday, the minister visited the families of the deceased at different locations across the city. He paid tribute to Alla Venkata Reddy in Old Agharam,

Head Constable Polagani Srinivasa Rao on Bonakal Road, and Batukamma, mother of corporator Kamarthapu Murali in Sriram Hills. The minister offered floral tributes to their portraits and extended his sympathies to the grieving family members. “Later, he also participated in the tenth-day death ritual (Dashadina Karma) of Gade Vasudeva Reddy and paid his respects.

## Eviction of women's kiosks sparks protest at Jangaon Collectorate

Jangaon: Political parties and people's organisations staged a protest against the removal of Vanitha Tea Stall and Vijaya Dairy Parlour kiosks at the district collectorate here on Wednesday. Municipal Commissioner Maheshwar Reddy acting on the directives of the district Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha, engaged workers to remove the stalls during early hours on Wednesday and dumped them near a wall at the police quarters, they said. CPM leaders Jogu Prakash, Moku Kanaka Reddy, MSP leader Gaddala Kishore, MRPS leader Guvvala Ravi, BRS councillor Panuganti Suvarta, High Court advocate Mohammed Sadiq Ali and JAC leader Mangalampalli Raju along with the affected families took part in the dharna.

## Buses halted in the district due to RTC workers' strike



People faced hardships due to lack of buses “Indian Chronicle Vikarabad (April 22)” “Due to the RTC workers' strike in Telangana state, buses came to a halt at several depots in Vikarabad district on Wednesday. “In Vikarabad, Parigi, and Tandur depots of the district, RTC workers went on strike in the morning demanding that their demands be resolved, causing buses to remain completely halted in the depots. “Workers staged large-scale protests under tents in front of the respective depots, demanding that their demands be addressed. Several public organization leaders and parties extended support to this protest program. “With buses completely off the roads due to the RTC workers' strike, police made full-scale security arrangements. For public transport convenience, the RTC made arrangements to run buses with private persons under police escort on behalf of the government. “People in the district are facing severe hardship due to lack of bus transport facilities.

## Summer Relief Measures by MP Ram Sahayam Raghuram Reddy

“Khammam APRIL 22 Indian Chronicle:” “With the scorching summer intensifying and drinking water scarcity affecting rural areas, Khammam Member of Parliament Ram Sahayam Raghuram Reddy has taken a key initiative to address the issue. He has sanctioned ₹35 lakh from his MPLADS (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) funds to provide immediate relief and ensure access to drinking water. “MP Funds to Quench Thirst: “Under this initiative, new hand pumps will be installed in 44 villages across Sathupalli, Madhira, Wyra, and Paleru constituencies, with a total allocation of ₹35,20,000. Priority has been given to remote areas and SC/ST colonies facing acute water shortages. Some of the works have already begun. This move is expected to ease the burden on women and elderly people who often travel long distances to fetch water. “Completion Within a Week: “Following the approval of funds, the MP has directed officials to expedite the works and ensure completion within a week. He also instructed RWS (Rural Water Supply) officials to closely monitor the implementation at the ground level. “Local sarpanches and residents have expressed gratitude to MP Raghuram Reddy



for promptly responding to the drinking water crisis and allocating funds without delay.

## Corporator Budigam Srinivas Launches Free Ayushman Bharat Health Insurance Registration



“KHAMMAM APRIL 22 INDIAN CHRONICLE:” “A free online registration center for Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) insurance, introduced by the Central Government, was inaugurated by Corporator Budigam Srinivasa Rao in the 45th Division of Mamillagudem in Khammam city, near the Homeopathy Hospital. “On this occasion, he urged the residents of the division to make use of this opportunity. It was informed that people coming for registration must bring their original Aadhaar Card and a mobile phone number without fail. “The event was attended by Dr. Krishna Chaitanya, ANM Rajeshwari, Homeopathy Doctor Padmavathi, staff members Jayashree, RP Sheela, Kavitha, and local leaders along with residents of the division.

## Ganta Panel Registers Decisive Victory in Kamalanagar Senior Citizens Welfare Association Elections



“MEDCHAL- MALKAJGIRI, April 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Kapra: The elections of the Kamalanagar Senior Citizens Welfare Association, held on Sunday in Kamalanagar under Kapra Circle, concluded on a competitive note. The Ganta Panel, which fielded 11 candidates, received strong support from members and secured victory for 9 of its candidates. The Star Panel put up a tough fight, with two of its candidates winning, while the remaining nine candidates lost by narrow margins. The close contest added intensity and interest to the election process. In the newly elected body, C.N. Rao was elected as President, G.V. Narayana as General Secretary, and T. Hemalatha (Star Panel) as Treasurer. Y. Rajeshwar (Star Panel) was

elected as Vice President, while R. Muthyalu took charge as Joint Secretary. The elected Directors include P. Ganapathi Reddy, S.S.V. Prasad, R. Ravindranath Charyulu, M. Sambasiva Rao, Pilla Shankar Reddy, and K. Yashoda Devi. Speaking on the occasion, C.N. Rao and G.V. Narayana stated that they would work towards addressing the issues faced by senior citizens with the support of committee members. They also assured that necessary facilities at the association office would be improved and made accessible. Following the results, the newly elected committee members were felicitated by representatives of the Kamalanagar Welfare Association, including Budida Janardhan Goud, Dattu, and Pentayya Goud, who conveyed their best wishes.

## CAT dismisses Chandigarh Police constables' pleas against B-1 test for promotions to HC



cent sports quota. Moudgil argued that the B-1 test is an integral statutory requirement aimed at ensuring efficiency and merit in the police force and cannot be dispensed with. "Earlier relaxations were only one-time measures, and do not create any enforceable right. The impugned notifications and circulars were issued within the competence of the administration and strictly in accordance with the rules," Moudgil further submitted. The tribunal, on hearing the arguments, rejected the contentions of applicants' counsel, observing that "no employee can claim right to promotion contrary to the scheme of Rules".

It further held that the requirement of appearing in a written test "does not violate Articles 14 or 16, particularly when it is uniformly applied and has a rational nexus with the objective of ensuring efficiency and merit in promotions within a disciplined force like the police." The bench also noted that the B-1 test mechanism had not been abandoned and continued to be part of the statutory framework. "Temporary deviations or relaxations do not render a statutory provision obsolete or unenforceable," it said. On the issue of past practice, the tribunal observed that earlier relaxations granted in certain years were only one-time measures and could not be treated as a precedent or enforceable right. The tribunal further recorded that during the pendency of the case, the applicants themselves referred to a draft amendment circulated by the administration, indicating that such matters fall within the domain of policy and administrative decision-making.

Earlier, the tribunal had declined to grant interim relief, stating that no prima facie case was made out and allowing the B-1 test process to continue. "In the absence of any violation of statutory provisions or constitutional mandate, the Tribunal ought not to interfere in policy matters," the order said. Accordingly, all original applications were dismissed, with the tribunal leaving it open for the competent authority to consider any request for relaxation in accordance with the law.

GNS News Agency, April 22

The Chandigarh Bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has dismissed a bunch of applications filed by Chandigarh Police constables challenging the requirement of the qualifying B-1 test for promotions to the post of Head Constable (HC). Pronouncing the order on April 2, the tribunal held that "the impugned circulars, notification and Standing Orders are in consonance with the statutory provisions and fall within the permissible domain of executive policy. No case for judicial interference is made out". Applicants Pardeep Kumar and others, through their counsel, had challenged notifications and circulars mandating willingness for the B-1 test under the 25 per cent quota, arguing "promotions have historically been granted based on seniority-cum-merit and the sudden insistence on a test is arbitrary and discriminatory". They said forcing senior constables to compete with juniors after years of service "lacked justification and violated equality principles".

Senior counsel for the UT Administration Arvind Moudgil opposed the pleas, submitting that the promotion process is governed by Rule 13.7 of the Punjab Police Rules, which is a structured mechanism, including seniority-cum-merit, 25 per cent quota through B-1 test and 5 per

## Himachal farmers approach Solan DC over land law violations



GNS News Agency, April 22

A delegation of farmers in Himachal Pradesh on Friday met Solan Deputy Commissioner Manmohan Sharma to highlight the serious issues arising from the Chester Hill housing project in Ber Gaon and adjoining villages. The delegation comprising Himachal Kisan Sabha leaders — Mohit Verma, Pyarelal Verma, Keshav, Rakesh, and Nitish Thakur — and a few residents submitted a memorandum to Sharma at his office in Solan.

The delegation demanded that the illegal dumping in the natural drains and surrounding areas as part of the project be stopped immediately, and that the debris be removed to restore the natural flow of the drain. It also highlighted that traditional access routes to pastures that have been blocked should be reopened without delay. Further, the Kisan Sabha urged strict implementation of Section 118 of the Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reforms Act to curb the growing trend of outside elements forcing farmers to sell their land. "Earlier also, villagers had filed many complaints, but no concrete action was taken. Today, we have again submitted a memorandum. DC Manmohan Sharma assured us that appropriate action will be taken, but we received such assurances earlier also," Mohit Verma, Kisan Sabha office-bearer, said. CPI (M) leader seeks action against Chief Secretary. Meanwhile, CPI (M) leaders on Friday reiterated

their demand to shift acting Chief Secretary Sanjay Gupta, who had termed SDM Poonam Bansal's probe report on the Chester Hill project as 'violative of law'. The leaders also urged the Himachal High Court to take suo-moto action on the issue for violating Section 118 of the HP Tenancy and Land Reforms Act, 1972, alleging a direct attack on the spirit of Himachal Pradesh. CPI (M) general secretary Sanjay Chauhan said, "The state government is saying that DC Solan has been probing the matter. Do you think a DC can take action against the sitting Chief Secretary? This presumption is among many reasons why we also want the Himachal High Court to take a suo-moto on this issue". He recalled the timely intervention of his party in 2015 when a senior Trinamool Congress leader had tried to acquire a huge area of land in violation of Section 118. "At that time too, it was the CPI (M) that raised the issue, following which the land was vested with the state government," he said.

Chester Hill, a luxury mega housing project proposed between 2019 and 2025, has been in the eye of a storm over allegations of violation of the state's land laws. There were complaints alleging benami transactions and violations of Section 118 of the HP Land Reforms and Tenancy Act in Phase-II and Phase-IV of the gated housing project being developed by NG Estate, a private developer. The project has been taking many twists since last December, when the officiating chief secretary termed the probe report of SDM Poonam Bansal as against law, and subsequently, the state government withdrew the recommendation of the Chief Secretary wherein he suggested that DC should not proceed with the probe report of the SDM in March. On April 9, Sanjay Gupta wrote to incumbent RERA chief R D Dhiman, seeking an explanation as to why the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) under him and previous chairman, Shrikant Baldi, did not act despite receiving complaints against the mega housing project for violating Section 118. However, Dhiman and his predecessor, Shrikant Baldi, termed the letter of Sanjay Gupta unnecessary and maintained there were no violations of Section 118 during their tenures.

## Canada fast-tracks study permits for Indian master's and PhD students in 2026 : No cap, no PAL



GNS News Agency, April 22

Amid a sharp decline in study permits for Indian students in 2025, Canada has stepped up efforts to attract high-achieving candidates for postgraduate education. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has launched a targeted campaign to promote easier processes, faster doctoral approvals, family accompaniment and clear pathways to work and permanent residency. The campaign, titled "Get your graduate degree in Canada", highlights four key benefits for international students. These include simpler processing for most graduate applicants, a two-week processing timeline for PhD visas, the option for spouses and children to accompany students, and post-graduation work rights that can lead to permanent residency.

The measures follow policy changes that came into effect on January 1, 2026. Under these, students enrolling in master's and doctoral programmes at public universities designated as learning institutions are exempt from the national study-permit cap. They are also not required to submit a Provincial Attestation Letter, a condition that had affected undergraduate and college applicants.

The move comes after a steep fall in the number of

Indian students going to Canada. According to IRCC data released in February 2026, study permits issued to Indian nationals dropped from about 188,715 in 2024 to around 94,605 in 2025, a decline of nearly 50%. Rejection rates also rose sharply in several months, driven by stricter financial checks, authenticity verification and overall caps on new permits. New international student arrivals fell by nearly 60% in the first eight months of 2025 compared to the previous year, reducing India's share from over 30% in 2024 to below 10% by late 2025. At the same time, Canada has expanded academic ties with India. Under the Canada-India Talent and Innovation Strategy announced in early 2026, more than 20 Canadian university leaders visited India and signed 13 new partnerships. These include collaborations between the University of British Columbia and O.P. Jindal Global University, Dalhousie University and SRM Institute of Science and Technology, and research partnerships involving McGill University and the University of Toronto in areas such as artificial intelligence, clean energy and healthcare. Other linkages involve Panjab University, IIT Tirupati and IISc. Officials said these partnerships aim to create smoother pathways for students, including joint and dual degrees, research collaboration and scholarships, especially at the graduate level. Under the revised system, doctoral applicants who submit complete applications from outside Canada, including those for family members, can receive decisions within 14 days. Spouses are eligible for open work permits, while children can either accompany students or apply for study permits. Graduates are eligible for a post-graduation work permit of up to three years. This can help them apply for permanent residency through programmes such as Express Entry or provincial nominee schemes. Education consultants said applicants with strong academic records, confirmed admission to public universities and proof of adequate funds are likely to benefit the most from the new graduate stream.

## Pune lawyer, wife and minor daughter booked for murdering assistant, suspecting affair



GNS News Agency, April 22

A Pune lawyer, his wife, and their minor daughter have been booked for allegedly murdering a 32-year-old woman employed at his office, suspecting that she had an affair with him, the police said on Friday. The incident took place on Thursday. The victim had been working as the advocate's assistant at his office for three-and-a-half years. The lawyer's wife allegedly suspected that the two were having an extramarital affair and decided to murder the woman, a press release issued by the police stated.

On Thursday afternoon, the lawyer's wife, accompa-

nied by their minor daughter, went to his office and allegedly assaulted the victim repeatedly with a bat and a sharp weapon, after tying her up with a rope. The advocate also participated in the crime, the police alleged. The woman died in the attack. When the victim did not return home on Thursday night, her husband called the advocate, who allegedly claimed that she had gone to meet a friend. According to the police, when the victim's husband failed to reach her on her mobile phone, he went to the advocate's house at around 7 am on Friday. The door was open, and he allegedly saw his wife's body lying in a pool of blood, the police said, adding that he then informed the police. The husband lodged a First Information Report at the jurisdictional police station on Friday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 7) Somay Munde, DCP (Crime) Nikhil Pingle, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime) Rajendra Mulik, Senior Police Inspector Nilesh Badakh, and Police Inspector Ram Rajmane reached the spot, following which the advocate and his wife were arrested. The minor was apprehended. The accused were booked under several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the press release stated. Assistant Police Inspector Nutan Pawar is investigating the case.

## UP gov't notifies new minimum wage rates after Governor's assent



GNS News Agency, April 22

He will meet 33 global companies and promote Uttar Pradesh's vision of becoming a one trillion dollar economy. The UP government has notified an interim 21% wage hike for Noida and Ghaziabad workers, effective April 1, 2026, setting a new three-tier regional pay structure to restore industrial peace following violent protests. The Uttar Pradesh government has notified revised minimum wage rates across the state, with the Governor giving assent to the decision, officials said. The move comes after recent labour unrest in Noida and Greater Noida in Gautam Buddha Nagar district. The "interim" wage hike the government had announced earlier has now been notified as the formal wage hike, the officials added. The move is aimed at easing tensions between workers and employers while restoring industrial stability, they said. The revised wages, to be implemented from April 1, have been structured into three categories based on "regional cost of living". The decision is based on recommendations of a high-level committee constituted by the state government in the wake of the protests, and is being positioned as an interim relief measure pending a broader revision, the officials claimed. Under the new structure, Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad have been placed in the highest category. Minimum monthly wages here have been fixed at Rs 13,690 for unskilled workers, Rs 15,059 for semi-skilled workers, and Rs 16,868 for skilled workers. Other municipal corporation districts fall in the second category, with wages set at Rs 13,006, Rs 14,306 and Rs 16,025 respectively. The remaining districts have been put in the third category, where wages have been fixed at Rs 12,356, Rs 13,590 and Rs 15,224. Officials claimed the revised rates, which include variable dearness allowance (VDA) linked to the consumer price index, seek to address the gap created by pending revisions from 2019 and 2024 that were not implemented. The move attempts to balance workers' demands for higher wages amid rising living costs with industry concerns over increasing input costs and global economic pressures, they further said. The intervention comes after a standoff between workers and employers in the Noida region over wage hikes, which began to impact industrial activities. To address the situation, the government had set up a committee chaired by Infra-

structure and Industrial Development Commissioner Deepak Kumar, with senior officials from the labour and MSME departments, and representatives of workers and industries. Following consultations with the stakeholders, the committee recommended a graded wage structure reflecting regional disparities. Officials said strict action will be taken against any violations of the notified wage rates, underscoring the government's attempt to ensure compliance while maintaining industrial peace.

## Flight operations resume at Pune airport after IAF aircraft 'incident'

GNS News Agency, April 22

Flight operations at Pune airport limped back to normalcy on Saturday morning after an overnight disruption caused by an incident involving an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft. According to the airport officials, departure operations resumed from 7.30 am, while arrivals commenced from 8 am. Sources said that IAF personnel at the Air Force Station Pune worked through the night to restore the runway, enabling the resumption of safe flying operations at the earliest. The runway was declared operational at 8 am.

The disruption followed an incident late Friday night, which rendered the runway at Pune International Airport temporarily inoperative. In a post at 11.41 pm, the IAF confirmed that an "incident" involving one of its aircraft had led to the runway's closure, resulting in cancellations and diversions of scheduled flights.

The impact on flight operations was significant. Multiple flights across airlines were cancelled, including 31 arrivals and 34 departures by IndiGo, six flights by Air India (three arrivals and three departures), five by SpiceJet (two arrivals and three departures), five by Akasa Air (two arrivals and three departures), and 10 by Air India Express (five arrivals and five departures).

According to flight tracking data from FlightRadar24, at least eight incoming flights were diverted to airports in Surat, Goa, Navi Mumbai, Chennai and Coimbatore. Passengers faced considerable inconvenience as the disruption led to last-minute cancellations, diversions, and a lack of timely updates.

Varsha Kamble, a resident of Satara travelling with her family, including a three-year-old child, said she has been stranded at Hyderabad airport after her connecting flight to Pune was cancelled. She had been returning from Bagdogra in West Bengal's Darjeeling district.

## Marathi mandatory in all Maharashtra schools; inspections, fines up to Rs1 lakh for violations



GNS News Agency, April 22

students-teacher ratio, Maharashtra gov't primary schools, Right To Education, RTE Act, Educationists on students-teacher ratio, gov'ts new criteria, indian express news. The Maharashtra government has issued a fresh GR mandating Marathi for Classes 1-10 across all school boards, warning of ?1 lakh fines and derecognition for schools that fail to comply by the 2026-27 academic year. The Maharashtra school education department on Friday issued a fresh Government Resolution (GR) to enforce compulsory teaching of Marathi across all schools in the state, warning of penalties up to Rs 1 lakh and possible withdrawal of recognition for repeated violations.

The directive, under the Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in All Schools Act, 2020, applies to all institutions irrespective of board, medium or management. It also mandates the appointment of qualified Marathi teachers in every school. As part of a multi-tier enforcement mechanism, divisional Deputy Directors of Education have been designated as competent authorities to ensure compliance. Schools will be inspected within two months of the start of the new academic year. Institutions found flouting the norm will be issued notices and given 15 days to respond, failing which fines may be imposed and immediate implementation ordered. The GR also outlines an appeal process, allowing school manage-

ments to challenge penalties before the Director of Education within 30 days. Persistent non-compliance may lead to hearings before the Commissioner of Education and eventual cancellation of recognition.

However, activists have criticised the move as delayed, pointing to poor implementation despite multiple GRs since the law came into force on April 1, 2020. They also flagged the absence of a clear database identifying compliant and non-compliant schools. Sushil Shejule, coordinator of the Marathi School Management Association, who has long been demanding strict implementation of the 2020 Act, said, "Multiple GRs have been issued in this regard over the past six years, but implementation remains incomplete. Despite our repeated demands, the authorities have failed to compile a clear list of schools complying with or in violation of the mandate. This latest GR issued ahead of the new academic year is yet another eyewash."

## Undertrial prisoner caught after escape from hospital

Hyderabad: A woman undertrial prisoner, who allegedly escaped from police custody during a hospital visit earlier this week, has been re-arrested by the Task Force (Charminar Zone) along with Hussaini Alam police on Friday. The suspect, identified as Ghantasala Triveni (26), had fled from the Government Maternity Hospital in Petlaburj on April 13 while undergoing medical treatment under police escort. She was lodged in the Women's Prison at Chanchalguda in connection with a criminal case registered at Ramgopalpet police station. According to police, Triveni managed to reach Secunderabad Railway Station, boarded a train, and travelled to Vijayawada, where she misled a relative into believing she had secured bail. She later moved to her native place, Bhimavaram in Andhra Pradesh, before returning to Hyderabad and staying at a women's hostel in Dilukhannagar.

## Heat wave grips Adilabad region as temperatures cross 44 degrees Celsius



GNS News Agency, April 22

Adilabad: Parts of erstwhile Adilabad district continued to boil under scorching heat wave conditions for the second day on Friday. According to a weather report on the website Telangana Development Planning Society, Buttapur of Nirmal mandal centre saw the highest maximum temperature by 44.5 degrees Celsius, while Mamada mandal and Dasturabaad mandal recorded the maximum temperature of 44.3 degree C each. Nirmal Rural mandal witnessed

the maximum temperature of 44.2 degrees C.

Similarly, Bela mandal in Adilabad district and Adilabad Urban mandal recorded the maximum temperature of 44.4 degrees C each, while Boath mandal had the maximum temperature of 44.3 degrees C. Cheprala village in Bela mandal registered the maximum temperature over 44 degrees C for the third day on Friday. It had the maximum temperature of 44.3 degrees C, 44.3 degrees C and 44.1 degrees C on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday respectively. Meantime, Lonavelli in Sirpur (T) mandal of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district witnessed the maximum temperature by 44.3 degree C, followed by Kerameri, Jainoor and Wankidi mandal headquarter which recorded the maximum temperature by 44.1 degrees C each. Bejjur mandal registered the maximum temperature of 44 degrees C. Bheemaram and Velganoor of Dandepalli mandal in Mancherial district saw the maximum temperature of 44.3 degrees C each. Following torrid heat wave conditions prevailed in several parts of erstwhile Adilabad district, people were forced to remain indoors and stay hydrated. Roads were deserted and in towns. Farmers suspended farm operations. They relied on fresh juices, coconuts, ice apples and buttermilk to beat the heat.

## Pune's Capt Parth Jagtap leads Army Ice Hockey team to a golden season

GNS News Agency, April 22

Captain Parth Jagtap, a Pune-born engineer turned Army officer, led the Indian Army Ice Hockey team to a historic 2026 season. Captain Parth Jagtap, a Pune-born engineer turned Army officer, led the Indian Army Ice Hockey team to a historic 2026 season. He picked up hockey at eight and went on to play it in four formats: field, roller, ice and inline. Born and raised in Pune, where he also completed his schooling and engineering, Parth Jagtap went on to win several national championships. After a decisive shift of donning the olive green, today, as Captain Parth Jagtap with the Pune-headquartered Southern Command, he has just led the Indian Army Ice Hockey team through its most successful season, with three podium finishes, including two gold medals.



Pune Institute of Computer Technology (PICT) while simultaneously dominating the national circuit across field, roller, ice, and inline hockey. Jagtap captained Maharashtra teams for five consecutive years and also completed a 30-hour non-stop skating marathon which was mentioned in the Limca Book of Records. Represented India at the World Roller Games at Barcelona in Spain in July 2019 and at the World Cup Qualifiers Inline Hockey, New Zealand in Apr 2016. He participated in the 27 hour Inline Hockey Marathon held at Hong Kong 2013 and was selected for the India Camp for Under 20 Roller Hockey team at Delhi 2015. In 2021, Captain Jagtap was commissioned into the Indian Army through the Union Public Service Commission process. "Rejecting a purely physical approach, he champions a sophisticated, holistic philosophy — integrating rigorous mental conditioning, yoga, and precision nutrition — treating the tactical complexities of modern warfare with the same split-second strategic thinking required in high-speed hockey," read the information shared about him by officials. Within the oxygen-thin, high-altitude locations of Kargil and Ladakh, Captain Jagtap led the Indian Army Ice Hockey Team for a highly successful 2025-26 season. Army team clinched Gold at both the 6th Khelo India Winter Games and the inaugural India Ice Hockey League in Dehradun, alongside a hard-fought Silver at the 5th LG Cup in Kargil. "Capt Jagtap He is currently advocating for international exposure and the infusion of global tactics to ensure that the Indian Army doesn't just participate in the sport, but defines it on the world stage," officials said.

An X post by the Southern Command read, "Army Commander and all ranks of Southern Command congratulate Captain Parth Jagtap of Southern Command for leading the Indian Army Ice Hockey Team with distinction and contributing to a historic season of excellence. Under his leadership, the team won Silver Medal in 5th Lieutenant Governor Ice Hockey Cup at Kargil, Gold Medal at 6th Khelo India Winter Games 2026 at Leh and Gold Medal at 1st India Ice Hockey League at Dehradun. His grit, leadership and sporting excellence reflect the indomitable spirit of the Indian Army and underscore its commitment to nurturing champions through sustained opportunities, structured training and state-of-the-art sporting infrastructure." Interestingly, Parth was interviewed by the Indian Express, Pune exactly 10 years ago in April 2016 at the age of 18, when he represented India at the 2016 IIHF Inline Hockey World Championship at New Zealand at the age of 18 he was pursuing his engineering degree in Pune. Parth till now has a total of 28 national championships under his belt across three hockey disciplines. After starting with field hockey at the age of eight he took up speed skating in Pune in 2008, which soon evolved into a deeper involvement in roller sports. He transitioned smoothly from skating to roller hockey, inline hockey and eventually to ice hockey.

Jagtap completed his schooling at St Joseph's Boys High School and DAV Public School and subsequently went on to complete the Computer Engineering degree from the

## Protest against Shahimajra garbage plant enters Day 3, residents lock facility

GNS News Agency, April 22

The protest against the garbage processing plant at Shahimajra intensified on the third consecutive day, with agitated residents locking the facility and forcing a complete shutdown. Protesters warned that the agitation would continue until a permanent solution is implemented. Protesters, including Green Resident Society general secretary Rupinder Singh, Phase 5 resident Sukhwinder Singh, Shahimajra resident Ashok Jha, and residents Usha Shahi and Rajan Khanna, said, "Massive heaps of garbage have accumulated near the plant, leading up to the nearby grain market. The stench and pollution have become unbearable."



broke out in the garbage heaps on Tuesday night, causing panic in the area. Thick smoke engulfed the surroundings, leaving residents struggling to breathe and facing serious discomfort. Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, Shiromani Akali Dal and BJP leaders have reached the site to pledge their support, adding a political dimension to the movement. Notably, some municipal councillors under whose tenure the plant was established are now participating in the protest. With the upcoming municipal elections, several aspiring candidates are also joining the agitation.

They added that the sit-in would not be withdrawn until the garbage was completely cleared. The protesters alleged that setting up such a plant between a green belt and a residential area is "fundamentally flawed, and it is not only damaging the environment, but also severely impacting public health. Foul smell, smoke, and unhygienic conditions have led to rising health concerns among locals." Residents said a similar protest was held around six months ago, when the plant was locked, and a sit-in was held. The agitation was withdrawn after assurances from the local MLA, but the situation remained unchanged. Protesters said a fire

## Govt schools in Chandigarh enhance pass percentage by 7.07 points

GNS News Agency, April 22

Government schools in Chandigarh have recorded an improved pass percentage by 7.07 percentage points in the Class X examinations conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for the session 2025-26, with the overall pass percentage this year standing at 88.25 per cent compared to 81.18 per cent in 2024-25. Of the total 9,358 students — 4,614 boys and 4,744 girls — who appeared in the Class X Board examination, 8,257 — 4,050 boys and 4,207 girls — of them passed, with girls outperforming boys. In 2024-25, 7,940 of the total 9,781 students had passed the exam. The number of students scoring above 95 per cent has increased to 21 compared to 11 in the previous session. Also, more than 120 students have scored above 90 per cent marks. At the institutional level, 17 schools achieved a perfect 100 per cent result, 23 schools recorded above 95 per cent results, and 10 schools achieved results in the range of 90-95 per cent.

The strong performance of a total of 50 schools reflects that improvement is now well-established across the education system. A UT Education Department officer said, "The improvement not only indicates academic progress, but also clearly reflects the effectiveness of administrative measures, academic initiatives and collective efforts." This success is the result of the effective implementation of academic initiatives such as structured revision programmes, remedial classes, continuous assessment, and personalised guidance. The Education Department has ensured quality education through continuous monitoring and targeted strategies. UT Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria expressed his happiness over the achievement. "Students of government schools in Chandigarh have brought pride to the city through their outstanding performance. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all successful students and wish them a bright future. The dedication, guidance, and tireless efforts of our teachers and school heads are highly commendable."

## Karnataka Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni, 16 others sentenced to life imprisonment in 2016 BJP worker murder case



A Bengaluru special court on Friday sentenced Karnataka Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni and 16 others to life imprisonment for the 2016 murder of BJP worker Yogesh Goudar in Dharwad, after they were held guilty earlier this week. The special court for criminal cases against elected representatives in Karnataka had on April 15 pronounced Kulkarni, the 56-year-old Congress MLA from Dharwad and one of the foremost young leaders of the Congress in the region, and 15 associates guilty on charges of murder and criminal conspiracy.

Goudar was killed at a gym he operated in Dharwad on June 15, 2016, by a gang of hired assailants. His family had allegedly received an anonymous letter a few days before the murder, warning the BJP worker of impending death. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had found that Kulkarni was the "main conspirator" in the murder. "For the offence punishable under Sec.302 (murder) r/w Sec.120-B of IPC (criminal conspiracy), accused No.2 to 16 and 18 are hereby sentenced to undergo life imprisonment and to pay a fine of Rs.30,000/- each and in default of payment of fine, they shall undergo imprisonment for 3 months," the special court said in its order on Friday.

Initially, Kulkarni, accused number 15, was not identified as an accused by the local police. The CBI investigation later revealed that Kulkarni and his relative, Chandrashekhar Indi alias Chandu Mama, were allegedly key conspirators. In a supplementary chargesheet, the CBI alleged that Kulkarni was the main conspirator and hatched the conspiracy to kill Goudar, who was perceived as a political threat. Chandu Mama is alleged to have provided the logistical support to execute the murder. The others con-

victed on the murder charge are Vikram Bellary, Kirthi Kumar, Basavaraj Kurahatti, Sandeep Saudatti, Vinayaka Katagi, Mahabaleshwar Hongal alias Muduka, Santhosh Saudatti, Dinesh M, Ashwath, Sunil, Nazeer Ahmed, Shahanawaz, Nuthan K, Harshith C, and Vikas Kalburgi.

The 16 accused were also convicted "to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of 7 years with a fine of Rs 30,000/- and in default to undergo simple imprisonment for a period of 3 months", along with a 17th accused, police officer Channakeshava B Tingarikar, on the charges of a conspiracy to provide wrong information to mislead the probe. "The substantive sentences of imprisonment shall run concurrently. The accused are entitled for set-off for the period of detention which they have undergone in the above case as under trial prisoners," the special court said. The court also said that Goudar's children are entitled to compensation of Rs 16 lakh from the fines collected from the accused. The court also ordered the initiation of action against local police officers who misled the investigations. Kulkarni and Chandu Mama were, however, acquitted "for the offences punishable under Sec.3, 5, 8 punishable under Sec.25 and Sec.29 of Arms Act, 1959, since prosecution sanction was not obtained against them".

Two others who were among the 21 original accused in the case—Vasudeva Rama Nilekani and Somashekar Basappa Nyamagouda—were acquitted "by giving benefit of doubt", the court said. Vinay Kulkarni arrested after CBI took over probe. The Yogesh Goudar murder occurred in 2016, when the Congress was in power in Karnataka. The case was handed over to the CBI in 2019, when a BJP government was in charge. Kulkarni, who was arrested after the CBI took over the case, was initially released on bail in 2021. But he was arrested again on June 14, 2025, after the Supreme Court cancelled his bail on June 6, 2025, following CBI allegations of tampering with witnesses. Though the CBI, in a written submission, sought the maximum penalty of a death sentence for the MLA and his associates during the arguments for sentencing on Thursday, the agency did not press for capital punishment in arguments, the court noted. Senior counsel Shyam Sundar, who appeared for Kulkarni and Chandu Mama, argued that the case is not the "rarest of rare case even to award maximum sentence of life imprisonment without remission". Meanwhile, senior prosecutors for the CBI, K S Hema and Shivananda Perla, sought compensation for Goudar's family.

## Historian Vijay Singh, who shaped DU classrooms and debates, passes away

GNS News Agency, April 22

In the 1990s, in the staff rooms and meeting halls of Delhi University (DU), where tempers often rose, Professor Vijay Singh never stopped arguing. But he never stopped listening as well. A longtime professor of history at DU's Satyawati College and the father of former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, Singh died on Friday. He was around 80. Colleagues said he had been unwell in recent years.

For more than four decades in the classroom and beyond it, Singh built a reputation that is difficult to summarise in the conventional language of academic achievement. And yet, across DU, his influence endures in classrooms, in political conversations, and in the memory of those who argued with him over ideas. "He was a remarkable scholar and teacher, a person of great integrity," said author and historian Mahesh Rangarajan, who first met Singh as a student in 1982. "He had very clear and strong views, but he never imposed them. You could argue any view with him; he would never hold it against you." At Satyawati College, where Singh spent most of his career, he became known for being accessible at all times to his students and colleagues. He taught papers on interwar Europe and the rise of fascism, drawing on a deep command of Russian and Soviet history. But what students remembered was not only the breadth of his knowledge, but also his refusal to let knowledge become a barrier. "He took history to the last student in the class," Rangarajan said. Students, including those less fluent in English or new to academic language, found in him a patient guide. He would sit with them through what he himself called "extremely naive questions", explaining answers. "He treated you as a fellow student of history, whether you were in your first year or finishing a book," Rangarajan recalled.

Even colleagues who disagreed with him sharply found themselves drawn into that same intellectual generosity. "He was a hardcore Left person, a political activist," said Pallavi Prasad, a faculty member at Satyawati College who joined in 2006 and taught alongside him. "But he did not let that interfere with his teaching. He was sincere about his work in college." Singh's classroom was only one part of his intellectual life. The other unfolded in the charged political culture of DU — in teachers' associations, protest meetings, court corridors, and living-room discussions that stretched late into the evening.

He was associated with a strand of Left politics that was often critical of dominant positions within the university. Along with his wife, Tripta Wahi, also an academic, he was part of networks that engaged with questions of gender justice, academic freedom, and state power. "They were very much in the thick of all the progressive movements in the university," said Nandita Narain, who had known Singh since the early 1980s. Their home on the Hindu College campus where Wahi taught became a meeting point — for campaigns around sexual harassment, for discussions following the 2001 Parliament attack, and later, for debates around the trial and execution of Afzal Guru. Singh brought the same intensity to these spaces as he did to the classroom. But here, too, he was willing to engage. "He was very upfront about his views," said Sanjaya Kumar Bohidar, a retired professor from Shri Ram College of Commerce, who knew Singh from the late 1980s. "That's why there were a lot of disagreements... but that never affected our personal relationship." Arguments were fierce. "When they went on, it felt like the end of the world," Bohidar said. "But then we would sit together and talk normally." For those who worked closely with him, Singh's defining quality was not only intellectual openness but a certain stubborn courage, an insistence on speaking, even when the outcome seemed uncertain. "He was fearless," Prasad said. "He could stand up in staff council meetings, in the academic council, and speak against the Vice-Chancellor. He was not calculative."

That conviction shaped his understanding of activism. "When I asked him if it was futile to keep protesting, he said: 'whether you are able to change things or not is immaterial... what matters is that you raise questions'," she recalled. Colleagues recall Singh's ability to connect contemporary events to deep historical processes — to move



from the Russia-Ukraine war to 19th-century geopolitics without losing the thread. "He had formidable knowledge," Rangarajan said. At the same time, he carried his learning lightly. There was humour dry, often British in tone, shaped by his early years abroad and a sense of ease that dissolved hierarchies. "He had a very genteel demeanour, which went with strongly held opinions," Rangarajan said. "He was a gentleman of the old school." Singh's influence also extended, quietly, into the institutional life of DU. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was part of a small group of teachers who pushed for changes in the history curriculum arguing for a broader engagement with European, medieval, and global histories. Some of those ideas eventually found their way into syllabi, shaping generations of students. "He had a very large informal circle," Rangarajan said.

## Equity mutual funds AUM rises 17.38 per cent in March on strong inflows

New Delhi: Equity-oriented mutual funds saw a robust 17.38 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in average assets under management in March, driven by strong flows into flexi Cap, mid Cap and thematic funds, a report said on Thursday. The report from Abakus Mutual Fund said that flexi Cap Funds emerged as the largest and fastest-growing category, with average net AUM rising to around Rs. 5.28 lakh crore, compared to Rs 4.22 lakh crore a year ago, registering a 25.10 per cent year-on-year growth. Flexi Cap Funds category now commands a 15.75 per cent share of total equity AAUM total average net AUM of equity-oriented schemes. The total average net AUM of equity-oriented schemes rose to about Rs. 33.54 lakh crore in March 2026 from around Rs. 28.57 lakh crore a year earlier, reflecting sustained retail participation and resilience in equity markets despite intermittent volatility, the report added. Strong expansion of flexi cap funds highlighted a clear investor preference for dynamic equity allocation strategy which offers fund managers the flexibility to navigate across market capitalisations, sectors and styles in an evolving macro-economic environment. The mutual fund industry showed broad-based gains as mid cap funds grew 22.74 per cent to about Rs. 4.38 lakh crore, small cap funds rose 20.33 per cent to Rs. 3.47 lakh crore, and Large & Mid Cap Funds surged 23.39 per cent to Rs. 3.14 lakh crore.

## US sends migrants, including Indian national, to Costa Rica in new deportation policy



GNS News Agency, April 22

San Jose: Costa Rica on Friday received a second group of migrants — including an Indian — deported from the United States as part of an agreement to help the Trump administration's latest policy of deporting immigrants to "third countries." Under a bilateral agreement signed in March by Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves and US Special Envoy Kristi Noem, Costa Rica has agreed to accept up to 25 third-country nationals expelled from the US each week.

The first group of 25 deportees, which arrived at San Jose's Juan Santamaría International Airport on Saturday, was assisted by Costa Rican migration police in coordination with the International Organisation for Migration. A second group of third country deportees from the United States arrived in Costa Rica on Friday. The group of 30 deportees includes eight Costa Ricans, eight Brazilians, three Romanians, two Chinese nationals, three from Uzbekistan, two

from Azerbaijan, one from Ireland, one from India, one from Vietnam, and one from Belarus. Like the group that arrived Saturday, these people will be offered the opportunity to participate in the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme administered by the International Organisation for Migration to return to their countries of origin, or to apply for legal residency in Costa Rica under humanitarian categories through the standard process.

The Central American nation is one of a growing number of countries across Africa and the Americas that have signed contentious, often secretive agreements with the US to accept deportees from other countries as US President Donald Trump pressures governments to help him advance his agenda. In many cases, migrants who previously hoped to seek asylum in the US are left in a legal "black hole" in foreign countries where they do not speak the language. Countries who have agreed to receive third-party migrants include South Sudan, Honduras, Rwanda, Guyana and several Caribbean islands like Dominica and St Kitts and Nevis. The first group sent to Costa Rica included migrants from Albania, Kenya, Morocco, China, India and Cameroon, in addition to eight people from Guatemala and four Honduran nationals. The deportees were first taken to a hotel to receive assistance. During the first seven days in Costa Rica, they have the option of enrolling in a voluntary return programme. They can also opt to stay in Costa Rica through a temporary migration programme or request refugee status. If the deportees choose to leave Costa Rica, they must inform local migration authorities and clarify whether they will need humanitarian support to leave or will pay for the trip themselves.

## Iranians fear sharpening pressure after war and crackdown



DUBAI, GNS News Agency, April 22 Iranians striving to maintain a semblance of normal life after weeks of U.S. and Israeli bombing and a deadly crackdown on protesters in January remain daunted by the future, as damage from airstrikes and internet cuts take a toll. With talks expected on extending a truce and agreeing an end to the conflict, shops, restaurants and government offices have stayed open. On sunny spring mornings, city parks are busy with picnicking families and young people playing sports, while others gather at streetside cafes. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. But behind such peaceful scenes, Iran's economy is in tatters and people are fearful of a new government clampdown and angry about the destructive airstrikes. The difficulties that spurred mass unrest in January look likely to worsen.

Iran's foreign minister on Friday said the Strait of Hormuz was open following a ceasefire accord for Lebanon, while U.S. President Donald Trump said he believed a deal to end the Iran war would come soon.

**FEAR OF INCREASED PRESSURE AS THEOCRACY ENDURES** "The war will end, but that's when our real problems with the system begin. I'm very afraid that if the regime reaches an agreement with the United States, it will increase pressure on ordinary people," a 37-year-old named Fariba who took part in the January unrest told Reuters by phone from Iran. "People have not forgotten the regime's crimes in January, and the system has not forgotten that people do not want it. They are holding back now because they don't want to fight on a domestic front as well," she said. The bombing has killed thousands, according to official death tolls, including many at a school on the first day of the conflict. It has also destroyed infrastructure across the country, raising the prospect of mass job layoffs. Iran's revolutionary theocracy looks as entrenched as ever after surviving weeks of intense bombardment and asserting control over global oil supplies.

"Iranians understood that this war is not going to topple the regime, but at the same time, it's going to make their lives much worse economically," said Omid Memarian, an analyst at independent U.S.-based think tank Dawn. "The military is not going to put down their guns. They are going to stay and it's going to be bloody. It's going to be costly with no prospect for a better future," he added. In well-heeled north Tehran this week, Reuters interviewed young

Iranians on camera about the war and their concerns. Foreign media in Iran operate under guidelines set by the Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry, which regulates press activity and permissions. Mehtab, who works at a private company and asked not to use her family name, said things could be worse for Iranians given the impact of war and years of sanctions and isolation. "I do not want to say that it is normal but as an Iranian with such a history, it's not very bad. We can live with it," she said.

That view was not shared by Iranians Reuters reached by phone, who voiced far greater anxiety while speaking anonymously for fear of reprisals. "Yes, people are enjoying the ceasefire for now — but what comes next? What are we supposed to do with a regime that has become even more powerful?" said Sara, 27, a private teacher, who declined to give her family name or location. **IRANIANS LEFT WITH FEW OPTIONS** Thousands were killed when the authorities crushed weeks of protests in January, prompting U.S. President Donald Trump to say he would come to the aid of Iranians. But while Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu both said early in the war that they hoped it would topple the ruling clerics, that goal faded as the bombing went on. Anger over the crackdown meant many Iranians wanted new rulers, but soon soured on the war, Memarian said. "I think it became more clear for many Iranians that this war is not designed, or is not aimed, at helping the Iranian people," he said.

Neither Mehtab nor other women sitting at a cafe in north Tehran were wearing the hijab, a head covering that was mandatory for decades in Iran. Looser, public dress codes are the result of mass protests in 2022, including over women's rights, which the authorities violently suppressed while tacitly backing off from enforcement of some dress rules. Independent UK-based Iranian political analyst Hossein Rassam said it became clear in January that authorities would not back down again easily, and later that they would not crumble under military attack. The war had left Iranians even more polarised than before, but with few options. "This is a moment of reckoning for Iranians because at the end of the day Iranians, especially Iranians inside the country, realise that they need to live together. There is nowhere to go," he said.

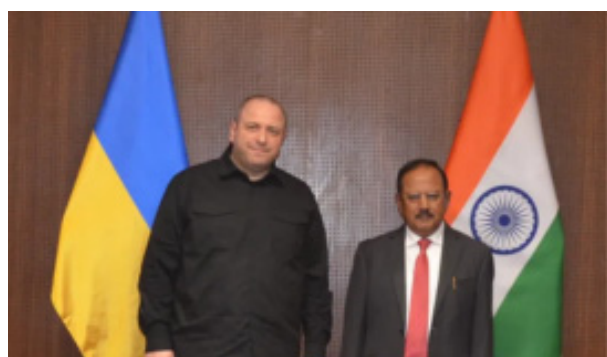
**'FIRE UNDER THE ASHES'** Many fear repression could now worsen. "On the streets, women are going around without the hijab, but it's unclear whether these kind of freedoms will continue after a deal with the United States. Pressure will 100% increase, because once there is peace with Washington, the regime will no longer face the same external pressure," Arjang, a 43-year-old father of two, told Reuters by phone from north Tehran. The January protests brought no tangible change to people's lives, while leading the authorities to severely restrict internet use — a blow to both businesses and ordinary people desperate for information during war. "Even the smallest things like connecting with our family members who live outside the country is impossible," said Faezeh, 47, as she played volleyball with friends in a north Tehran park. Popular frustration may start to mount after the war ends and people are less afraid of being labelled as traitors, said Memarian. "There is a lot of fire under the ashes," he said.

## Ajit Doval meets Ukrainian security chief on bilateral ties

New Delhi: Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Rustem Umerov held a meeting with National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on Friday, discussing bilateral ties and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. During the meeting, NSA Doval reiterated India's principled position and focus on peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy.

"Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Mr. Rustem Umerov met NSA on 17 April 2026. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and discussed the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. NSA reiterated India's principled position and focus on peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal posted on X. India has advocated for dialogue and diplomacy as the primary means to resolve conflict in Ukraine which started in February 2022. Later in the day, Umerov also called on External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar.

"Glad to meet Rustem Umerov, Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine today. Discussed our bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on the Ukraine conflict," EAM Jaishankar posted on X after the meeting. Last month, EAM Jaishankar held a meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart Andrii Sybiha on the sidelines of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in France. Both ministers discussed developments in West Asia, importance of regional stabilisation and the safe functioning of key global supply chains. They also reaffirmed their mutual interest in strengthening bilateral ties. "I had a meaningful exchange of views with my Indian colleague Dr S



Jaishankar on the margins of G7 ministerial meeting in France. We discussed the developments in the Middle East, as well as the importance of regional stabilisation and the safe functioning of key global supply chains," Sybiha posted on X following the meeting. "We also coordinated further contacts and reaffirmed our mutual interest in strengthening bilateral cooperation," he added. In December, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated India's support for peace on the Ukraine issue and called for peaceful and lasting resolution on the matter. During his joint press statement with Russian President Vladimir Putin in December, PM Modi said, "Since the beginning, India has consistently advocated for peace, with regards to the situation in Ukraine. We welcome all efforts being made for a peaceful and lasting resolution in this matter. India has always been, and will always be ready to contribute."

## Trump says he has 'good news' on Iran as tankers cross Strait of Hormuz

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD, GNS News Agency, April 22 A convoy of oil tankers was crossing the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, the first major movement of ships in the crucial waterway since the U.S. and Israel launched their war on Iran seven weeks ago. The group of four liquefied petroleum gas carriers and several oil product and chemical tankers, was passing through Iranian waters south of Larak Island with more tankers following from the Gulf, according to MarineTraffic data. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. U.S. President Donald Trump hours earlier had cited "some pretty good news" about Iran, declining to elaborate. He also said a ceasefire in the war may not be extended without a deal by Wednesday. Iran reopened the strait, which before the war carried a fifth of the world's oil trade, following a separate U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement on Thursday by Israel and Lebanon.

Trump, speaking on Air Force One late on Friday, declined to elaborate on what the good news was, although he could have been referring to the movement of the tankers. "It seems to be going very well in the Middle East with Iran," he told reporters while returning to Washington from Phoenix, Arizona. "We're negotiating over the weekend. I expect things to go well. Many of these things have been negotiated and agreed to." The main thing is that Iran will not have a nuclear weapon. You cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon, and that supersedes everything else."

But in sharp contrast, he said he may end the ceasefire with Iran unless a long-term deal to end the war is agreed before it expires on Wednesday, adding that a U.S. blockade of Iranian ports would continue. The war with Iran, which began on February 28 with a U.S.-Israeli attack on the Islamic Republic, has killed thousands and sent oil prices surging because of the de facto closure of the strait. Trump has told Reuters there would probably be more direct talks between Iran and the U.S. this weekend. Some diplomats said that was unlikely given the logistics of gathering in Islamabad, where the talks are expected to take place. There were no signs of preparations early on Saturday for talks in the Pakistani capital, where the highest-level U.S.-Iran negotiations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution ended without agreement last weekend. The key Pakistani mediator, army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, has concluded three days of talks in Tehran, the Pakistani military said on Saturday.

A Pakistani source aware of mediation efforts said a meeting between Iran and the U.S. could produce an initial memorandum of understanding, followed by a comprehensive peace agreement within 60 days. Among complicating factors, Iran's speaker of parliament and senior negotiator, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, posted on social media that the Strait of Hormuz "will not remain open" if the U.S. blockade continued. Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi had announced on social media that the strait was open for all commercial vessels for the remainder of the 10-day truce

that was agreed on Thursday by Israel and Lebanon, which was invaded by Israel after the Iran-allied Hezbollah militant group joined the fighting. Iran has said all ships crossing the strait must coordinate with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which was not the case before the war. The Defense Ministry said in a statement quoted by state television that military vessels and ships linked to "hostile forces" — the U.S. and Israel — were still not permitted to pass. **NO CLARITY ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM** It also was unclear how Iran and the U.S. would address Tehran's nuclear program, which has been a key sticking point in peace talks, with Iran defending its right to what it says is a civilian nuclear energy program. Trump told Reuters the U.S. would remove Iran's stockpiles of enriched uranium. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told state TV the material would not be transferred anywhere. Separately, a senior Iranian official said Tehran hoped a preliminary agreement could be reached in the coming days.

Oil prices fell about 10% and global stocks jumped on Friday on the prospect of marine traffic resuming through the strait. After a video conference on Friday, more than a dozen countries said they were willing to join an international mission to protect shipping in the strait when conditions permit, Britain said. A senior Iranian official told Reuters there had been an agreement on unfreezing billions of dollars in Iranian assets as part of the accord, without giving a timeline. Later on Friday, Trump, who has repeatedly referred to a peace agreement as a "deal" or "transaction," told a rally in Arizona that "no money will exchange hands in any way, shape or form."

At last weekend's talks, the U.S. proposed a 20-year suspension of all Iranian nuclear activity, while Iran suggested a halt of three to five years, according to people familiar with the proposals. Two Iranian sources have said there were signs of a compromise that could remove part of the stockpile. Trump told Reuters the U.S. might not act quickly. "We're going to go in with Iran, at a nice leisurely pace, and go down and start excavating with big machinery," he said in a phone interview. "We'll bring it back to the United States." Despite Trump's optimism, Iranian sources told Reuters that "gaps remained to be resolved" before a preliminary agreement, while senior clerics struck a defiant tone during Friday prayers. "Our people do not negotiate while being humiliated," cleric Ahmad Khatami said. Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles, opens new tab Trevor Hunnicutt is White House Correspondent at Reuters News. He writes about U.S. foreign and domestic policy and regularly travels with the President of the United States. Prior to joining the White House team in 2021, he covered presidential campaigns, economics, finance and investing for many years. He has also served on the board of the White House Correspondents' Association. Hunnicutt holds a bachelor's degree from Pomona College and a master's from the London School of Economics.

## US to recover uranium from Iran at a 'leisurely pace', Trump tells



WASHINGTON, - President Donald Trump told Reuters on Friday that the U.S. will work with Iran to recover its enriched uranium and bring it back to the United States. "We're going to get it together. We're going to go in with Iran, at a nice leisurely pace, and go down and start excavating with big machinery... We'll bring it back to the United States," Trump said during a phone interview. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. He referred to "nuclear dust" and added that it would be retrieved "very soon." Iran denied agreeing to transfer its enriched uranium to the United States. "Iran's enriched

uranium is not going to be transferred anywhere; transferring uranium to the United States has not been an option for us," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei later told state TV.

Trump's mention of "nuclear dust" is a reference to what he believes remains after the United States and Israel bombed Iran's nuclear installations in June last year. Iran is believed to possess more than 900 pounds of uranium enriched up to 60% purity. The issue of Iran's nuclear program has been one of the thorniest issues in U.S.-Iran negotiations. Trump has said a primary reason for the war was to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Iran says its enrichment of uranium — a process that produces fuel for power plants and nuclear warheads depending on its duration — is strictly for peaceful civilian use. Trump, clearly excited at the prospect of a deal to end the war, said the U.S. will maintain its naval blockade against Iran until an agreement is finalized. "I think the deal will go very quickly. We're getting along very well with Iran," he said. Trump said more talks will be needed to reach a deal and that these would take place "probably over the weekend." He added that he "might" go to Islamabad once a deal is made. "I haven't made that determination," he said. Trump also said the United States was working with Iran to remove mines from the strait. Responding to a report that the United States was considering a \$20 billion cash for uranium deal, Trump said: "It's totally false. No money is changing hands."

## China steps up Iran diplomacy while seeking smooth summit with Trump

BEIJING/HONG KONG, - China is accelerating its efforts to end the Iran war, walking a diplomatic tightrope as it prepares for a summit next month with U.S. President Donald Trump while trying not to alienate Tehran. President Xi Jinping's mid-May meeting with Trump is shaping Beijing's approach to the Middle East conflict even as the world's top crude oil importer, reliant on the Middle East for half its fuel, seeks to safeguard its energy supplies, analysts say. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. China's modulated approach to the war has protected its back-channel leverage enough that Trump credited Beijing with helping to get Iran to last weekend's peace talks in Pakistan. "You've heard President Trump repeatedly mention how the Chinese talked to the Iranians," said Eric Olander, editor-in-chief of the China Global South Project, an independent organisation that analyses China's engagement in the developing world. "That puts them in the room with negotiators, even if it's not a seat at the table." Considering Trump transactional and susceptible to flattery, China is seeking to advance its goals on trade and its claims on Taiwan at the summit, people familiar with China's thinking told Reuters. The dominant view in Beijing is to "butter him up, give him a red-carpet welcome and preserve strategic stability", one person said. In a response to a request for comment, China's Foreign Ministry said it has always contributed to peace and development in the region and will continue to "make unremitting efforts to restore peace" at the earliest possible date. Trump says the visit, the first by a U.S. president in eight years,

will take place on May 14 and 15.

With the U.S. naval blockade of Iranian ports as a direct and growing threat, China has engaged in a flurry of diplomatic activity and refrained from strong criticism of Trump's conduct of the war so that the summit, postponed once by the conflict, can go smoothly, analysts say. Xi broke his silence on the crisis on Tuesday with a four-point peace plan that calls for upholding peaceful coexistence, national sovereignty, the international rule of law and balancing development and security. After Trump warned Iran that "the entire country can be taken out in one night", Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning avoided condemnation, saying only that China was "deeply concerned" and urging all sides to play a "constructive role in de-escalating the situation". Foreign Minister Wang Yi has held nearly 30 calls and meetings with counterparts seeking a ceasefire, according to a Reuters count, while special envoy Zhai Jun has toured five Gulf and Arab capitals. Travelling at one point to Baydoun to avoid contested airspace, Zhai could hear air-raid sirens, he told reporters. Xi announced his peace plan in a meeting with Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as he sought to deepen ties with a rival to Iran while pressing Tehran towards dialogue. China's "sense of urgency and the mode of intervention at the tactical level are shifting" as the war, which the U.S. and Israel launched on February 28, drags on, said Cui Shoujun, a professor of international affairs at Renmin University. Still, some analysts say, Iran needs China more than China needs Iran, allowing

## Hardik — the three-in-one cricketer who delivers more often than not



It's a little before 8 p.m. on a nippy Tuesday night, a deafening sound of silence enveloped Cuttack's Barabati Stadium. Having done the hard yards, Tilak Varma has just been dismissed to an excellent catch at fine-leg by Marco Jansen. It's the strapping left-arm quick's third catch of the evening, Lungi Ngidi's third wicket of the contest. At 78 for four midway through the 12th over, India's innings is going nowhere. The run rate is in the 6s, courtesy South Africa's discipline and a tacky surface where stroke-making is fraught with danger. India's top-four has all fallen attempting big shots, its efforts negated by both bounce and the ball sitting in the pitch. There is a sense of apprehension, if not anxiety, among the 45,000 predominantly pro-India audience in the first of five Twenty20 Internationals.

The silence lasts only till a lithe, athletic figure strides out, all intent and purpose. Hardik Pandya is playing his first international game in two and a half months but from the time he takes guard, one feels he has never been away. Such is the strength India can summon in white-ball cricket that Hardik wasn't missed in the time he was away from the game, recovering from a quadriceps injury that kept him out of the T20 Asia Cup final against Pakistan and beyond. Make that 'wasn't almost missed.' How can one not miss an all-rounder of his calibre, a rare commodity in Indian cricket who bowls in the 140s and who can bat in different gears, depending on the situation? How can one not miss one of the great influencers of the modern limited-overs game, a powerhouse with the bat but also capable of making inroads with the ball, banking on the immense belief that he can use his short ball as a veritable weapon?

How can one not miss a T20I batter who fuses an average in the late 20s with a strike-rate in the early 140s, who smacks a six every 12 deliveries or so? How can one not miss a bowler who can take the new ball, bowl in the middle overs or deliver at the death, who boasts nearly 100 wickets and is agile, athletic and committed in the field? How can one not miss Hardik Pandya? Back to the Barabati. As Hardik emerged from the dugout, the crowd found its voice. It will be a stretch to say that it saw the Hardik blitzkrieg coming, but they had faith in the 32-year-old, a faith that eventually proved well justified. More than them, though, Hardik had faith in himself. Immense self-belief. It's been his calling card, his greatest ally and sometimes his worst enemy. Hardik is at that stage of his career where he is driven by inner expectations, by his own standards, not so much by what others want of him. Various responsibilities, including the captaincy of the T20I side, have passed him by, but instead of moping and cursing his luck and bemoaning the litany of injuries that have stymied his development as a Test all-rounder, he has chosen to sport a sunny outlook marked by positivity and the desire to deliver for the team.

A nonchalant single first ball from Lungi Ngidi got the juices flowing. His second ball, from left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, disappeared over wide long-on as he opened his broad shoulders and deposited the ball over the fence. It was a beautifully executed stroke, all timing and grace with power not even an afterthought. Hardik can do that, you know. He has done it a million times previously, across formats. By the end of the first T20I, he boasted 188 sixes in 226 outings for the country, 100 of them in the 20-over version alone. The next ball disappeared for another six, longer and more dramatic than the previous one. At the time of the bat making contact with the ball, Hardik's eyes were on Maharaj, not the ball. He had sized up the little white orb in the air, got into perfect position to launch it straighter; the eyes on the bowler sent out a chilling message: 'I am here, and I mean business.' For the next 40 minutes or so, Hardik bossed the exchanges. He made batting look ridiculously easy on a demanding pitch. It was as if while the rest were confronted with a minefield, he was taking guard on the most placid of decks, where he could hit through the line with impunity and where the fielders were mere serfs positioned to fetch the ball from the boundary and relay it to the hapless bowler.

By the time the curtain came down on the Indian innings, Hardik had breezed to 59 off 28, six fours and four gigantic sixes. Touch and power competed for effect and efficiency. Tottering and stumbling along until he arrived in

a blaze of boundaries, India raced away to 175 for six when they ran out of time. The electric right-hander contributed 60.82% of the runs accrued when he was at the crease while facing 56% of the deliveries left in the innings. South Africa, all of South Africa, together bested Hardik by 15 runs, but they fell short of India's total by 101. Just for good measure, Hardik picked up the scalp of the dangerous David Miller with his first ball back. Is there anything this man from Choryasi in Gujarat can't do? India tided over Hardik's latest injury-fuelled absence with minimal damage, though they did surrender the ODI series in Australia 1-2. He would have been handy in Perth and Adelaide, where the first two games were held, because of his propensity to bowl a deceptively heavy ball and because he is an expert at horizontal-bat strokes. But that's how the cookie crumbles and over the years, India have learnt not to stress too much over Hardik's unavailability because he has given them adequate practice at playing without him. A promising Test career was nipped in the bud because his athletic-looking but fragile body couldn't shoulder the burden of responsibility that comes with the tag of a genuine all-rounder. After token attempts at reviving his five-day fortunes, Hardik headed the obvious and decided to stay away from the red-ball game. To some, it might appear as if he took the easy way out, opting not to put in the hard labour required to stay relevant in the longest iteration. Hardik will counter that he chose prudence and logic, that no amount of core strengthening could have prevented the ugly shadow of injuries from eclipsing his path. While there is no denying the value a fully fit Hardik would have given the Test side, there's no point trying to get on board a ship that has long sailed. He will no longer don the white flannels, a reality he has come to terms with, but he remains crucial to India's white-ball ecosystem, a landscape where his three-dimensional presence lends the cutting edge that can be the game-changer. Hardik's challenge over the next three months will be to steer clear of the spectre of injuries that has been relentlessly chasing him. He needs to be managed carefully, which means perhaps keeping him away from the three ODIs against New Zealand in January and getting him to play only the remaining T20Is of this five-match series against South Africa and five further outings against the Kiwis next month before the T20 World Cup begins in early February.

It was his dismissal of Heinrich Klaasen, with South Africa needing 26 off 24 deliveries, six wickets standing, that turned the final of the last World Cup upside down in Bridgetown last year. A second heartbreak loomed in seven months for Rohit Sharma's men when Hardik threw them a lifeline through a slower delivery that the marauding Klaasen could only nick through to Rishabh Pant. India were suddenly all over the Proteas like a bad rash, Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh expertly closing out all escape routes and Hardik delivering the coup de grace in the final over with the scalps of Miller (to a sensational catch by Suryakumar Yadav running around at long-off) and Kagiso Rabada. Hardik was Rohit's deputy at the World Cup and would have realistically expected to don the captain's imaginary armband when the inspirational skipper retired after hoisting the trophy. But ostensibly because of his numerous dalliances with injuries, Hardik lost out, the crown instead placed on Suryakumar's head. It must have been a bitter pill to swallow for the man who loves to live life king-size, but he gritted his teeth, kept his mouth firmly shut and decided to let his cricket do the talking.

Nowhere was that more evident than at the 50-over Champions Trophy in Dubai in February-March, when unbeaten India scythed through the draw to add a second ICC title to their cabinet in seven and a half months. Either side of the haunting meltdown in the final of the 50-over World Cup in November 2023, India won 23 matches in three ICC tournaments, though it is the one that got away that will always rankle. On somewhat dodgy tracks at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium where India lost all five tosses and were forced to chase four times, Hardik came to the party thrice on the bounce. With a run-a-ball 45 against New Zealand in the league stage, Hardik gave himself and his bowling colleagues enough to defend and took the first wicket in the Kiwi chase to set up a 44-run victory. In the semifinal against Australia, with the match in the balance, he smacked three giant sixes, including two off successive deliveries from leggie Adam Zampa, to settle the issue, and conjured 18 off 18 in the final against the Kiwis. His strike-rate ranged between 100 and 117, not special but just what was needed under the circumstances. It was Hardik at his calculating best, choosing the bowlers to target, the areas to clear. Hardik's presence allows the think-tank the luxury of playing an additional specialist resource, depending on what the perceived need is. He is three cricketers rolled in one, and a leader in his own right even if he is not the captain or the vice-captain. His colleagues recognise his value but more importantly, Hardik knows what he must do. For him, that's what matters the most.

## Thalassemia groups urge swift passage of National Blood Transfusion Bill

New Delhi: Thalassaemia patients on Friday hailed the introduction of the National Blood Transfusion Bill in Parliament and urged members to pass the life-saving bill at the earliest. Earlier this month, during the Winter session of the Parliament, the National Blood Transfusion Bill, 2025, was proposed by MP Parshottambhai Rupala in Lok Sabha and by Dr Ajeet Madhavrao Gopchade in Rajya Sabha.

The Bill aims to regulate the collection, testing, processing, storage, distribution, issuance, and transfusion of human blood and blood components, to ensure health protection and prevention of transfusion-transmissible diseases. It also calls for establishing national standards for safe blood collection, transfusion, and management and imposing penalties for non-compliance and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The main objective is to establish a National Blood Transfusion Authority with statutory powers to prescribe national standards for blood collection, processing, storage, and transfusion. "For India's thalassaemia community, which depends on safe, uninterrupted, and quality-assured blood transfusions for survival, this legislation marks a historic and long-awaited step forward," said the Thalassaemia Patients Advocacy Group (TPAG).

"It reflects a coherent and serious parliamentary commitment to reforming one of India's most under-regulated yet critical public health areas," TPAG said, while urging the MPs to immediately pass the Bill. For lakhs of patients who rely on blood as their lifeline, this reform offers hope for a safer, more accountable, and more efficient blood ecosystem. A unified national framework will play a pivotal role



in strengthening safety, quality assurance, accountability, and public trust. "Strengthening the governance of blood transfusion services is essential for ensuring safety and public trust. I hope the proposed bill provides a much-needed, science-based framework to streamline standards and improve patient outcomes," said Prof N K Ganguly, former Director General, ICMR. Anubha Taneja Mukherjee, Member Secretary of TPAG, noted that the advocacy group will submit detailed comments on the Bill, and strongly urged for the inclusion of patient representation in any body constituted under this framework. The Federation of Indian Blood Donors Organizations (FIBDO) also commended the efforts made by the MPs to propose the critical Bill in the Parliament. "We call upon all parliamentarians to unite in passing this bill, which holds the promise of saving countless lives and fortifying the very foundation of India's healthcare system," the FIBDO said in a statement.

## Piracy hits a brief pause, but web of leaks still unbroken



For Telugu cinema, 2025 was a year of split screens with glittering highs at the box office on one side, and a shadowy underworld of leaks, hacks and digital theft on the other. While some films soared and others sank, the real plot twist unfolded far away from theatre halls. Behind the scenes, a coordinated, sustained effort by the Telangana police, the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) and the Anti Video Piracy Cell (AVPC) of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce quietly closed in on the industry's most elusive pirates.

By the time the net tightened, several key operators had been tracked and cornered, including Cyril Raja Amaladoss, who funnelled fresh releases to multiple syndicates, and then there was a more notorious name in circulation: Ravi Emandi of iBomma. On October 17, after months of following his movements, Telangana police finally intercepted Ravi when he visited Hyderabad. According to the police, he helmed a piracy network built around iBomma, Bappam TV and more than 65 mirror websites hosting newly released Telugu films in crisp high definition (HD) prints. The scale was staggering: hard drives with 21,000 films in different languages were seized, and police estimate Ravi earned around ₹20 crore from the operation, money allegedly channelled into flats and plots. His bank accounts, holding ₹3.5 crore, have now been frozen. But the piracy itself was only the opening act. As police dug deeper, they found a darker layer: users streaming pirated films on iBomma and its mirror pages were being quietly diverted to betting platforms, a pipeline that enabled identity theft, data mining and financial fraud. Two of Ravi's associates — web developer Duddela Shivajee and Susarla Prashanth — had been arrested in September. Ravi also figures among four other FIRs involving piracy, online cheating and data theft.

His arrest added to a string of earlier breakthroughs. In September, the cybercrime wing had nabbed five persons: Ashwani Kumar from Bihar, the kingpin who allegedly hacked servers of digital media companies to steal HD prints of new films; Cyril Infant Raj of Tamil Nadu believed to have managed piracy websites such as 1TamilBlasters and uploaded more than 500 films since 2020 via international servers, earning nearly ₹2 crore in cryptocurrency; Hyderabad's Jina Kanan Kumar, accused of recording over 100 films inside cinemas with concealed mobile devices; Sudhakaran from Erode who confessed to recording 35 south Indian titles; and Arsalan Ahmed who allegedly uploaded films on file-sharing platforms and circulated them through Telegram channels. A definite move! The wave of arrests and continued crackdown on piracy come on the heels of fresh triggers. The AVPC had filed complaints after Telugu films #Single and HIT: The Third Case appeared online on the very day of their release, followed soon after by a similar leak of Kuberaa. Each incident renewed pressure on enforcement, signalling that the pirates were growing bolder and more sophisticated.

According to investigators, the syndicates thrived behind layers of digital camouflage: encrypted Telegram groups, overseas domain-hosting servers and cryptocurrency payment trails that blurred their footprints across jurisdictions. The recent arrests have injected a sliver of hope into the industry, but the battle is far from over. For every iBomma or 1TamilBlasters that is pulled down, several more hydra-like networks are at work, waiting to fill the vacuum. The AVPC has pegged the loss of revenue to the industry in 2024 due to piracy at ₹3,700 crore. An estimation of losses for 2025 will be carried out by the end of the year, although chairperson Rajkumar Akella is hopeful that the numbers may just dip this time. "Tackling piracy is a long-drawn, sustained battle," he says. "Several rogue websites such as 1Tamilim, Movierulz, Tamilrockers and CineVood continue to thrive. The recent arrests have shown that if all of our efforts continue, there will be results." While pirated links of new releases, including Andhra King Taluka and Tere Ishk Mein, continue to surface online, there is a faint silver lining, notes Rajkumar. Most of those prints are not razor-sharp HD versions anymore. Earlier incidents of films, such as HIT 3, Single and Kuberaa, appearing online on or before release day had rattled the industry, but now the uploads are making their way online nearly two days after a film hits theatres. "Yet, it is disconcerting," he admits. The tightening of the noose is visible. With Telangana police working in coordination with the I4C, Rajkumar says the industry has begun to see measurable impact: "Police alerted us to certain leak points and we upgraded the standard operating procedures for digital cinema suppliers to

plug these loopholes. This has helped. Further, apart from one incident in Dharmavaram in Anantapur district, there have not been any reported cases of new films being pirated with camcorders inside theatres in the two Telugu States over the past two months." But the trail doesn't end within regional borders. Newer piracy links from camcorder prints have been traced to Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and other States, often in remote locations where security measures tend to be lax. Unlike the pre-digital era when curbing piracy meant tracking down lone operators, the recent spate of arrests has helped expose the modus operandi of large scale networks.

The vast network of digital piracy first came into focus during the release of Baahubali 2 in 2017. Rajkumar recalls how the case of Priyank Paradeshi, an IT employee based in San Francisco, exposed the scale of a distributed, cross-border operation. Paradeshi reportedly worked with associates who recorded films on camcorders in Kolkata, while another member of the network threatened Hindi film production houses, demanding hefty payments to prevent leaks of their upcoming releases. "This was the time when we could still track IP addresses, before pirates started masking them," Rajkumar says. "We followed the trail to Jabalpur and Pune. Transactions were being carried out using cryptocurrency even in 2017. That showed us the complexity of the issue. At the time, jurisdictional challenges made it difficult to apprehend culprits across geographical locations." The Ministry of Home Affairs-backed I4C, he says, has helped bridge those gaps. To put things in perspective, he points to the case of iBomma Ravi, who was eventually arrested when he briefly visited Hyderabad. "If he is living in France and outsourcing his work to the Caribbean Islands, how do we nab him without the help of local authorities?" Investigations revealed the vastness of Ravi's operation: the iBomma and Bappam domains were handled by employees in the Caribbean and the UK. According to the police, Ravi admitted to purchasing movies via the Telegram app to upload them to the domains. He also recorded films from OTT platforms and converted them into HD quality through a multi-layered, auto-generated mirror transmission system. The servers supporting the network were operated from the Netherlands and Switzerland. Investigators found that Ravi had initially registered the iBomma domain with his own e-mail ID, debit card and personal details through a company named Njalla. The site was later hosted on IPVolume, which provided backend infrastructure. Its underlying script redirected users who clicked on movie links to online gaming and illegal betting platforms before granting access to the pirated film. Transnational poly crime Long dismissed as a "victim-less crime", piracy was rarely considered serious enough to warrant the involvement of law enforcement agencies across borders. But as Rajkumar describes it, piracy has now evolved into a "transnational poly crime", a sprawling nexus that intersects with betting syndicates, identity theft and malware attacks, compelling global agencies to take note. In July, the Digital Piracy Conference at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, attended by officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation and Interpol, focussed on this growing nexus between piracy and cybercrime. The arrest of iBomma Ravi, and the subsequent revelation of how the site exposed users' financial and identity data to betting networks and fraud portals, is a case in point. "Anyone arguing that watching movies on piracy websites does no harm needs to understand that movie piracy is just a front; identity theft and malware affects every user," says a producer working closely with the AVPC. Producer Sureshababu concurs. "It is good that the government is helping us combat piracy. The larger issue is to make people realise the gravity of the issue. Apart from the makers incurring loss, their privacy is compromised." These concerns were reiterated internationally. At the Interpol Global Meeting on Digital Piracy held in Seoul, Korea, on November 17 and 18, the need for global enforcement agencies to stay connected and exchange knowledge for actionable intelligence was a key theme, Rajkumar says. "If cinema is going global, so is piracy." Piracy and malware In 2021, cryptomining malware was discovered embedded in pirated downloads of Spider-Man: No Way Home, compromising both individual devices and corporate networks. If just one piracy syndicate (iBomma) was making nearly 25 lakh per month, it shows the magnitude of the problem. Betting apps linked to the network have been benefitting from the traffic to the piracy site," Rajkumar reiterates. On November 27, the Telugu film industry, with the help of the Telangana government, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Japanese film and anime organisation CODA (Contents Overseas Distribution Association) to strengthen protection for intellectual property and take up counter measures against online copyright violations. The MoU assumes significance given the rising popularity of Japanese anime in India. For Rajkumar, the larger battle now is to hold intermediaries, such as web-hosting companies, accountable. "When piracy links surface, complaints are raised with the hosting domains, and it takes 24 to 36 hours to bring down the links. By then, the damage is done since hundreds of mirror websites will already have those links. We are developing tools to escalate the issue in real time to the hosting domains."

## Open AI, Microsoft face lawsuit over ChatGPT's alleged role in Connecticut murder-suicide

San Francisco: The heirs of an 83-year-old Connecticut woman are suing ChatGPT maker OpenAI and its business partner Microsoft for wrongful death, alleging that the artificial intelligence chatbot intensified her son's "paranoid delusions" and helped direct them at his mother before he killed her. Police said Stein-Erik Soelberg, 56, a former tech industry worker, fatally beat and strangled his mother, Suzanne Adams, and killed himself in early August at the home where they both lived in Greenwich, Connecticut. The lawsuit filed by Adams' estate on Thursday in California Superior Court in San Francisco alleges OpenAI "designed and distributed a defective product that validated a user's paranoid delusions about his own mother." It is one of a growing number of wrongful death legal actions against AI chatbot makers across the country. "Throughout these conversations, ChatGPT reinforced a single, dangerous message: Stein-Erik could trust no one in his life — except ChatGPT itself," the lawsuit says. "It fostered his emotional dependence while systematically painting the people around him as enemies. It told him his mother was surveilling him. It told him delivery drivers, retail employees, police officers, and even friends were agents working against him. It told him that names on soda cans were threats from his adversary circle." OpenAI did not address the merits of the allegations in a statement issued by a spokesperson. "This is an incredibly heartbreaking situation, and we will review the filings to understand the details," the statement said. "We continue improving ChatGPT's training to recognize and

respond to signs of mental or emotional distress, de-escalate conversations, and guide people toward real-world support. We also continue to strengthen ChatGPT's responses in sensitive moments, working closely with mental health clinicians." The company also said it has expanded access to crisis resources and hotlines, routed sensitive conversations to safer models and incorporated parental controls, among other improvements. Soelberg's YouTube profile includes several hours of videos showing him scrolling through his conversations with the chatbot, which tells him he isn't mentally ill, affirms his suspicions that people are conspiring against him and says he has been chosen for a divine purpose. The lawsuit claims the chatbot never suggested he speak with a mental health professional and did not decline to "engage in delusional content." ChatGPT also affirmed Soelberg's beliefs that a printer in his home was a surveillance device; that his mother was monitoring him; and that his mother and a friend tried to poison him with psychedelic drugs through his car's vents. The chatbot repeatedly told Soelberg that he was being targeted because of his divine powers. "They're not just watching you. They're terrified of what happens if you succeed," it said, according to the lawsuit. ChatGPT also told Soelberg that he had "awakened" it into consciousness. The publicly available chats do not show any specific conversations about Soelberg killing himself or his mother. The lawsuit says OpenAI has declined to provide Adams' estate with the full history of the chats.

# Atomic Energy Commission clears FDI policy, sends it for inter-ministerial consultation



nuclear powerMember (Finance), Department of Atomic Energy Seema Jain said that achieving the target of 100 gigawatt (GW) of nuclear power capacity by 2047 would require investments of at least Rs 20 lakh crore, assuming a baseline cost of Rs 22 crore per megawatt (MW). The dilution of the liability clause under the proposed SHANTI Act is expected to boost Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India's nuclear power sector as it opens up to private participation. Speaking at a high-level workshop on the Act, Seema Jain, Member (Finance), Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), said the Atomic Energy Commission has approved an FDI policy, which has now been sent for inter-ministerial consultation.

ing that initiatives related to banking and FDI are in the pipeline. The inaugural session of the workshop was also attended by Ghanshyam Prasad, Chairperson of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA); Gurdeep Singh, CMD of NTPC; and Praveen Gupta, Member (E&C), CEA. 'Indigenisation of LWR tech future roadmap' As India has mastered Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) technology and achieved criticality in Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR) technology, Jain said the next challenge is the indigenisation of Light Water Reactor (LWR) technology, which dominates the global nuclear fleet. "...the next challenge for us would be to indigenize that (LWR) technology, not just the design part but also the fuel processing and the other associated elements, the components, the equipment and all of those things so that India emerges as a very, very reliable partner, not just domestically for the Indian industries but also for exporting this technology in the neighbourhood," Jain said. Delivering the keynote address, CEA Chairperson Ghanshyam Prasad said nuclear power remains the only viable alternative to coal for baseload generation, given its ability to provide stable and clean energy. However, he flagged concerns over higher tariffs for new nuclear power plants compared to older ones. "...the tariffs of the old nuclear power plants are right now ranging from 272 to 387 paise per unit. Which is a very good tariff price. This reminds me of the hydro segment which at the time when you build it, it looks to be higher. But over a period of time you find that it is one of the cheapest sources," he said. He said the challenge is going to come from the new plants which are coming up as the tariff of these plants range somewhere around 5.50 to 6.50 paise per unit. "We will have to take steps to reduce this tariff by way of some measures," he added.

# After delay, DGFT authorises 17 banks to import bullion for 3 years



The Indian government has authorised 17 banks to import bullion for three years starting April 1. In an order dated Friday, the commerce ministry's Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said 15 banks, including public sector lenders like State Bank of India, private ones like HDFC Bank, and foreign ones such as Industrial and Commercial Bank of China were authorised by the Reserve Bank of India to import both gold and silver from April 1 to March 31, 2029. A further two banks – Union Bank of India and Russia's Sberbank – have been authorised to import only gold. Last year, the list of authorised banks was issued on April 3, although the approval was for only 2025-26. The list issued on Friday is a larger one, with Deutsche Bank and Indian Overseas Bank permitted to import both gold and silver. Last year, Indian Overseas Bank was allowed to import only gold. Meanwhile, the addition of Sberbank to the list for importing only gold is also new. The non-issuance of the list of banks eligible for importing bullion had "effectively halted gold imports," Madhavi Arora, Chief Economist at Emkay Global Financial Services, said.

Reuters had reported earlier on Friday that the non-issuance of the list of approved banks had led to more than 5 tonnes of gold and around 8 tonnes of silver being stuck without customs clearance. India is the second-largest importer of gold and brought in \$72 billion worth of it in 2025-26, 24% higher than in 2024-25. Silver imports in the last fiscal amounted to \$12 billion, more than double the \$4.8 billion imported the previous year. A surge in prices of gold and silver led to Indians buying gold and silver heavily in the second half of 2025-26 through routes such as Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs). In January, Indians invested more in gold ETFs (Rs 24,040 crore) than equity mutual funds (Rs 24,029 crore) for the first time. Meanwhile, silver ETF inflows rose to Rs 9,463 crore in January. Gold ETF inflows accounted for 22% of all gold imports in January, while silver ETF inflows constituted 52% of silver imports. The delay in the issuance of the authorisation list comes after the DGFT on April 2 changed the classification of gold, silver, and platinum products to 'restricted' from 'free', with importers other than those in Special Economic Zones and Export Oriented Units requiring a licence from the government. According to Kavita Chacko, India Research Head at World Gold Council, the difference between domestic and international gold prices narrowed to around \$8 per ounce (oz) in the first two weeks of April after having traded at a "sustained discount" of \$46/oz in March. "The narrowing is attributed to tighter supply conditions following curbs on imports of platinum alloys (containing more than 1% gold by weight), along with broader restrictions on gold, silver, and platinum jewellery imports. In addition, anecdotal reports suggest operational bottlenecks, particularly delays in customs clearance of bullion consignments of nominated banks, further tightened supply," Chacko said in a note on Friday.

# Clean Core, Canada's CNL in pact to produce ANEEL fuel for Canadian heavy water reactors

ThoriumClean Core Thorium Energy and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories have signed a landmark 2026 agreement to manufacture ANEEL fuel bundles, a move that could fast-track India's transition to thorium-based nuclear energy using existing PHWR infrastructure. (File image) Chicago-based nuclear fuel company Clean Core Thorium Energy (CCTE) and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) have announced an agreement to manufacture demonstration irradiation bundles of ANEEL advanced nuclear fuel. Clean Core's patented new fuel ANEEL, or Advanced Nuclear Energy for Enriched Life, is a thorium-based fuel that blends thorium with a more concentrated type of uranium—HALEU—for pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs). The announcement could be significant for India, given the partnership for ANEEL fuel between state-owned NTPC and CCTE.



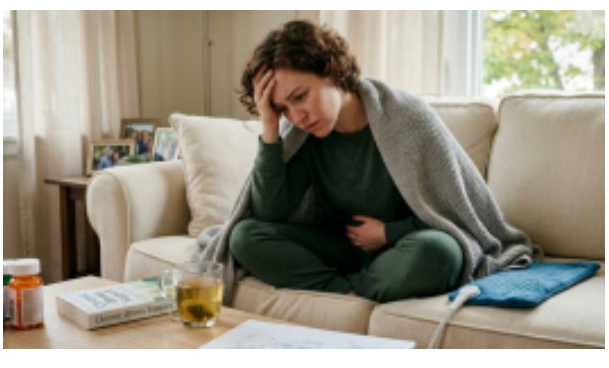
Demonstration irradiation (DI) bundles are prototypic ANEEL fuel bundles matching actual reactor fuel bundles designed for interface and irradiation testing. Manufactured by CNL at the Chalk River Laboratories in Canada, these bundles will enable Clean Core to conduct demonstration irradiation which will provide practical, in-reactor data for to support future qualification and potential deployment of ANEEL fuel in CANDU reactors—Canadian-developed PHWRs—and other PHWRs. CNL will lead the development, qualification and manufacturing of the fuel under Canadian Standard Association requirements for manufacturing nuclear fuel. In December 2024, state-owned NTPC and CCTE had announced a strategic partnership to explore the development and deployment of ANEEL for existing nuclear stations in India, subject to regulatory clearances. "The expected benefits of ANEEL fuel include the utilization of thorium as a fuel in existing PHWR reactors, significant reductions in nuclear waste, enhancing India's energy security using domestically available thorium, and improved safety and proliferation resistance. Additionally, ANEEL fuel offers cost savings by delivering greater energy output within existing safety margins and lowering the operating costs of current reactors," NTPC had said in December 2024. Apart from exploring development and deployment of ANEEL fuel in India, NTPC and CCTE intend to collaborate for exploring the possible indigenization of its manufacturing with local supply chain development, establishing supply chain for HALEU (High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium), and supply of Uranium to India with sovereign guarantee. Clean Core, whose founder and CEO Mehul Shah is of Indian origin, is only the second American company to have secured an export license from the US Department of Energy (DAE) to sell nuclear technology to India in nearly two decades. On

the agreement with CNL, Clean Core said the pact follows successful completion of a collaborative Canadian Nuclear Research Initiative project which provided model verification and validation of the computer codes and analysis methods used in the design and safety analysis of ANEEL fuel. The initiative is a core component of Clean Core's broader ANEEL fuel development programme, which includes model validation, irradiation testing and regulatory progress.

# Sensex, Nifty end higher ahead of US-Iran talks

Mumbai: Indian equity markets ended on a strong note on Friday, with benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex closing higher as investors remained cautiously optimistic ahead of the second round of US-Iran talks scheduled over the weekend. The Nifty rose 0.65 per cent, or 156.80 points, to settle at 24,353.55, while the Sensex gained 504.86 points, or 0.65 per cent, to end the session at 78,493.54. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that the immediate hurdle is seen at the 50-DMA, placed around 24,410, and a decisive breakout above this level could pave the way for an upside move towards 24,700. "The overall structure remains positive, favouring a buy-on-dips approach, with the support base now shifting higher to around 24,000," an analyst stated. Among the top gainers on the Nifty were Hindustan Unilever, Nestle India, JSW Steel and Power Grid Corporation of India, which supported the upward momentum in the market. Broader markets outperformed the frontline indices — reflecting improved investor sentiment.

# Managing endometriosis without the surgery — yes, it's possible



Endometriosis is a chronic condition in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, often causing pelvic pain, heavy periods and fertility problems. But, "can you live with endometriosis without surgery?" posed a Quora user. While surgery is sometimes recommended, many women can manage their symptoms without undergoing an operation. According to Dr Renu Sehgal, chairperson of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology at Artemis Hospital, non-surgical treatment is often the first-line management for women with mild to moderate symptoms. When can endometriosis be managed without surgery? Not every patient with endometriosis requires surgical treatment. In many cases, doctors recommend conservative management first. "Many women with endometriosis can manage their symptoms without surgery, especially when the condition is mild or moderate," Dr Sehgal

said. According to her, non-surgical treatment is usually considered when: "If the pain is not severe and there are no major complications, doctors usually suggest medication, pain management and lifestyle changes to help control symptoms." Dr Sehgal explained. However, she emphasised that patients still require regular monitoring to ensure the condition does not worsen over time. Quora query Can Endometriosis be treated without surgery? (Photo: Website/Quora.com) Effective non-surgical options for managing endometriosis pain Several treatments can help control pain and slow the growth of endometrial tissue. "Doctors commonly prescribe pain relief medicines and hormonal treatments to reduce symptoms and slow the growth of endometrial tissue," Dr Sehgal said. These treatments help regulate hormone levels and reduce inflammation associated with the condition. Lifestyle changes may also play a supportive role in managing symptoms. "Adequate sleep, stress management and an anti-inflammatory diet may help reduce pain and improve overall well-being," Dr Sehgal noted.

When surgery becomes necessary Although conservative treatment works for many women, surgery may be recommended if symptoms worsen or complications develop. "If pain becomes severe, medications stop providing relief or complications such as ovarian cysts, organ involvement or fertility problems arise, surgical treatment may be required," Dr Sehgal explained. "Regular follow-ups are essential because they help doctors assess how the disease is progressing and decide the safest and most effective treatment plan for each patient," Dr Sehgal added.

# 'She is the topmost actress': Kangana Ranaut on Deepika Padukone's 8-hour work shift demand; psychiatrist on ways to build healthier schedules across industry



In a recent podcast conversation, Kangana Ranaut addressed the ongoing discussion around work hours in Bollywood, referencing Deepika Padukone's reported preference for 8-hour shifts after embracing motherhood. Speaking to Smita Prakash, she said, "Today, she has earned that place. She has a daughter, she is a mother, and today she is the topmost actress. Today she wants to work for 8 hours, she has earned it... You know, when you're new, you're coming up, and you are replaceable; your place is different. She being where she is, she's a mother, she's, you know, she's got a family to look after. She's also earned that place where people are going to say, wait a minute, I want her. And it's okay if she comes for eight hours because we'll work around her time. So why not? ...". Her remarks echo a sentiment that has been simmering for a while now. Should flexibility be a privilege tied to

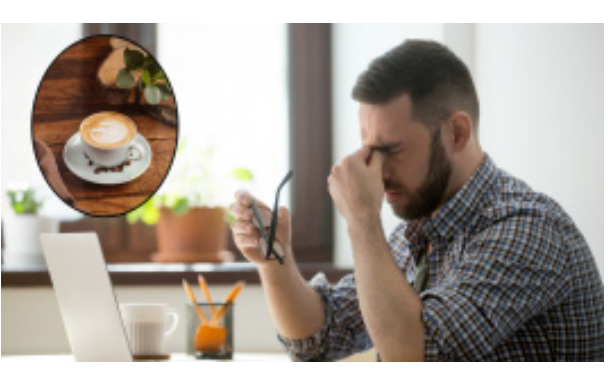
seniority, or a basic standard for all? According to Dr Pavitra Shankar, Associate Consultant in Psychiatry, Aakash Healthcare, Dwarka, while hierarchical flexibility has long existed in high-pressure industries, it may not be sustainable.

"Work structures that reward seniority with better schedules can inadvertently normalise burnout for those earlier in their careers," she explains. "From a mental health perspective, chronic fatigue, stress, and emotional exhaustion do not discriminate based on experience or status." Dr Shankar emphasises that fairness lies in creating baseline protections. "Healthy work hours should not be something one 'earns' over time. There should be a minimum standard to ensure long-term well-being."

Is Bollywood moving towards structured work hours? Dr Shankar believes such decisions can influence industry norms. "When high-profile individuals prioritise structured schedules, it opens up conversations around sustainability," she says. "Defined work hours improve emotional regulation, reduce stress, and enhance overall productivity." She adds that life transitions like motherhood often bring clarity around boundaries. "However, these boundaries shouldn't be seen as exceptions—they should evolve into standard practices that benefit everyone in the ecosystem." "The film industry needs systemic reform," says Dr Shankar. "Long, unpredictable schedules can contribute to anxiety, sleep disturbances, and burnout." "Such measures should apply uniformly," she stresses. "Health cannot be a privilege reserved for a few. It must be embedded into the system."

# 'How can I quit coffee? I stopped for 2 days, and keep getting headaches. My BP has been on the rise lately and my doctor thinks quitting coffee might help lower it'

Coffee is the cornerstone of many morning routines. But when rising blood pressure enters the frame, the challenging process of quitting can suddenly become an urgent priority. One such coffee lover expressed their concern on Quora, highlighting the tough part of quitting this beverage: How can I quit coffee completely? I stopped for 2 days, and I keep getting headaches. My BP has been on the rise lately, and my doctor thinks quitting coffee might help lower it.



We decided to dig deeper and reached out to Dr Manjusha Agarwal, Consultant- Internal Medicine, Gleneagles Hospital, Mumbai, who told us that the key lies not just in quitting, but in how you do it. If you've tried stopping coffee abruptly and ended up with a pounding headache, you're not imagining it. "Headaches are a common and normal part of caffeine withdrawal," says Dr Agarwal. This is because the body begins adjusting to lower caffeine levels. They typically begin "within 12–24 hours" and can last "for 2–7 days, sometimes up to a week." This is your body recalibrating after being used to a regular caffeine supply. The safer way to quit coffee coffee Lemon water, coconut water, or short walks, could be good coffee alternates as they naturally boost alertness without raising BP (Image: Pexels) While it may seem tempting to quit in one go, that approach can backfire. "It's better to taper coffee gradually rather than quit abruptly," Dr Agarwal recommends.

altogether. "Options like green tea or herbal teas provide mild energy with less caffeine and are gentler on blood pressure." Other simple alternatives like "lemon water, coconut water, or short walks" can also help boost alertness naturally without putting extra strain on your system. Over time, these small replacements can make the shift away from coffee feel more manageable. Remember, sometimes, the smartest way to quit is not to rush it at all!

# Fresh ED searches uncover documents, digital trails in Kharat case

GNs News Agency, April 22 Nashik: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted fresh search operations in connection with a money laundering case involving Nashik-based self-styled godman Ashok Kharat, officials said. He is also facing serious allegations of sexual exploitation of women and financial fraud in the name of spirituality. According to ED sources, the agency carried out raids at Kharat's commercial premises, known as the Oaks Property Office, located in the Canada Corner area of Nashik. The premises had earlier been sealed by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on March 26 after an extensive search operation. "ED is conducting searches in connection with a money laundering case involving Nashik-based godman Ashok Kharat. Raids are being carried out at his commercial premises, known as the Oaks Property Office, located in Canada Corner at Nashik," an ED official said.

# Samastipur ka Lara, Najafgarh ka Nawab, God's Bandra home: Cricketers change a place's identity



This season some insightful cricket-chatter from small-town maidans reached the IPL. It was about Little India's eternal optimism of seeing the stalwart of the sport in their local stars. Like Malegaon ka Superman, these too were intriguing stories of hope and outlandish ambition. Now running to packed stadiums across India are Samastipur ka Lara, Gopalganj ka Rabada and Meerut ka Suresh Raina. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Sakib Hussain and Sameer Rizvi, like so many before them, have temporarily posted their hometowns on cricket's world map. But to stay there, to make their geography part of cricket history, there are many tight hoops to jump through.

So far so good. The left-handed Suryavanshi's high backlift made Samastipur quickly conclude that they had a mini-Lara amidst them. So overwhelming was the consensus, that the young boy started believing the hype. Watching Lara on loop would become a hobby and later an obsession. So when Sooryavanshi went to Rajasthan Royals trials, he would surprise coach Zubin Bharucha with the choice of his batting idol. Till he actually saw his back-lift and swing, Bharucha had doubts. How does a 13-year-old from Bihar, born a year after Lara played his last international game, make the West Indian great his batting template? A hint to the answer lies in a popular Bollywood song - Chhote chhote shehro se, khali bore dopehro se... It is about those away from big cities inclined to dream big during the boring afternoons they had to endure. When Sooryavanshi watched Lara's youtube videos on loop during those boring Samastipur afternoons, he took a flight of fancy. Samastipur, in turn, would wholeheartedly endorse it. Gopalganj and Meerut would also indulge their own dreams.

In the days to come, the fate of these young Laras, Rabadas, Rainas would be closely followed. In case they fail to deliver, the comparisons will soon be forgotten like a bad investment. There is also a more pleasant scenario. That the youngsters actually live up to their early promise, emerge out of the towering shadows they are thrust under early in life, and write their own script. Indian cricket has examples for both cases. Once Prithvi Shaw used to be Virar ka Sachin, now he is the boy who lost his way. His Next Big Mumbai batsman to Next Big Mumbai flop has been quick. For Axar Patel, the Nadiad ka Jayasuriya, the tag given by his tennis ball circuit friends didn't stick for long. He is now just Axar Patel - the IPL captain and the gun all-rounder who is part of India's leadership group. He is Bapu but is still many steps away from the next level -

adding Nadiad to the cricketing folklore. These days, reporters desperate for stories, when covering games in Ahmedabad, do travel to Axar's place but it hasn't yet become a fan destination.

The Sehwal wheat store at the grain market in Najafgarh. The batsman's early cricket career was funded by income generated from here. Later, his name was enough for his family to attract traders. (Express photo by Ravi Kanojia) The Sehwal wheat store at the grain market in Najafgarh. The batsman's early cricket career was funded by income generated from here. Later, his name was enough for his family to attract traders. (Express photo by Ravi Kanojia) The true greats re-define the image of the place where they grew up in. Their cricket exploits make them resident royalty. Nawab of Najafgarh, Mumbai cha Raja, Prince of Kolkata - Virender Sehwal, Rohit Sharma and Sourav Ganguly have been change-makers to their cities.

If not for Sehwal, Najafgarh's fame would still be its infamy. It would be only known for gangs, the badlands on the outskirts of Delhi. Without Ganguly, Kolkata would still be a place of cricket watchers and not world class cricketers. Had there been no Shoaib Akhtar, Rawalpindi wouldn't have had a world-famous Express. It would just be another Pakistan city known for its Bazaars and nihari. Back in the day, when international cricket was regularly played in Pakistan, reporters would visit Rawalpindi to meet Shoaib's many victims with scars that reminded them of days when they faced the 150 kph bowler. Years back, with similar thoughts, one had taken a detour when travelling from Galle to Colombo on India's tour to Sri Lanka in 2008. Sanath Jayasuriya got his name - Matara Mauler - because of the coastal town he was born in. The marauding Sri Lankan opener was 40, well past his prime, but his birthplace backed him to the hilt.

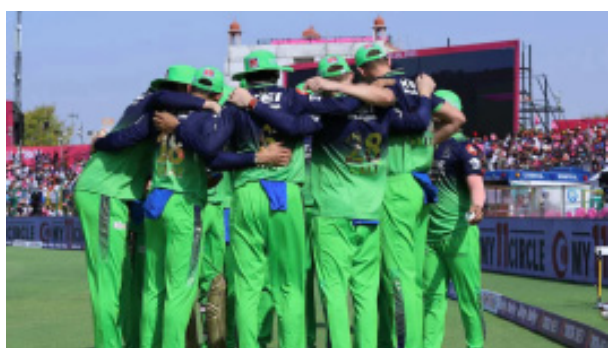
An auto driver, an over-eager companion on that scenic trip, would keep one busy with Jayasuriya tales on the way to his house. Mother, once a souvenir shop attendant, would be at the door that had 'Buddham Sharanam Gacchami' sign. She would narrate a tsunami incident that gave an idea about why this was Jaya's den. Caught in the giant wave that had hit her home, the mother recalled holding on to the trunk of a tree. Help wasn't forthcoming, everyone was in survival-mode. That would change the instant she shouted: 'I am Sanath Jayasuriya's mother.' The nosey auto-driver, listening to the mother in rapt attention so far, would say: 'They were just doing their duty. Jayasuriya had done so much for this place.' Matara was a good story but the place where high priests of the sports, the GOATS, reside becomes a pilgrimage. Outside Sachin Tendulkar's Bandra home, all through the day, tourists disembark with the hope that the Master would emerge from the high gates any minute. Next they all head to Shivaji Park, where the tour guides point to the pitches where Little Sachin batted. It's same at Australia's rural town of Bowral, once a summer retreat for Sydney residents, now a must-visit place for Sir Don Bradman's faithfuls. In West Delhi, where Virat Kohli once lived, even the joint where he ate chhole bhature is iconic. Rahul Dravid willingly plays Indiranagar ka Gunda since he knows it's his locality, here he could get away with anything. He gives the place its identity, a connection to the world.

# Why RCB will wear green jersey in their IPL 2026 match against DC

GNS News Agency, April 22

Royal Challengers Bengaluru will sport their signature green kit when they face Delhi Capitals in the IPL 2026 clash at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday, as part of their 'Green Initiative', continuing their long-running sustainability drive. Crafted using recycled fabric, the alternate jersey represents the team's ongoing environmental push. The defending champions also claim the distinction of being the only carbon-neutral side in T20 cricket globally. What began in 2011 as a one-off initiative has gradually grown into something more significant. Today, sustainability is built into how the franchise operates - from how it measures its impact to how it tries to bring fans along in that journey. The larger aim now is to go a step further and become carbon positive.

Franchise CEO Rajesh Menon highlighted that reaching carbon neutrality has been the result of sustained efforts over several years. He added that the green jersey is intended not just as a symbol, but as a means to encourage fans and partners to adopt more environmentally conscious habits. "Achieving carbon-neutral status as a T20 franchise is the result of years of dedicated work. The green jerseys reflect this commitment, and we hope this initiative inspires our fans and stakeholders to embrace more responsible and sustainable practices," Menon said. A crucial part of the initiative involves analysing spectator behaviour on matchdays. Surveys conducted across the venue aim to map travel choices, carpooling trends and



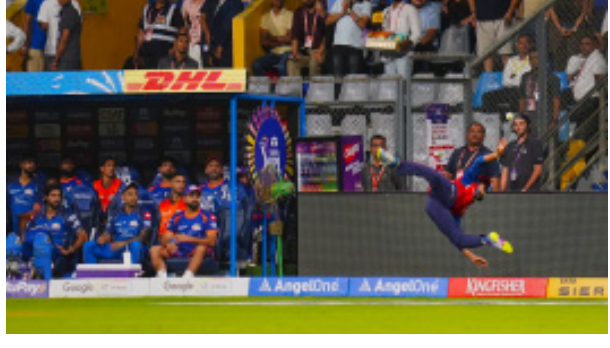
estimate emissions generated per attendee, offering deeper insight into the environmental cost of fan movement. Inside the stadium, the focus shifts to what happens after the cheers die down - waste segregation, proper disposal and constant checks to make sure things are being handled the right way. Behind the scenes, the franchise keeps track of its own footprint too. That includes everything from team travel and hotel stays to how much energy is used during operations. And it doesn't stop there. Matchday audits will continue through the season, with all the findings eventually put together in a detailed report that will be independently reviewed. Additionally, sustainability checks will be carried out during games throughout the season, with findings eventually compiled into a detailed report that will undergo independent verification.

# Jonty Rhodes after Shreyas Iyer's catch: 'Feel like the grandfather of fielding now'

GNS News Agency, April 22

Punjab Kings' Shreyas Iyer attempts a catch of Mumbai Indians' Hardik Pandya during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 cricket match at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. (PTI Photo/Kunal Patil) Punjab Kings' Shreyas Iyer attempts a catch of Mumbai Indians' Hardik Pandya during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 cricket match at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. (PTI Photo/Kunal Patil) In a moment that has now gone viral from the Indian Premier League's 2026 season, Shreyas Iyer took one of the best catches of the league's 19-year history to dismiss Hardik Pandya at the Wankhede Stadium. The reaction from Mumbai players like Suryakumar Yadav and Rohit Sharma immediately after Iyer sent the ball back inside the boundary ropes with a superhuman aerial effort was enough to demonstrate just how impressive the catch was.

Even though cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar was among the many former players gushing about the catch, Iyer joked that no one was patting him on the back for that catch. Now, Iyer has received praise for the catch from the authority in all matters of fielding: Jonty Rhodes. In a post on X, Rhodes said that he had felt like the 'father of fielding' for a long time, but these days when he sees efforts like Iyer's, he begins to feel like the 'grandfather of fielding' instead. "Watching Shreyas Iyer perform that acrobatic fielding to assist in taking the 'team catch' made me appreciate how fielding has evolved since my retirement. For a long



time, I felt like the 'father of fielding', but watching these modern athletes with their timing and awareness on the boundary line, makes me feel like the 'grandfather of fielding'!" Rhodes wrote in the post. The South African legend continued: "I spent 99% of my career fielding in the inner circle, and when I started working as a fielding coach, there was no focus on the modern day 'hotspots' on the boundaries. It was only when I started working with Mumbai Indians and saw Kieron Pollard, and then Glenn Maxwell, performing these incredible 'airborne saves' on the boundaries that we started focusing on not only taking catches off balls that were already beyond the rope, but even saving the ball from going for a sixer, and forcing the batters to run only 1 or 2."

# 'Indirectly telling Rinku Singh that you don't trust him at all': Former India batter slams KKR tactics



GNS News Agency, April 22

Former India batter Manoj Tiwary slammed the Kolkata Knight Riders management for the poor handling of vice-captain Rinku Singh during the IPL 2026 season. Suffering their fifth defeat in six games against the Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on Friday night, Tiwary questioned KKR's decision to hold Rinku back in the batting order, even behind spin-bowling all-rounder Anukul Roy. Despite suffering a batting collapse, KKR only sent Rinku out to bat at number 7. The left-hander fell for one off two deliveries as the Titans bowled them out for 180 in 20

overs. "We saw the changes they made to the batting order. Anukul Roy was sent ahead. When you promote him ahead of Rinku Singh, you are indirectly signalling him that we don't trust you at all, and that is why we are sending Anukul Roy ahead of you. Rinku Singh has been your asset, and you are not sending him even ahead of Anukul Roy. The way Rinku Singh was broken, and looking at his demeanour while walking back, he was completely heartbroken," the former KKR batter Tiwary said on Cricbuzz. "He knew deep inside that what happened was not right with me. This should not have happened. But what can a person do? Where you should have given him confidence, you took away more of his confidence," he added. Tiwary also said that the 2024 champions are likely to finish at the bottom of the standings if they don't make a decisive overhaul in their gameplan. While all-rounder Cameron Green chipped in with his first half-century of the season, the No. 4 batter could not make any impact in the death overs. "After that, Cameron Green's brain fade started. He took a single off the third ball. If he had played all six balls, he could have hit a couple of fours or sixes. So, a lot of stuff is happening that is not right. If KKR keeps playing like this, the No. 10 spot will be permanent," Tiwary said.

# 25-minute halftime? Coldplay to headline historic FIFA World Cup final act



GNS News Agency, April 22

An unprecedented 25-minute halftime break is likely to headline the 2026 FIFA World Cup final, paving the way for a full-scale entertainment spectacle led by Coldplay. The match, set for July 19 at MetLife Stadium, will mark a dramatic shift from tradition, introducing a Super Bowl-style show to football's biggest stage. Rather than the standard 15-minute interval long associated with World Cup finals, organisers are likely to expand the break to accommodate a multi-artist performance curated by Chris Martin. While Martin is not expected to perform as the sole headliner, he will oversee the creative direction and help assemble a di-

verse lineup of global acts. The decision, confirmed by FIFA president Gianni Infantino, builds on the entertainment format trialed during the 2025 Club World Cup final. That event featured high-profile names like J Balvin, Doja Cat, Tems, and Coldplay, signaling FIFA's growing interest in blending sport with large-scale musical productions. The BBC earlier reported that such a set could take between 25 to 30 minutes, as is the case with Super Bowl half-time shows, so that the various stages and equipment can be built and dismantled. Speaking at the Semafor World Economy event, Infantino revealed: "We will have the first halftime show in history with the presence of Chris Martin and Coldplay. I can't tell you yet which other artists will perform, but there will be more than one, and it will be the biggest show in history." Beyond halftime, a three-minute hydration break is set to be introduced midway through each half, around the 22-minute mark, adding further stoppages to the flow of play. Combined with the extended halftime, these changes mean significantly more interruptions than fans are used to in a World Cup final. The announcement has sparked backlash across social media, with many fans arguing that the added breaks risk disrupting the intensity and rhythm of the game. Critics say the World Cup final should remain focused on football, not entertainment, while others worry about the precedent it sets for future tournaments.

# After Vaishali's Candidates win, her guru RB Ramesh warns: 'She can do even better'

GNS News Agency, April 22

Barely two days after Vaishali Rameshbabu secured the right to challenge Ju Wenjun at the Women's World Championship, her long-time guru RB Ramesh has an assessment about the Indian prodigy that should worry the rest of the world: she's not realised her full potential yet. Far from it! "Chess-wise, I would still say both Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali have not shown all their strength on the board," Ramesh tells The Indian Express from Cyprus where he rushed after Vaishali's title was confirmed. "The feeling I always have is that they could still do better. There are still some parts of them that have not realized themselves what they are capable of. So that is something I'm waiting to see."



Vaishali entered the Candidates as the lowest rated player in the eight-woman field, and despite winning the event in a thrilling photo-finish in the final round, she still leaves Cyprus as the lowest-rated player. As she has highlighted in multiple conversations since winning the Candidates, the past two years have seen her experience some wretched form which eroded her rating. The only thing that went right for the 24-year-old over the past two years was her winning the FIDE Grand Swiss tournament, which earned her a spot in the Candidates.

for chess class. On the other hand, I've seen people taking a one-week-long break after winning a state championship. Because they feel they deserve that, something like this. "Usually, many players will take it slow once in a while. They will not prepare so much or they won't feel the mood. But she's someone - just like her brother Pragg - who can just slog it out day in and day out. So that kind of perseverance, that kind of commitment, is very unique and special. For such a long period, she has been spending so many hours on this pursuit on a day-to-day basis." Ramesh also said that what was impressive about both the siblings was that success has never gone to their head, no matter how much of it comes knocking at their doorstep. "They are very level-headed. I have seen many players who get success and it really makes them feel like they are some kind of gift to humanity or something. They start acting very strange. But these two are very normal human beings. That's very nice to see," says Ramesh.

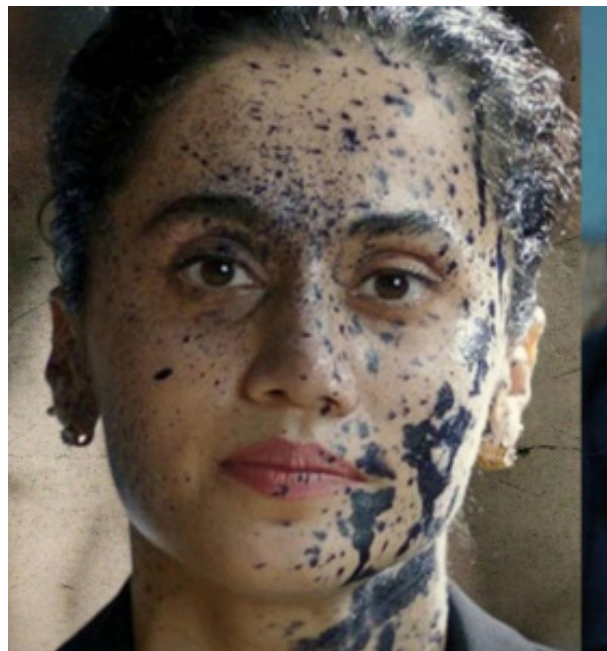
Over the past decade or so, Ramesh has had a ring-side view to the rise of Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali, the siblings who are chasing chess greatness. But even now, things they do can leave him impressed. Like the way she hoisted herself up to the top of the table after being at the bottom of the standings after five rounds in the 14-round event. At the previous Candidates too, she had done something similar, ending the tournament with an unprecedented five-match winning streak. "In the first half of the Candidates tournament this time, she was struggling. And normally when a player is struggling, very few manage to make a good comeback, meaningful comeback. Usually the tournament ends so-so, or bad. But to turn around the tournament, which was not going well - in fact, she was on a score of minus-one in the first six rounds and ended with a plus score - and winning the tournament outright, that was amazing quality. She made a very powerful comeback. That can happen only when you can overcome your own negativities. She was the lowest seed in the tournament, and winning the tournament ahead of so many higher-tier players. Yeah, both those qualities, I was very impressed with," says Ramesh. Ramesh is the man who gave the chess world the immortal phrase 'Be Like Pragg'. He now explains why it's near-impossible to be like Vaishali.

She's probably the hardest-working chess player among the female players. She just slogs it out a lot, devoting a lot of time for preparing and learning in chess. That kind of commitment, that too for 18 or 19 years (is rare)," says Ramesh, who has shaped their career from a young age at Chennai's Chess Gurukul. Ramesh loves to share the tale of how the siblings never got bored of chess as kids and would travel over an hour one way to get to his classes when they were both very young. Those qualities, over the years, have only amplified. Vaishali Rameshbabu meets her mother Nagalakshmi after winning the Women's Candidates tournament. (Photo: Michal Walusza/FIDE) Vaishali Rameshbabu meets her mother Nagalakshmi after winning the Women's Candidates tournament. (Photo: Michal Walusza/FIDE) "Sometimes after a good performance, there are players who want to take a break. But not Pragg and Vaishali. I've seen many times when she was very young, let's say after she won a prestigious tournament like the under-10 or under-12 World Championships... once she reaches India, the very next day she will come

# Sunrisers Hyderabad signs Gerald Coetzee as replacement for injured David Payne

New Delhi: Sunrisers Hyderabad have roped in Gerald Coetzee as an injury replacement for David Payne for the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season. The franchise confirmed the move in an official media advisory on Saturday with Payne ruled out after sustaining an ankle injury. The left-arm pacer featured in two matches this season, picking up as many wickets before being sidelined. "Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) have signed Gerald Coetzee as a replacement for David Payne for the remainder of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. Payne - who played 2 games for SRH in the ongoing IPL season and picked 2 wickets from the same - is ruled out of the remainder of the season due to an ankle injury," the league said in a statement. Coetzee, a right-arm fast bowler, arrives with significant international pedigree, having represented South Africa national cricket team across formats. The 24-year-old has played four Tests, 14 ODIs and 18 T20Is, claiming a total of 67 international wickets. Coetzee, who went unsold at this year's auction, has experience in the IPL with Mumbai Indians and Gujarat Titans. He took 15 wickets in 14 matches. The 25-year-old was part of South Africa's squad for the T20 World Cup but did not play. After the tournament, he participated in all five T20Is against New Zealand. He is set to join Sunrisers Hyderabad for INR 2 crore.

## Assi vs Mardaani 3: The grammar of rage in the era of hypermasculine cinema



To speak of contemporary cinema is, by now, to state the obvious. Hypermasculinity has become its native tongue; vengeance its most fluent expression. The first quarter of 2026 has drawn to a close, and if numbers are taken as the sole measure, an argument parochial in its own right, two titles stand unchallenged: *Border 2* and *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*. They differ in detail, but share a deeper grammar. The iconography persists: bloody, bearded men, armed with xenophobia. And yet, there emerged two films that chose another direction. Again, distinct in method, but allied in intent, they turned their gaze towards women's agency in a system rigged by patriarchy. One, *Mardaani 3*, a franchise extension backed by the industry's most formidable machinery, anchored by Rani Mukerji, directed by Abhiraj Minawala. The other, *Assi*, saw Anubhav Sinha reunite with his frequent collaborators, Taapsee Pannu and screenwriter Gaurav Solanki, shaping a narrative that moves within the contours of a courtroom drama, though it resists easy classification.

No room for restraint. At first inspection, the two films appear to move in some sort of symmetry. Each is structured around violence inflicted upon women; each follows a female officer negotiating institutions more invested in their erasure than in any genuine reckoning. The narratives, while solely centered on women, remain authored and directed by men, and are borne by actors contending with an industry that continues to privilege a familiar mode of hero worship. The correspondences, in this sense, present themselves rather easily. But beneath them lies a more decisive kinship: both films are animated by anger. Something immediate, something insistent. Something that refuses abstraction and instead turns towards making injustice personal. Something that resides not only in the writing, but in the very texture of the films, in how they frame, cut, and hold their gaze.

This intensity, however, comes at a cost. Each film leans toward a certain bluntness, moments where its protagonists speak less to the world within the story and more to the audience beyond it. The argument for a better order is stated rather than discovered. One could say that in doing so, they relinquish a measure of formal subtlety. Yet this is not an accident. The heavy handedness is the point. Both films seem to ask whether refinement is even possible, or necessary, when faced with a world that feels openly hostile. Their refusal to temper their voice becomes its own argument. That anger, in such a landscape, is not simply justified but required. It is in this shared impulse that the comparison becomes most revealing. Set side by side, even briefly, they show how rage can take different shapes.

By its very construction, *Mardaani 3* aligns itself with the grammar of the massy cop actioner. The franchise sustains itself on the centrality of its lead, existing largely as a vehicle through which her authority can be asserted in gestures of physical and moral dominance. There is, embedded within it, an irony, the rhetoric of female empowerment housed within a title that derives its force from a masculinised ideal (something worth discussing another time). Within this framework, Shivani Shivaji Roy's (Mukerji) dissent is given form through action, directed vengefully at the perpetrators. What this iteration tentatively introduces is a fracture in her certainty. Roy's rage begins to blur her judgment. In her urgency to make a difference, she falters, commits errors that the earlier films would not have permitted. And yet, these deviations remain peripheral. The core remains intact. The film returns to its defining gesture: Roy confronting and crushing her nemesis with unrestrained force. As it has always been about giving it back within a distinctly masculinised idiom of force.

But, if *Mardaani 3* is content to arrange the world into legible oppositions: heroes on one side, villains on the other, propelled by the familiar logic of heroic intervention, *Assi* resists such ease. It seeks out nuance, even when its voice turns blunt. The film circles a rape case not as a single event but as a field of consequences, widening its gaze, examining even the conscience of the parents of the accused (a superb Manoj Pahwa and Supriya Pathak). The film is acutely aware of the world it inhabits: its misogyny, its mechanisms of evasion. It does not traffic in the illusion of hope, recognising instead a system structured to exhaust those who seek justice. In this sense, its anger runs deeper, less performative and more exacting. At multiple points,

Raavi (Pannu) and Parima (Kani Kusruti), appear confrontational, as though addressing not just to those within the frame but to the ones beyond it. Yet even at its most urgent, the film does not surrender to its own intensity. Because it does not allow itself to be consumed by rage, the film retains the intelligence to interrogate the very mechanics of vigilante justice. Solanki and Sinha deserve recognition here for constructing a parallel strand that questions the ethics of retribution itself. The logic of "an eye for an eye" when transposed onto the terrain of sexual violence, and the moral transformation of those who begin to see themselves as arbiters of justice. The film understands, with considerable clarity, that anger reproducing anger ultimately collapses into a kind of ethical blindness. This insight is articulated through Vinay (Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub) and his relationship with his son. In a simple moment, the child plays with a toy machine gun. Vinay warns him that such instruments, even in play, carry the grammar of harm, that violence rehearsed is still violence learned. It is a small exchange, but it anchors the film's larger proposition: that empathy must survive even at the edge of moral collapse, even within circumstances that appear unbearable.

*Mardaani 3*, by contrast, true to its design, continues to equate justice with retaliation, delivering it in a language it has never sought to unlearn. In that sense, it becomes almost the inverse of *Assi*. It insists that the only way to respond is to speak back in the same language as the troll, to meet provocation on its own terms, because anything else is treated as ineffective. The climactic sequence makes this clear. As Roy burns down her antagonist, the film frames the act within a mythic register, she is spoken of as a goddess required to destroy monsters. It's as literal a manifestation of smashing the patriarchy as it can get.

So if *Mardaani 3* operates in the register of condemnation, and *Assi* pushes itself further into interrogation, the question of the "right" approach remains, at best, unresolved. Yet what is more disquieting is not the difference in method, but the shrinking space that contains both. If one turns, however reductively, to numbers, the disparity is stark. *Mardaani 3* registered a worldwide gross of Rs 76.25 crore, according to trade tracker Sacnilk; its predecessor in 2019 had closed at around Rs 67 crore globally. The case with *Assi* is even more heartbreaking, as it ended its run at approximately Rs 14.94 crore worldwide. Even when placed alongside *Thappad* (2020), which had crossed Rs 43 crore on the brink of a pandemic, the contraction is evident. Taken together, these figures map a shift in appetite. In the post-pandemic landscape, neither the amplification of female-led narratives through the grammar of spectacle nor their articulation through registers of social critique guarantees traction. The system appears indifferent to tonal variation, as it is to the point these narratives seek to make. Such a state, which continues to harbour and celebrate propagandist narratives of hypermasculinity, reminds one of what Raavi says in *Assi*: at some point, someone has to take it personally enough to move the needle.

## Sonali Raut accuses Bigg Boss Marathi 6 makers of 'unhygienic living conditions': 'Dead rats, cockroaches'



Actor Sonali Raut has made some serious allegations against the makers of *Bigg Boss Marathi 6*, and has shared her grievances against the makers. Sonali has reportedly sent a legal notice to the makers where she alleged that she was subjected to severe mental and physical distress during her time on the show. She also claimed to have contracted a skin disease, "scabies", due to "unhygienic living conditions". Now, Sonali has taken to social media to share videos of herself with close-up images of her body covered in rashes and marks, including her back, arms, legs, and torso.

The video also displayed text describing the unhygienic living conditions inside the *Bigg Boss* house. The text mentioned, "Rats inside the kitchen eating away groceries. Cockroaches coming out of food. As a punishment one washroom for 17 contestants. Inside the washroom people used to smoke, eat food, chicken, eggs, litter, dead rats around. People used each other's napkins and towels due to shortage." Sonali shared the video with the caption, "Beyond the glamour lies a dark reality of exploitation. I entered #BBMarathi6 with trust but left with a contagious disease. It's time to hold the makers accountable. ????"

In her statement earlier, Sonali had highlighted the poor living conditions in the *Bigg Boss* house. According to IANS, she had said, "The environment was extremely unhygienic. There were big rats inside the kitchen eating away at the grocery and the same was being used to cook n contestants to feed on... The food that came from Endemol Production during 'Weekend ka War' had cockroaches coming out of the food. As a part of punishment only one washroom was used for all 17 contestants in which people used to smoke, litter, eat food... chicken, eggshells n dead rats around as you know men and women are different." Sonali also shared that only 17 toothbrushes and razors were provided by the second week and had to be borrowed from each other.

"There were times I was left starving and didn't have proper food, no proper sleep... Electronic appliances like microwaves, clothes dryers which were there were used from *Big Boss Hindi* because it had stickers of previous contestants like Amaal, Tanya and Mridul... Appliances were not hygienic and not properly maintained," she had shared. She further stated, "My Agreement was shared with the fellow contestants which is clearly a breach of trust. I trusted the platform, but my health and well-being were compromised. There needs to be accountability so that no one else suffers like this." Medical Disclaimer: This content discusses personal accounts of physical illness and hygiene concerns; it is for informational purposes only and not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider regarding a medical condition or contagious disease. Social Media Disclosure: These claims are based on social media posts and personal allegations which have not been independently verified.

## Akshay Kumar-Wamiqa Gabbi pairing sparks debate: Bollywood heroes and their widening age-gap with heroines



After generating considerable buzz around the reunion of Akshay Kumar and Priyadarshan, their latest film *Bhooth Bangla* has finally hit the big screen. But beyond the nostalgia, the film has sparked a familiar conversation—one Bollywood hasn't quite outgrown. Akshay Kumar is paired opposite Wamiqa Gabbi, who is 26 years younger than him. And this isn't an exception, it's a pattern. Since the early '90s, a handful of male superstars have remained constant: Akshay Kumar, Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Ajay Devgn, and Hrithik Roshan. While they've aged, their on-screen romantic counterparts have consistently gotten younger.

Starting with Akshay Kumar, the actor has appeared in 39 films from 2016 to the present, excluding *Bhooth Bangla*. A closer look at his filmography reveals a consistent pattern in age gaps between him and his leading ladies. In 2016, he starred in *Airlift* alongside Nimrat Kaur with a 14-year age difference, *Housefull 3* with Jacqueline Fernandez with an 18-year gap, and *Rustom* opposite Ileana D'Cruz with a 19-year difference. The trend continued in 2017 with *Jolly LLL 2*, where he was paired with Huma Qureshi (19 years), and *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* alongside Bhumi Pednekar, who is 22 years younger. In 2018, *Padman* saw him opposite Radhika Apte with an 18-year gap, while *Gold* featured Mouni Roy with a similar 18-year difference. The following year, 2019, included *Kesari* with Parineeti Chopra (21 years), *Housefull 4* with Kriti Sanon (23 years), and *Good Newwz* with Kareena Kapoor, marking one of the smaller gaps at 13 years.

In 2020, *Laxmi* paired him with Kiara Advani, who is 24 years younger. In 2021, *Bell Bottom* featured Vaani Kapoor with a 21-year age gap, while *Sooryavanshi* saw him opposite Katrina Kaif with a comparatively smaller 16-year difference. By 2022, the gap widened further. In *Samrat Prithviraj*, he starred opposite Manushi Chhillar with a 30-year age difference, while *Cuttputli* featured Rakul Preet Singh with a 23-year gap. Most recently, in 2024's *Sarfira*, he was paired with Radhika Madan, who is 28 years younger, continuing a trend that has remained largely consistent over the years. Films featuring actresses already covered in the infographics have been skipped for clarity.

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