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Telangana EAPCET 2026 registrations dip by nearly 17,000

Hyderabad: The registrations for the Telangana Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test (TG EAPCET) 2026 slumped by nearly 17,000. City & Local Guides

As many as 2,89,974 candidates applied as the last date to register without a late fee concluded Saturday, which was 16,867 fewer applications than last year when total registrations stood at 3,06,841.

Revanth Reddy orders Tirumala-style rules for Telangana temples

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy instructed the officials to frame new regulations for the functioning of all temples across the State on the lines of Tirumala temple in Andhra Pradesh.

He emphasised that spirituality should be given top priority. The sanctity of temples should be maintained by prohibiting political party meetings, hoisting flags and demonstrations in the temple premises, he said.

Modi: Cong., Left Lying About FCRA Bill



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, April 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to allay the fears of the Christian community following the apprehensions over NDA government's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill.

Addressing an election rally in the Christian heartland of Thiruvalla, Modi alleged that the Congress and LDF have been telling lies about their character, constantly misleading the country. "When the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) came, they spread countless lies, yet once it was implemented, there was no harm to the nation. They called the films like Kerala Files, Kashmir Files, Kerala Story and Dhurandhar fake, and spread misinformation. Now, with the FCRA, they are spreading similar lies. Earlier, they tried to mislead people on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

The Prime Minister said an electrifying atmosphere is being witnessed across Kerala, which indicates the faith bestowed by the people in the NDA. "I've had the chance to watch this atmosphere closely, having visited earlier as well. But this time the wind is blowing differ-

ently, and the mood of the people has changed. Kerala is on the verge of the biggest transformation. On May 4, the end of the LDF misrule is clear.

The countdown for the LDF government has begun. For the first time in Kerala, a BJP-NDA government will come to power," he said.

Modi said, "Three days ago, when I was in Delhi, I had a phone meeting with BJP workers of Kerala regarding 'Mera Booth Sabse Majboot.' More than 5,000 Shakti Kendras and the BJP's 1.25 lakh workers joined me for 30 to 40 minutes. I could gauge that the people of Kerala have ensured the exit of the LDF government. I thank all BJP and NDA workers who are working hard in this election," he said.

Meanwhile, the FCRA issue had triggered huge protests in Kerala, with major Christian denominations coming out strongly against the amendment. The India Alliance MPs had also staged a protest outside the Parliament.

The vehement opposition expressed by Christian

denominations, who felt that the provisions could be used to target minority institutions, forced the Centre to put the Bill on hold. The state leadership cautioned the Central leadership regarding the possible backlash the party could suffer during the upcoming Assembly elections.

Modi said Kerala's faith, beliefs, and culture should be preserved, and Kerala should move forward on the path of development—this is our resolve.

The Prime Minister said barring one, the NDA is ruling in all states in the North East, which has a sizeable population of Christians. The development brought in these states by NDA governments now was never witnessed in the last 60 years.

Similarly, in Goa where the Christian community has a decisive presence, the BJP-NDA government has ushered in a new era of development.

Prime Minister Modi, who came under severe attack from Congress for skipping the Sabarimala issue during his last visit to Kerala a few days ago, spoke about the case at the Saturday rally. Rahul Gandhi had accused Modi of skipping the Sabarimala issue to favour the LDF

due to their alleged "secret deal" with the CPM.

"The theft in Sabarimala took place during the LDF period, but Congress also had links. The Left has always been known for attacking the Hindu faith, and the state government is not handing over the case to CBI. Congress is trying to stage a drama of showing love for Hindus. I want to say clearly that once the NDA government comes to power, the LDF and UDF will be punished for their wrongdoings, and the looted gold will be returned to the temple," the prime minister said.

Modi said, "In this election, Kerala will gain, but I will have a personal loss. You see, Anoop, who is contesting from here, has been working with me for the last five years. He brings issues from across the country to my office; he's a dedicated friend, my right hand. People may not know that Anoop has been with me for such a long time because he never tells anyone. I know his strengths—he works silently, tirelessly, day and night, and much of my work has been accomplished because of him. But when Kerala needed his services, I decided to accept my loss and hand Anoop over to all of you."

CM orders swift action in Macharla attempted rape case

Amaravati: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed police officials to immediately arrest the accused in the attempted rape of a woman government employee in Macharla town.

According to officials, an unidentified intruder forcibly entered the residence of the victim, an office subordinate in the Panchayat Raj Department, and attempted to sexually assault her. The incident has triggered serious concern within the administration.

Acting swiftly on the complaint, police registered a case and initiated an investigation. The victim was shifted to Guntur Government General Hospital for medical examination and treatment.

Senior police officials briefed the Chief Minister that special teams, led by an Additional Superintendent of

Police, have been constituted to trace and apprehend the accused. They added that several suspects have already been taken into custody and are being questioned as part of the investigation.

Taking a serious view of the incident, Naidu ordered that the accused be arrested at the earliest and dealt with strictly in accordance with the law. He emphasised that crimes against women will not be tolerated under any circumstances. The Chief Minister also instructed officials to ensure that such cases are handled with urgency and sensitivity, and that strong action should serve as a deterrent.



AP women's commission serious on Macherla assault, orders arrest of accused

A shocking incident involving the alleged rape of a female government employee in Macherla, Palnadu district, has triggered widespread outrage across the Telugu-speaking states.

The Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission has taken serious note of the incident, issuing directives for the immediate arrest of the accused and urging authorities to ensure comprehensive support for the victim.

Commission Chairperson Rayapati Sailaja personally spoke with the victim over the phone, expressing her concern and offering reassurance. She enquired about the victim's health and affirmed that both the Commission and the state government would stand firmly by her during this time.

Jharkhand air ambulance crash: Mid-air breakup suspected as AAIB flags 1-km debris trail

Jharkhand, April 4

The air ambulance crash in Jharkhand that killed seven people may have involved a mid-air structural breakup during cruise, experts indicated after the preliminary report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) revealed a widely scattered debris field stretching nearly a kilometre.

The accident, involving a Beechcraft King Air C90A operated by Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd, occurred on February 23 near Kasiyatu village in Chatra district. All seven on board two pilots, two medical personnel, a patient and two attendants were killed. The aircraft was completely destroyed.

According to the AAIB report released on Saturday, the aircraft was in the cruise phase when contact was lost. The last radio transmission was recorded at 1349 UTC, with the crash estimated around 1354 UTC, leaving a narrow five-minute window between routine communication and the accident.

Related news: Authorities looking into factors that could have caused Jharkhand plane crash

Investigators flagged a widespread debris pattern suggesting the aircraft may have broken apart mid-air. Both engines were found detached from the wings and while the right engine was about 250 metres away, the left engine nearly 640 metres from the main wreckage.

The tail section empennage was fragmented and scattered between 200 and 600 metres. Wing tips on both sides were broken and separated. The fuselage showed multiple fractures, while the cockpit and nose section were completely destroyed. The debris field extended close to one kilometre, indicating major structural disintegration before ground impact.

The aircraft, manufactured in 1987, had valid airworthiness and review certificates, with its last inspection conducted on January 20, 2026. It had logged over 6,600 flight hours. Both pilots held valid Commercial Pilot Licences and had earlier flown the Delhi-Ranchi sector the same day without reporting any technical snags. On the return leg, the aircraft departed Ranchi at 1337 UTC for Delhi after being refuelled with 830 litres. The crew requested a route deviation due to weather, which was approved. Further heading changes and a request to level off at Flight Level 140 were also cleared.

Weather conditions in Ranchi around the time included haze, cumulonimbus cloud presence and developing thunderstorm activity along with changing wind patterns. However, the report does not attribute the crash to weather at this stage. No distress call, ELT failed to activate. After the last acknowledged communication with Kolkata ATC, the aircraft ceased all transmissions. The Emergency Locator Transmitter ELT did not activate after the crash.



Hyderabad Police Caution against New Impersonation Scam Targeting Business Heads

Hyderabad: April 4

Cybercriminals have launched a new type of WhatsApp impersonation fraud specifically targeting business heads, CEOs, CFOs, and accountants of large corporations. By sending malicious phishing links to official email addresses, they are infiltrating computers with malware to gain full remote access to the systems, said Hyderabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar here on Saturday.

In a post on 'X', he said that once they gain control of a system, the attackers exploit active WhatsApp Web sessions to send misleading messages to accountants while posing as the CEO or CFO. They use social engineering tactics, claiming to be in an urgent meeting and unable to take calls, to trick staff into transferring crores of rupees immediately to their fraudulent accounts.

Since the messages appear to come from the actual WhatsApp accounts of the top executives, accountants often believe them to be genuine and process the payments. With several such cases being reported recently within the Hyderabad Commissionerate jurisdiction, every company must remain highly vigilant.

One should never blindly trust financial requests received on WhatsApp, even if they appear to be from superiors. It is essential to immediately call the person concerned directly to verify the authenticity of the message before making any transaction.



Companies should ensure that high-quality firewalls and antivirus software are installed on all office systems. Additionally, users must make it a habit to log out of WhatsApp Web after every use.

"If you fall victim to a cyber-fraud, do not delay and immediately call the 1930 helpline number or file a complaint at <http://cybercrime.gov.in>," he advised.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

On the FCRA amendments

The Centre wants to restrict foreign contributions to individuals and organisations in India, but intends to do so in a selective and opaque manner. A fresh set of amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, or FCRA, now temporarily stalled due to protests, is an attempt by the Centre to empower itself to arbitrarily take control of assets owned by recipients of foreign contributions. Introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25, 2026, the Bill to amend the FCRA proposes a comprehensive statutory framework for a new "designated authority" to seize, manage, and dispose of assets of organisations that lose their FCRA licence. Cloaked in the rhetoric of national security and foreign interventions, the move smacks of bad faith, or even worse, a devious scheme to snatch assets built through legal means. Once an FCRA registration ceases to exist, the designated authority can take control of assets built using foreign funds — schools, hospitals, places of worship — and use them. This process is proposed to be automatic and instantaneous upon the discontinuation of the FCRA status, requiring no judicial determination or adjudicatory process. In effect, the Centre that grants FCRA permission can decide to withdraw that permission, and benefit from its own decision. This is unfair in both principle and procedure, and Christian groups that run numerous health and educational institutions are particularly concerned, given that they may have received contributions from abroad. The Bill has been postponed for now, but the government has no plans to abandon it. The FCRA was first enacted in 1976, and reenacted in 2010 during the UPA regime and amended in 2020 under Narendra Modi — progressively tightening the receipt and use of foreign funds.

Sewerage Issue to Be Resolved Without Causing Inconvenience to the Public: Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



MLA and local leaders met Water Board Executive Director Pankaja — ED assures inspection with Zonal Commissioner and early resolution. KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 4 (Indian Chronicle). Residents of Mallikarjun Nagar Colony in Chilkanaagar Division, along with people from Chilkanaagar Hilltop and Bodrai areas, have been facing severe problems due to the absence of a proper sewerage outlet for the existing pipeline. The affected residents approached former corporator Bandala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj and requested the installation of a new outlet. "With the support of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, assurance was given that a proper outlet would be arranged. On Saturday, BRS state leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, along with senior leader Jalli Mohan, Mallikarjun Nagar President Ashok Chari, colony members, and residents from the Bodrai area, met the Water Works Executive Director Pankaja at her office, accompanied by the MLA. "During the meeting, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and the leaders explained the issue in detail. They stated that due to the lack of a proper outlet for the sewerage pipeline coming from the hilltop and Bodrai areas, sewage water has been overflowing from manholes, entering houses, and causing severe inconvenience to residents, making it difficult for them to even step outside. They also presented photos and videos of the situation. "Responding immediately, Executive Director Pankaja assured that she would visit the affected areas on Monday along with Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta. She stated that necessary steps would be taken at the earliest to install a trunk line and ensure that the sewerage water is properly diverted into an irrigation canal. "Several leaders, including MD Moula Ali, Shyam, Bharat, BRS party members, and local residents, participated in the program in large numbers.

Bhuvanagiri Municipal Vice Chairman Pothamsetty Manjula inaugurated CC Road



"(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Indian Chronicle Bureau.. April 4):- Bhuvanagiri Municipal Vice Chairman Pothamsetty Manjula Venkateswarlu inaugurated CC Road with HMDA funds in local ward 29 of Bhuvanagiri town. Speaking on the occasion, Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbha Anil Kumar Reddy said that Bhuvanagiri Municipality will take special care and move towards the development path. He said that Bhuvanagiri Municipality will be developed as a model municipality in the coming days.



press note "India Art Festival Hyderabad kicked off on Friday at the Jubilee Hills Convention Centre, bringing together a vibrant mix of art enthusiasts, artists, curators, and writers under one roof. The much-anticipated three-day art

fair has quickly established itself as one of Hyderabad's largest and most dynamic art gatherings, creating a lively cultural atmosphere in the city. "The festival opened to strong footfall, with collectors, celebrity visitors, and art lovers adding energy and excitement to the event. Showcasing an impressive collection of over 3,000 artworks by nearly 300 artists represented through 30 galleries, the fair offers a diverse and engaging panorama of contemporary and traditional Indian art. From paintings and sculptures to mixed media and experimental works, the exhibition reflects the evolving language of Indian art while also celebrating its rich heritage. "Visitors have the opportunity to interact directly with artists and gallery representatives, making the experience both immersive and insightful. The presence of renowned names alongside emerging talents ensures there is something for every kind of art enthusiast and collector. "Many art Galleries have brought together strong rosters of artists, contributing to the overall richness and diversity of the showcase. The festival continues to serve as an important platform for artistic dialogue, cultural exchange, and art appreciation. "The festival will remain open 11 am until 8:00 PM, till Sunday, 05 April, offering one last chance to experience this grand celebration of creativity and take home unique works of art.

45 years of Indervelli police firing on April 20



S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, April 4**On April 20 this year, it will be the 45th year since the infamous police firing on tribals at Indervelli mandal headquarters in Adilabad district took place. A few hundred Adivasis mainly from old united Adilabad district will assemble at the Martyrs column just outside Indervelli to pay homage to those who were killed in the police firing on that eventful day in 1981. "This instance, however, the event will be different from the past years on two counts. The commemoration will be held at a greatly physically transformed martyrs column and will be held for the first time after the Union government declared the country as free from left wing extremism. "The State government sanctioned Rs. 1 crore for beautification of the martyrs column and its surroundings besides setting up a museum at the place as soon as it assumed office. It has transformed into a beautiful place following the raising of a park. "As the activities of the CPI (Maoist) have presumably ended, observers opine that there will be no salutations from the side of naxals for the first time in the history of the incident. The observers assert that the outlaws had



assembled at some nearby place or village on April 20 every year to pay homage to the martyrs. "April 20, 1981, was a Monday, a busy day for the Raj Gonds and other tribes as it was the weekly shandy at Indervelli. But the tribals had also come in good numbers to attend a public meeting called by the Girijana Rythu Coolie Sangham, a frontal organisation of the CPI (Maoist), then known as CPI(ML) People's War. "The Adivasis were reportedly promised that their lands which were usurped or encroached upon by non-tribals would be handed over to them. The unsuspecting tribals had come flocking only to face the police firing which left 13 of them dead on the spot (scores were killed according to independent estimates). "Investigations which followed the police firing incident revealed that the police had cancelled the permission given to the GRCS the previous evening. The message, nevertheless, did not reach the tribals given the primitive stage of communications at that time. "Every year since then, the tribals have paid homage in their traditional way. The government on their part had started gradually lifting curbs on visiting the martyrs column in the year 2002.

Development Works to Begin Soon at Reddy-Munnuru Kapu Cremation Ground; 38 Lakhs Sanctioned



— Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy. KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 4 (Indian Chronicle). Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, announced that development works at the Reddy-Munnuru Kapu cremation ground in Uppal will commence very soon. "On Saturday, Parameshwar Reddy, along with members of the cremation ground committee, inspected the site. He stated that development works worth ?1.5 crore have already been completed at the cremation ground. He further informed that an additional ?38 lakhs has been sanctioned for the construction of an office room and other de-



velopment works. Necessary steps will be taken to begin and complete the works at the earliest, he added. Parameshwar Reddy also emphasized that efforts are being made to provide essential infrastructure in all cremation grounds across the constituency. The program was attended by President Mekala Hanumanth Reddy, Gone Prabhakar Reddy, Giri Ramakrishna, Ainla Venkatesh, D.R. Raju, Mekala Dayasagar Reddy, Poreddy Srinivas Reddy, Mandumula Anji Reddy, Gone Prem Sagar Reddy, Shameerpet Dharma Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Mekala Sharath Reddy, Mekala Samaved Reddy, Gone Arjun Reddy, Gone Krishna Reddy, Ainla Venkatesh, Siddu, Rokati Narsing, Ram Lakshman, and others.

Run for Jesus Rally Held Grandly in Uppal

Rally flagged off by Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy. KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 4 (Indian Chronicle). On the occasion of Good Friday and Easter, pastors from various churches and Christian organizations in Uppal organized a "Run for Jesus" program on Saturday. "The rally was flagged off by Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, he said that Jesus Christ was born to save humanity and preached values of equality, love, compassion, and service. He appreciated the organizers and extended his best wishes to all participants of the "Run for Jesus" event. "The rally started from Ganesh Nagar Church in Uppal and concluded at Uppal Cross Roads. Several leaders and members participated in the program, including Chilkanaagar Division In-charge Akiti Aagam Reddy, Uppal Christian minority leaders Seedarla Pushparaj, Kompally Balaraj Mudiraj, Rajesh, Uppal Constituency Christian Minority Co-ordinator Sadguna Rao, senior pastor G.K. Babu, Pastor B.C.K. Devadanam, Pastor Gona Philip, Pastor Agrippa, Pastor Ashok Rathi, Pastor Dr. Srinivas, Pastor Jacob Raj, Pastor Prabhakar, Pastor Nethaniel, Pastor Vijay Kumar, Pastor John, Pastor Devaraj, along with many local pastors and church elders who participated in large numbers.



Surprise Inspection at Tiryani Police Station – SP Nitika Panth IPS Issues Key Directions



"Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 04. In A Move To Strengthen law and Order. District SP Nitika Panth IPS conducted a surprise inspection of Tiryani Police Station on Saturday. During the visit, the SP examined various aspects including station premises, records maintenance, progress of pending cases, attendance register, and overall cleanliness of the station. The SP gave important instructions to SHO Venkatesh and the staff: Police personnel must remain alert at all times to maintain peace and security. "Special focus should be given to controlling illegal activities, smuggling, and drug-related offenses in villages. "Efforts should be made to encourage installation of CCTV cameras in mandal headquarters and villages. All complainants and citizens visiting the station should be treated with respect. "Special attention must be given to cases related to women and children safety. Night patrolling and surveillance should be carried out regularly without fail. "The SP strictly instructed that stringent legal action must be taken against anyone disturbing public peace and safety. — District Police Department, Kumuram Bheem Asifabad. End..

Repair Of Anganwadi Borewell In Narlapur



— Sarpanch Bapuji Takes Initiative. Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 04. In Narlapur village under Sarandi Gram Panchayat, a damaged borewell near the Anganwadi building was repaired on Saturday under the leadership of Sarpanch Muhurle Bapuji and Deputy Sarpanch Diddaji. "With the repair work completed, the drinking water problem in the area has been resolved, bringing relief to the villagers. On this occasion, the Sarpanch also created awareness about water conservation and advised people to protect public resources. Villagers appreciated the initiative taken by the Sarpanch.

Demand to Declare Public Holiday on Buddha Purnima; Honorarium for Buddhist Priests Urged



"Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 04. Declare Holiday on Buddha Purnima – Honorarium for Buddhist Priests Demanded. Bharatiya Buddha Maha Sabha Submits Memorandum to District Collector Haritha The Bharatiya Buddha Maha Sabha and Ambedkar Youth Associations have demanded that the government declare an official holiday on the occasion of Bhagwan Buddha Jayanti (Vaishakha Purnima). They also urged the government to provide honorarium to Buddhist priests on par with priests of other religions. "In this regard, a memorandum was submitted to District Collector Haritha at the Komuram Bheem Asifabad Collectorate on Saturday. Responding to the request, the Collector assured that the matter would be forwarded to higher authorities and the State Government. "Meanwhile, as per the directions of the State Committee, memorandums were also submitted at Tahsildar offices across various mandals by local committees. This was stated by Bharatiya Buddha Maha Sabha District President Ashok Mahalkar. The program was attended by District President Ashok Mahalkar, Vice President Vinesh Upre, Treasurer Durgam Tirupati, Chief Advisors Durgam Shyam Rao and Durgam Babu Rao, Samaj Kranti Aghadi District Leader Gadam Harish, RPI (BA) District President Shyam Rao, Donduji Durge, Bhim Sena District President Raju Chunarakar, and other members.

Chalivendram Inaugurated at Ramanthapur by Uppal Constituency Congress In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy



--- Chalivendram set up under the leadership of Division Working President Vallapu Sreekanth Yadav (KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 4 (Indian Chronicle)). "A chalivendram (free drinking water facility) set up at the Public School bus stop in Ramanthapur was inaugurated by Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-Charge, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, who attended the event as the chief guest. The facility was arranged under the leadership of Division Congress Party Working President Vallapu Sreekanth Yadav. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy appreciated Sreekanth Yadav for organizing the chalivendram to quench people's thirst during the summer. He said that setting up such facilities is a commendable initiative and praised Sreekanth Yadav for com-

ing forward to serve the public." He urged the residents of Ramanthapur to make good use of the facility and encouraged Congress leaders to come forward and establish more chalivendrams at necessary locations to help people during the summer season. "Several leaders and local residents, including Ganesh Naik, Poosa Satyanarayana, Jaleel Pasha, Kandi Shruvan Reddy, Bullet Ashok, Muthyala Jangaiah, Baburao, Balaraj, Sandeep, Swami, G. Swami, Bhaskar Gangaputra, Bhaskar, Sridhar, Raji Reddy, Indrasena Reddy, Santosh, Yogi, Raj Kumar, Chintu, Kiran, Gautham, Ramraj, Ramakrishna, Naveen, Mahesh, Menga Ravi, Raju, Ravi, Vijju, Satish Goud, Sai Yadav, Shankar, Aju, Ambika, Srilatha, Shobha and others participated in the program."

A steel grill should be installed around the Phule statue..BC Welfare Association District President:- "Kotha Narasimhaswamy,



around the statue of Jyothirao Phule at Jagadevpur intersection in Bonagiri town. For some time now, there has been no grill around the statue of Jyothirao Phule, and strangers have been committing anti-social acts near the statue. The atmosphere near the statue is unhygienic with garbage and debris, which is making the statue unsafe. As part of the grand celebration of Jyothirao Phule's birth anniversary on the 11th of this month, the Bhuvanagiri Town Municipal Chairperson met with Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar and explained the problem to the District President. The statue has been unsafe for many years. Please recognize this and install a steel grill around the statue to solve this problem. Under the auspices of the BC Welfare Association District Committee, the District President Kotha Narasimhaswamy and the leaders of the District Committee Together, they handed over a petition to the local municipal chairperson, Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar. Former market chairman Potnak Pramod Kumar, 20th ward councilor Pacharla Jaganga Mudiraj, Rajaka Sangam district vice presidents Sirikonda Sivakumar, Kura Sivakumar, and other BC leaders participated in the program.

"(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Indian Chronicle Bureau.. April 4):- We all know that the month of April is celebrated as the month of great people across the country. As part of the celebrations of the birth anniversary of the great man, a steel grill should be installed

Transparent Sand Supply Through Online Booking via "Mana Isuka Vahanam Portal": Collector Haritha



"Indian Chronicle. Jade Srinivas. April, 04. "Kumram Bheem," Asifabad District Collector Haritha stated that steps should be taken to ensure the supply of sand in a fully transparent manner through online booking via the "Mana Isuka Vahanam Portal." She participated in a training program organized by the Centre for Good Governance at the Integrated Collectorate Complex on Saturday. Additional Collector M. David, Asifabad RDO Lokeshwar Rao, District Panchayat Officer Bikshapathi, and officials from the Mines and Geology Department were also present. "Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed that from April 1 onwards, sand should be supplied only through online booking and illegal transportation must be strictly curbed. She emphasized that Tahsildars, Panchayat Secretaries, Village Administrative Officers, and operators should have complete awareness of their roles and responsibilities on the portal. She noted that managing sand transportation

through an online system would ensure transparency." She further stated that Panchayat Secretaries are responsible for creating awareness among beneficiaries, especially those under Indiramma housing, about the usage of the portal. Officials were instructed to work in coordination to prevent illegal sand transportation. "The Collector also directed officials to ensure there are no drinking water shortages during the summer by repairing hand pumps, borewells, and pipelines. She instructed that sanitation activities should be carried out daily in villages and that controllers should be installed to prevent streetlights from remaining on during the daytime. "Regarding the ongoing enumeration process, she said Panchayat Secretaries should assist enumerators in preparing household lists. Tahsildars were directed to clear all pending Bhubharati applications. She also instructed that the distribution of three months' PDS rice should be managed smoothly without overcrowding. "Furthermore, officials were asked to expedite voter mapping under the Special Summary Revision and ensure the successful completion of house listing and related activities through proper coordination. "Tahsildars, Panchayat Secretaries, Village Administrative Officers, and other concerned officials participated in the program.

MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Attends VMR Chittrakoot High School Annual Day Celebrations"

NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR) Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, April 4 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the Annual Day celebrations of VMR Chittrakoot High School located in Sainikpuri and Saipuri. Addressing the gathering, he emphasized that students should not focus only on academics during their school years but also actively participate in extracurricular activities. He stated that involvement in various activities helps children become more active and mentally strong, contributing to their overall development. The event was attended by former corporator Kotta Ramarao, S.A. Rahim, School Correspondent Varkati Mallikarjun Reddy, Principal Vasavi, and others.



Celebrate the conference being held for the use of Godavari water:- Kondamadugu Narasimha's call



"(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Indian Chronicle Bureau.. April 4):- Kondamadugu Narasimha, the district co-convenor of Musi Prakashalana - Godavari Jalala Porata Vedita, has called for farmers, agricultural laborers and professionals to participate in a large scale and celebrate the district conference being held at the GBR Function Hall in Pochampally town on Monday, the 6th of this month at 10 am, demanding the provision of Godavari water instead of the poisonous water of Musi. On Saturday, in Pillayapalli village under Pochampally mandal, on the occasion of the 3rd Mahasabha of Telangana Rythu Sangam Bhuvanagiri District, which is being held in Pochampally town on the 6th and 7th of this month, Narasimha participated in the auto campaign organized to make the "Moosi Prakashalana - Godavari Jalala Sadhana" conference being held in Pochampally town on the 6th and expressed his concern that the Pochampally region is in danger of turning into a desert in the coming time due to the poisonous waters of the Moosi. He said that the lives of the people of the Moosi region have not changed even after the rulers have changed. He criticized that there is no one who cares after winning votes by saying that they will purify the

Moosi and stop the toxic pollution emitted from industries in a hurry for power. He said that the suffering of farmers, agricultural workers, laborers and professionals due to the poisonous waters of the Moosi is not all. He expressed his concern that all the people in this area are living in fear and are living with their lives in their hands. He said that the people of Musi region are suffering from many types of diseases like skin diseases, cancer, kidney pain, knee pain, hair loss due to toxic water. He said that all the problems will be solved only when Godavari water is provided to this area instead of the toxic water of Musi. Narasimha urged people from all walks of life to participate in the conference being held on Monday for the purpose of achieving Godavari water without any political affiliation and to achieve victory. Senior leaders of the farmers' association Gudur Anji Reddy, district assistant secretary Kota Ramachandra Reddy, district committee members Gudur Buchi Reddy, CITU mandal convener Manchala Madhu, farmers' association urban leaders Bugga Lakshmaiah, village farmers' association leaders Bhatka Bikshapati, Pagilla Gangareddy, Chukka Jangaiah, Ram Reddy and others participated in the program.

Kuchipudi Dance Performance Enthralls at Uppal Mini Shilparamam



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, April 4 (Indian Chronicle). "As part of the weekend cultural programs at Uppal Mini Shilparamam, a captivating Kuchipudi dance performance by the disciples of Naga Alekhyia was held on Saturday evening, leaving the audience thoroughly mesmerized. "The performers presented a series of classical pieces including Mooshika Vahana, Okapari Kokapari, Adigo Alladigo, Narayana Achyuta, Bhavamulona, Shuddha Brahma, Kondalalo Nelakonna, Veyu Namala, Rama Shabdham, Sri Sharadamba, Garuda Gamana, and Namashivayate. "The talented dancers—Deetika, Samanvita, Janusha, Mahati, Deekshita, Ruhaniika, Rahul Prateetya, Gautami, Sreeshma, Harini, Sreeniksha, Ritish, Kavyashree, Varnika, Bhanupriya, and Neetika—delivered graceful performances and won appreciation from the audience.

Appointment of Booth Level Agents Must Be Undertaken - State Chief Electoral Officer Sudarshan Reddy.



conference hall, District Collector Ankit stated that the progress of the SSR process in the district has already reached 61.25 percent. He mentioned that all departments are working in coordination to complete the remaining tasks within the stipulated timeframe, and that the process is being accelerated by taking specific measures in every Mandal. He further noted that steps are being taken to enhance coordination with political party representatives and to complete the appointment of Booth Level Agents expeditiously. The Collector stated that all necessary measures are being taken to ensure that the voter list revision process is conducted with transparency and accuracy. Additional Collector Venugopal, Election Superintendent Ranga Prasad, staff member Naveen, and others participated in this meeting.

"Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, April 04, Indian Chronicle: State Chief Electoral Officer Sudarshan Reddy stated that representatives of all political parties should cooperate in a coordinated manner to expedite the appointment of Booth Level Agents (BLAs) as part of the Special Summary Revision (SSR) process of the voter list. On Saturday, conducting a review meeting with the District Collectors of all districts in the state via video conference from Hyderabad—joined by other relevant senior officials—he addressed the participants. Speaking on this occasion, he noted that since meetings regarding the appointment of Booth Level Agents have already been conducted at the Mandal level with Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) and Booth Level Officers (BLOs), the cooperation of political party representatives should be enlisted to further accelerate the SSR process. He further directed that meetings be organized immediately in areas where they have not yet taken place. He emphasized that Booth Level Officers must possess a comprehensive understanding of the relevant mobile application and take necessary precautions to ensure that no errors occur during the voter data mapping process. Participating in the meeting from the IDOC video

Telangana EAPCET 2026 registrations dip by nearly 17,000

Hyderabad: The registrations for the Telangana Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test (TG EAPCET) 2026 slumped by nearly 17,000. As many as 2,89,974 candidates applied as the last date to register without a late fee concluded Saturday, which was 16,867 fewer applications than last year when total registrations stood at 3,06,841. One of the reasons for drop in applications is attributed to scrapping of the non-local seats quota for Andhra Pradesh students for admissions to colleges in Telangana. "Last time, there was no clarity on non-local quota admissions in Telangana till the last moment. With the government already clearing the issue last year, this time, Andhra Pradesh students

Increase Field Visits and Respond Promptly to Public Issues – District Collector Ankit.



the medical services being provided to the patients. He issued orders to ensure that all necessary medicines are kept in ample supply and to maintain continuous oversight of their distribution. He also instructed that the hospital premises be kept clean and hygienic. Additionally, he reviewed the '108' ambulance services and gathered details regarding emergency response operations. Subsequently, the collector inspected the tahsildar's office and conducted a review of its overall functioning and the services being rendered to the public. On this occasion, he emphasized that officials should focus on touring the field level and resolving public grievances immediately. He issued directives to expedite the resolution of pending applications under the 'Bhubharathi' scheme. Inquiring about the drinking water situation in the Mandal, the collector noted that while supplies through 'Mission Bhagiratha' are proceeding smoothly, officials must proactively identify potential issues that may arise during the summer season and keep alternative measures ready. He directed that special attention be paid to the cleanliness of water tanks. He warned that sanitation drives must be conducted regularly in the villages; otherwise, there is a risk of diseases such as dengue and malaria spreading. He also reviewed the utilization of fogging machines. Upon inquiring about mobile signal issues, it was noted that connectivity problems persist in certain villages. As part of a review of the agricultural sector, he gathered details regarding the crops currently under cultivation in the Mandal. He questioned officials regarding water availability, groundwater levels, and the accessibility of irrigation water through borewells. He suggested that measures be taken to strengthen women's self-help groups and to ensure that every woman is enrolled as a member of these groups. He also reviewed the progress of works under the Employment Guarantee Scheme. During a review meeting of the Education Department, the District Collector expressed strong displeasure upon observing that schools across the Mandal were failing to adhere to the prescribed menu under the Midday Meal Scheme, in addition to issues regarding food quality. He issued a stern warning to MEO Shantharao, directing him to conduct continuous inspections of all schools and take strict action against any officials found to be negligent; failing to do so, the collector warned, would result in strict disciplinary action being taken against the MEO himself. He further ordered that supervision at the field level be significantly enhanced. District Collector Ankit instructed officials to work in close coordination across all sectors—including drinking water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and agriculture—to ensure the delivery of improved services to the public. Accompanying the collector during this visit were Tahsildar Jagadeeswar Prasad, MPDO Srinu, Mandal Special Officer Lal Chand, Headmistress Sarojini, Health Educator Ramadevi, officials and staff from various departments, and local farmers.

Invitation to Babu Jagjivan Ram Jayanti Celebrations Extended to Uppal Congress In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy



under the leadership of Chikanagar Division Congress Party President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj. "On this occasion, they informed Parameshwar Reddy that the celebrations would be organized in a grand manner by the Scheduled Caste Seva Sangham at the Indira Gandhi statue within the division limits. Along with the Jayanti celebrations of former Deputy Prime Minister Babu Jagjivan Ram, preparations are also underway for the upcoming birth anniversary celebrations of Constitution architect Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on April 14. As part of these arrangements, a donation was handed over to the Scheduled Caste Seva Sangham leaders by Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy through the hands of Division Congress President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy advised the members of the association to work collectively to ensure the celebrations are conducted successfully and on a grand scale. "Medchal District DCC General Secretary Kompalli Balaraj, Chikanagar Division Congress In-charge Akkiti Aagam Reddy, Sriramulu, B.M. Kiran, Ramcharla Balaram, Kurelli Yadagiri, Palnati Kishitayya, Marapaka Sailu, Palnati David, Podishetti Krishna, Kanukuntla Ravi, Palnati Ramesh, Cheripothula Chandrayya, and others participated in the program.

Drinking Water Issue Resolved in Shapur Nagar, Residents Express Relief



timely intervention. Local representatives including Nursing Goud, Tati Ravikumar, and other residents were present during the resolution of the issue.

Strict action will be taken if gender determination tests are conducted

Warangal Police Commissioner Sun Preet Singh "Devulapalli Srinivas, Warangal Bureau, April 4 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal Police Commissioner Sun Preet Singh has warned that strict action will be taken if gender determination tests are conducted at scanning centers. He stated in a release on Saturday that conducting gender determination tests is a punishable offense by law, and strict measures are being taken within the Warangal Police Commissionerate limits to completely curb illegal activities such as determining the sex of a fetus and sex selection. "On this occasion, the CP said that actions like identifying the sex of the unborn child, revealing it, or conducting abortions based on it are becoming a serious threat to society. He noted that this is particularly leading to a decline in the number of girl children, and strict enforcement of the law is being carried out within the commissionerate limits. "He warned that if scanning tests are conducted on pregnant women and the gender of the unborn child is disclosed, strict action will be taken against the organizers and doctors. He pointed out that even in the modern age, due to discrimination against girls, some people are undergoing gender determination tests through scanning and opting for abortions, resulting in only 894 girls being born for every 1000 boys, creating a significant imbalance in the sex ratio. "He emphasized that today girls are competing equally with boys and excelling in all fields, and discrimination against girls is unacceptable. He urged everyone to move forward with the slogan: "Let the girl child be born, let her



live, let her be educated. "He also instructed doctors to mandatorily display boards about the Prohibition of Sex Determination Act in scanning centers. In this context, he said that all ultrasound scanning centers within the Warangal Commissionerate must operate only with proper legal registration and strictly follow regulations. He appealed to the public to inform the police station, Dial 100, or the control room at SB 8712685257 if any gender determination activities are noticed. He stated that protecting girl children and maintaining gender equality is the social responsibility of everyone.

GHMC Action Sparks Tension at Suraram Crossroads in Quthbullapur Constituency



- Puppala Bhaskar "NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR) Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, April 4 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "Tension prevailed at Suraram Crossroads in Quthbullapur constituency on Saturday after GHMC staff carried out enforcement actions citing court orders, allegedly removing temporary sheds set up by small shop owners. According to local reports, footpaths had already been constructed on both sides of the road to facilitate pedestrian movement. However, shopkeepers had installed temporary sheds in the space behind the footpaths to protect themselves from rain and heat. GHMC officials attempted to remove these structures, leading to protests from traders and locals. Reacting strongly to the incident, local BRS leader Puppala Bhaskar questioned the officials and demanded an immediate halt to the action. He criticized the



government, stating that over the past two years it has focused more on destructive measures rather than development works. He further alleged that the government has failed to fulfill promises made to the public and is now targeting poor and small-scale traders, affecting their livelihoods. He termed the actions of GHMC officials as unjust, accusing them of ignoring real issues while harassing small vendors and carrying out unnecessary demolitions. Bhaskar warned that if such actions continue, there will be strong opposition from the public. He urged the authorities to focus on providing permanent solutions to civic issues without disturbing the livelihoods of small business owners. He also emphasized that protecting small traders and extending support to them is the responsibility of the government.

"If given a ministerial position, Jeevan Reddy wouldn't have resigned from Congress,"

—says ex-minister's criticism, District Congress President Gajangi Nandaya. "JAGITIAL, April 4, (Indian Chronicle): Gajangi Nandaya, district Congress president, criticized Jeevan Reddy, saying, "If you were given a ministerial position, wouldn't you have resigned from the party?" He alleged that Jeevan Reddy never allowed any party worker to cross the village boundary. "Addressing a press conference in Jagtial, Nandaya said, "Before Revanth Reddy became PCC president, Congress was on its last breath, on a ventilator. Revanth Reddy saved the party. You (Jeevan Reddy) should know this. "Nandaya questioned Jeevan Reddy's sudden love for BRS, asking, "You criticized BRS for 20 years, and now you're saying Telangana wouldn't exist without Kaleshwaram? Is this justified?" He added, "If the government had given you an MLC renewal and a ministerial position, you wouldn't have resigned, would you?" "Nandaya also accused Jeevan Reddy's followers of selling councilor tickets for ₹20 lakh and questioned why Jeevan Reddy didn't stop them. "We've been loyal to the party for four decades, and you know our dedication," he said. "The meeting was attended by Municipal Chairper-



son Samindla Vani Srinivas, PCC Secretary Giri Nagabhushan, Jagtial Market Committee Chairman Gaddam Narayana Reddy, Ravinder Rao, Pipperi Anita, Biram Rajesh, Mukesh Khanna, former Municipal Vice Chairman Goli Srinivas, councilors Boyinapelli Prashanth Rao, Pitta Dharmaraju, and others.

Discrimination in the allocation of funds for employment guarantee works is unacceptable

Stopping EGS funds to villages where BRS party sarpanches won is an act of vendetta

— Former BRS MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy "Devulapalli Srinivas, Warangal Bureau, April 4 (Indian Chronicle): Former BRS MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy stated that the Congress government is acting out of vendetta by showing discrimination in the allocation of funds for employment guarantee works, and demanded that the MLA and the Collector explain why EGS funds are being withheld from villages where BRS party sarpanches have won. "In a press release issued on Saturday, he said that as part of the central government's employment guarantee scheme, sarpanches and people across all villages in the Narsampet constituency are working hard on employment guarantee works. However, he alleged that development funds under the material component, meant for village development through the labor component of the scheme, are being allocated only to villages where Congress party sarpanches have won, calling it an act of vendetta. "He questioned how it is fair that when village sarpanches work closely with the people and carry out employment guarantee works together, the funds allocated to villages where BRS sarpanches have won are being diverted to neighboring villages. He said that by converting village-based work efforts into division-level units and allocating funds only to villages with Congress sarpanches, the MLA is clearly displaying discrimination, thereby hindering village development. "He expressed concern that, unlike ever before, the



Congress government is now misusing the employment guarantee law and politically obstructing village development. He criticized officials for acting like puppets in the hands of ruling party leaders and said they must be held accountable for this discrimination. "Peddi Sudarshan Reddy warned that the District Collector and EGS officials should immediately respond and ensure fair allocation of funds to all villages to support development, or else a public uprising would be inevitable.

Kolkata Police, RVNL finalise three-night block for crucial work



GNS News Agency, April 4

The Kolkata Police and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) have finalised a three-night window to complete the "missing link" at the busy Chingrighata intersection, marking a significant breakthrough for the New Garia-Airport Metro corridor. The completion of this segment is crucial for the entire Orange Line project. If the upcoming night traffic blocks and subsequent construction phases proceed without further delays, the officials have estimated that the full line extending to the Jai Hind (Airport) Metro station will be operational by April 2027. The construction is scheduled to take place between May 17 and 19.

To minimise the impact on the city's arterial traffic, the work will be confined to a five-hour window each night, running from midnight to 5:00 am, according to sources. Authorities have chosen the mid-May window to coincide with the start of school summer vacations. With schools likely closing around May 15, officials are expecting a significantly lower vehicular load on the EM Bypass. The move comes after months of deliberation. RVNL has been actively seeking a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) for night traffic blocks at the Chingrighata crossing since September 2024. The intersection is one of the most congested points in the city, making the coordination between rail authorities and traffic police vital. While the work is scheduled for late-night hours, motorists using the EM Bypass during May third week are advised to monitor traffic updates for any temporary diversions near the Chingrighata flyover. Following this work, three critical pillar numbers — 317, 318, and 319 — which stand unfinished will be connected and the Metro line will be connected from Southern suburbs to the IT hub of Sector V. This 366-meter missing link in the Orange Line (Line 6) has been a major point of frustration for commuters for several months. While the line is currently operational from Kavi Subhash (New Garia) up to Belegghata (Hemanta Mukhopadhyay), the final connection to the tech hub remains severed at this bottleneck.

Mass fish deaths in Sutlej near Harike, activists blame factory effluents, Buddha Nullah discharge

GNS News Agency, April 4 A viral video of a large number of dead fish floating on the Sutlej surface downstream of Harike Headworks in Ferozepur district has farmer leaders enraged, who blamed it on the depletion of oxygen levels due to the discharge of industrial effluents and polluted water from Ludhiana's Buddha Nullah and demanded that the Punjab government take immediate action against them. The incident is a grim reminder of a 2018 incident when polluted discharge allegedly from a liquor factory killed thousands of fish at the Beas-Satluj confluence at Harike.

Bhartiya Kisan Union (Totewala) state president Sukh Gill, also a leader of the Azad Kisan Morcha, Punjab, livestocked heaps of dead fish in the Sutlej near Dina village — the first village downstream of the headworks — on Facebook, questioning the causes behind the mass fish deaths. "We are responsible for only 500 metres downstream of Harike Headworks. Dina village, where fish were found dead, is not under our jurisdiction. Also, we have checked our jurisdiction, and did not find fish mortality. It could be a local issue," Wildlife Range Officer, Harike Wetland, Kanwaljit Singh said. "Factories dumping industrial effluent and Buddha Nullah's toxic discharge are responsible

for the mass fish deaths. The Punjab government must stop this pollution, or else a major agitation will erupt in the coming days," Gill stated.

"The mass fish deaths have created panic and anger. Farmer leaders and environmentalists claim that factory effluents and Ludhiana's Buddha Nullah sewage are causing massive damage to aquatic life. The Punjab government, which is solely responsible for curbing river pollution, failed. We demand an immediate curb on the discharge of polluted water and strict action against factory owners. If no steps are taken soon, a massive struggle will be launched," Gill warned. A meeting called by activists was attended by Balwinder Singh Sandhu (core committee member, Punjab), Gurcharan Singh Totewala district president, Moga), Raja Sandhu, Sukh Mallhi (core committee member, Punjab), Daljit Singh (sarpanch & general secretary, Punjab), Pippal Singh Kot Sadar Khan (core committee member, Punjab), Gurpreet Singh Firoz Shah, Tamjit Singh Gill (district president, Ferozepur), Gurmaj Singh Karnuwalla (core committee member, Punjab), Kuljit Singh Ronta (youth president, Moga), Chandandeep Singh Ronta (block president, Nihal Singh Wala), and Bohar Singh (unit president, Danewala).

MMSBY row: 55,000 Punjab govt staffers refuse health cards over low coverage concerns

GNS News Agency, April 4

More than 55,000 regular clerical employees with nearly 46 Punjab government departments, under the banner of the Punjab State Ministerial Services Union (PSMSU), have refused to opt for the Mukh Mantri Sehat Bima Yojana (MMSBY) after the union held a virtual meeting on March 29, stating that "the health packages for various diseases have been fixed, and the amounts are too low." PSMSU state president Gurnam Singh Virk said, "On March 30, the union formally communicated the decision to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Health Minister Dr Balbir Singh and Punjab Chief Secretary KAP Sinha that no union employee was keen to get their health cards under MMSBY."

However, the health minister told The Indian Express that he had not received any formal representation from the union. "I have not yet received their representation," he said. Explaining the reasons behind the decision, Virk said, "We have studied the scheme and found the health packages for various diseases have been fixed, and the amount is very low. Also, employees have expressed their apprehension that opting for MMSBY can lead to discontinuation of the existing reimbursement system and the monthly medical allowances."

"Moreover, the Punjab government has long been defaming union employees and not fulfilling our demands. Thus, the union has decided not to get our health cards made under the scheme," Virk, currently posted as the personal assistant to the Faridkot Deputy Commissioner, said. Virk explained that regular employees are entitled to a monthly medical allowance of Rs 500 and can also reimburse medical bills as per the prescribed government norms. The reimbursement facility covers employees, pensioners and their dependents, and allows treatment in both government and private hospitals, he said. The Punjab government launched MMSBY in January, projecting it as a universal health insurance scheme offering coverage of up to Rs 10 lakh per family annually. The scheme has around 2,359 treatment packages, each with fixed rates determined by the state.

On March 26, a joint meeting of major employee unions, including PSMSU, Punjab Civil Secretariat and Directorate employees' bodies, the Employees-Pensioners Joint Front, Contributory Pension Fund Employees Union, and organisations associated with the Old Pension Restoration Joint Platform, was held in Chandigarh on March 26, deciding to "unite for common demands and intensify joint struggle". To formalise the structure of this emerging alliance and chalk out future strategy, another meeting was



been scheduled for April 4 at Pensioners Bhawan in Ludhiana. More unions are likely to reject MMSBY at the meeting on April 4," Virk said, adding, "If more unions adopt the same position, then nearly three lakh regular employees and around four lakh pensioners will join us." Contractual, outsourced employees have no issues

Though regular employees are refusing to opt for MMSBY, the contractual or outsourced employees have no issues with the scheme. In Patiala, several employees of the Punjab Roadways Transport Corporation got their health cards made from Wednesday to Friday. PSMSU general secretary Tarsem Bhattal said, "The issue surfaced earlier when the Ferozepur administration circulated instructions on March 26, asking employees to get MMSBY cards made." "The employees, who are members of PSMSU, refused to get the health card made. Subsequently, the union held a meeting and a collective decision was made that no one from our union will get the health card, which is not of much use to us," Bhattal added.

Discuss with us if you have any doubts: health minister told The Indian Express, "They should discuss the health card scheme with us if they have any doubts, rather than deciding not to opt for it. I am open to any kind of query about the MMSBY." Seeking to reassure employees, the minister said, "I want to tell the employees that under this scheme, they can avail cashless treatment up to Rs 10 lakh. If the treatment cost exceeds Rs 10 lakh, it will be reimbursed as per the employees' policy. The existing system of reimbursement will continue as normal. Employees need not worry about that." The minister, meanwhile, said the scheme was receiving "very good" response. "MMSBY is receiving a very good response. We launched it in January, and by the end of March, treatment worth Rs 300 crore has been carried out under the scheme."

Respect public verdict in Kyatanapally municipality: Gangula Kamalakar

Karimnagar: Senior BRS leader and Karimnagar MLA Gangula Kamalakar wanted the state government to protect the democracy by honoring the public verdict in Kyatanapally municipality of Mancherial district. Voters of Kyatanapally gave a clear verdict by electing ten BRS and four CPI councilors. Both the parties have decided to share the power in the municipality. Despite pressures from the ruling party, councilors of both the parties have protected the democracy by following the public verdict by not deviating during the last 51 days.

So, the state government as well as the Minister G Vivek should also respect the public decision instead of

creating troubles in the election of municipal chairman and vice-election election scheduled on Saturday. It was the responsibility of the police and election commission to take steps to conduct elections in a peaceful manner. It was reluctant if the government tries to distribute the peaceful atmosphere by using power, he made these comments while speaking to reporters here on Saturday. BRS leader Balka Suman wanted the police and government officials to work as public servants instead of the employees of companies owned by the Minister Vivek. Both BRS and CPI councilors from Kyatanapally, who stayed in a private hotel here on Friday night, went to Kyatanapally on Saturday morning.

'My son is still alive': As family performs his last rites, Ahmedabad boy's heart continues beating — in another teen



Ahmedabad teen A Class 12 science student, Krish was riding a two-wheeler to his tuition centre on a busy road on March 28 when a mini truck on the opposite lane blew the horn to drive away a blue bull on the road. (Express Photo) When the Akbaris, a family largely of medical practitioners in Ahmedabad, came to know that their 17-year-old son Krish Akbari was declared brain dead by doctors at a hospital following a road accident, they knew that nothing can be done to save him. His father Dr Ravi Akbari, a practising physiotherapist, says after discussions, the family decided to donate Krish's organs. "We thought, if he cannot survive, then at least he can give life to others," Dr Akbari said. The family donated his organs, benefiting six other people, three of them teenagers. "Even as his last rites were being performed, his heart continued beating inside a 13-year-old boy from Bhavnagar in an operating theatre," Dr Ravi Akbari says. "By the time the cremation was over, the transplant of his heart was complete. In a way, my son is still alive," he said. His hands were donated to someone in Faridabad and lungs to a 22-year-old in Ahmedabad. His kidneys went to two teenagers, and corneas will give sight to someone. A Class 12 science student, Krish was riding a two-wheeler to his tuition centre on a busy road on March 28 when a mini truck on the opposite lane blew the horn to drive away a blue bull on the road. The startled bull jumped across the divider onto the boy.

"Krish had no time to react. The weight and force of the blue bull was so much that it directly hit his face. His left side of the face was bleeding and the eye was damaged. Locals called the 108 ambulance and Krish was aware

enough at the time to give them his mother's phone number. We reached the spot immediately, but a lot of blood loss had already occurred," says Dr Akbari. After Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) his pulse revived a bit at the hospital and the bleeding was controlled but there was no movement and no awareness. He was placed on a ventilator. The following day (March 29), an MRI was done at Marengo CIMS Hospital, but doctors told the family that there was no blood supply to the brain. "At the time of the accident for about 20-30 minutes the heart was shut so the brain got no oxygen supply and several brain cells had got permanently damaged," Dr Akbari said. Dr Akbari, whose brother is a spine surgeon, said the family's medical background helped them understand the situation. "Other organs can survive for some time, but the brain cannot survive a 30-minute window without blood supply," he said. "Even for a coma, at least one brain cell needs to be alive — and he didn't even have that."

Two apnea tests — conducted as part of the brain death protocol — confirmed that there was no brain activity. "At that time, your mind does not work," he said. "At that point, there was no treatment, no surgery, no possibility. If there was even a small hope, I would have taken him to any corner of the world. But there was no option," he says. The option of organ donation was then discussed with the family. "We decided — his mother and I — that we should save as many lives as possible. We didn't choose the recipients. We just gave approval, the government handled the rest," he says. Krish's heart, lungs, kidneys, cornea and hands were donated through the government's centralised organ allocation system. On Friday, at his prayer meet the kids of his age who came to grieve with the family were given a personalised bottle of perfume with Krish Akbari's name inscribed on it, his father said. He also pointed to the circumstances of the accident, urging authorities to address incidents involving blue bulls on city roads. "What happened to my child can happen to anyone," he said. "The government must act so that such incidents do not repeat." In the days since, the family has received messages from across the country, but Dr Akbari says the focus should remain on awareness. "When you know the body cannot survive but the organs can help someone else, you should consider it," he said. A statement from Marengo CIMS said this was the "first-ever hand donation in the private sector".

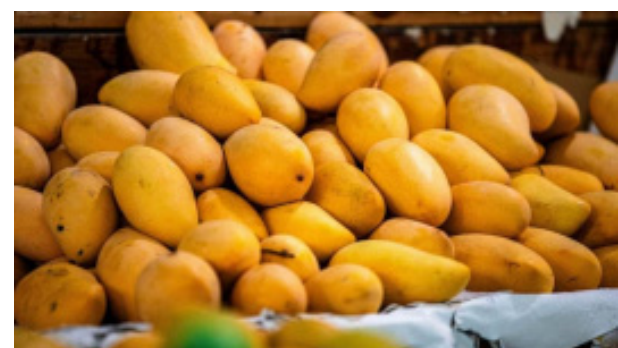
Calcium carbide in your mangoes: Hyderabad cracks down on ripening agents, top cop issues warning

GNS News Agency, April 4

As mango stocks started arriving in Hyderabad markets, police and municipal authorities have launched separate operations to check for the use of illegal ripening agents that pose health risks. On April 4 and 5, police arrested at least two wholesale fruit traders who were allegedly using excessive ripening agents and chemicals to ripen mangoes from Andhra Pradesh. One of the men, who runs a fruit business at Chudi Bazar, was allegedly found using "Diamond Ripe Ethylene" to ripen mangoes. "He was using the ripener in more quantities than required. We seized over two dozen sachets of the ripener," an official of H-Fast (Hyderabad Food Adulteration Surveillance Team) said. Police also seized at least 7 tons of mangoes from several warehouses across the city, suspected to have been ripened using ethylene and calcium carbide, and samples have been sent for testing.

H-Fast has been tasked to monitor godowns, warehouses, and shops selling mangoes wholesale where they are kept for ripening, Hyderabad Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar said. He said that citizens should call the police if they find mangoes that smell of chemicals or if they feel the fruit has been ripened with harmful agents. "The king of fruits is back on our plates, but people are advised to exercise caution and avoid being misled by chemically ripened mangoes. They should also be wary of those sold under the label of 'organic'. Consumers are urged to verify the authenticity of the produce before making a purchase." "With the onset of summer, the mango has begun to flood the markets. However, citizens must not overlook the deadly danger lurking behind these mouth-watering fruits. Driven by a greed for profit, some unscrupulous traders are risking public lives," Sajjanar said. "Instead of allowing mangoes to ripen naturally, they are being artificially ripened using Calcium Carbide and other hazardous chemicals. Purchasing fruits solely because they look shiny and golden on roadside stalls is essentially inviting illness into your home," he further wrote on X.

"Typically, a naturally ripened mango does not have a perfectly uniform colour. In contrast, chemically ripened fruits appear bright yellow on the outside but remain raw and toxic on the inside. Medical experts warn that consuming such fruits can lead to immediate health issues like throat irritation, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. In the long run, it may also lead to severe complications such as nervous



system damage and respiratory problems," he warned. "The Hyderabad City Police is already taking a stern stand against such traders who play with public health. The H-Fast is maintaining a strict vigil on the sale of adulterated mangoes, and legal action is being initiated against those who violate the rules. We urge the public not to be deceived by the outward appearance of the fruit and to verify its naturalness before purchasing. Be cautious of mangoes that have an unnatural colour, a chemical odour, or a strange taste. If there are unusual spots on the skin or if the colour changes unexpectedly when washed with baking soda water, realise that they are harmful to your health," he wrote. "If you have any information regarding adulterated mangoes, please report it to Dial 100 or contact the H-Fast helpline at 8712661212. Wholesale fruit traders said that not all of them indulge in illegal activities and that all of them should not be blamed." A member of the Wholesale Fruit Sellers and Commission Agents Association at Mozamjahi Market said, "Fruit traders are allowed to use a certain amount of ripening agents that are not harmful. Some greedy traders may use excessive chemicals. We are mindful of the harm it can cause, and we do not use anything in excess. Based on the colour of the fruit, customers can easily make out if it has chemicals or ripening agents on it." The Gaddi Annaram Fruit Market near Boduppal is already buzzing with more than 25 varieties of mangoes. The fruit comes not only from Telangana's hinterland but also from various parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. H-Fast and municipal health officers are asking sellers to report if sales agents approach them to sell unsafe ripening agents. Samples are also being collected from various places to test for chemicals, an official said.

On Rotary International president-elect Babalola's top list global push to end polio

GNS News Agency, April 4

District Governor-Elect Dr Rita Kalra described 'Srijan 2026' as a platform for leadership development and collaboration. District Governor-Elect Dr Rita Kalra described 'Srijan 2026' as a platform for leadership development and collaboration. Rotary International president-elect Olayinka Hakeem Babalola on Friday outlined his key strategic priorities: eradicating polio worldwide, expanding membership, and promoting youth-focused AI literacy, among others.

Addressing the media on the sidelines of a leadership seminar, 'Srijan 2026 — A New Beginning', in Zirakpur, Babalola stressed the urgency of inclusive and accelerated global development. Calling for peace, he urged political leadership to end ongoing hostilities in West Asia, stating that "humanity must come first". Babalola said, "Rotary consistently supports war-affected populations, particularly in post-conflict rehabilitation and rebuilding communities devastated by violence."

Highlighting future goals, Babalola said, "Rotary aims to increase its global membership from over 1.2 million to

1.25 million within the next five years. The organisation remains committed to its flagship mission of polio eradication, while strengthening global grant partnerships focused on environmental sustainability, basic education and disease prevention." A major regional announcement included the proposed 'AI Functional Literacy for Youth' project in the Chandigarh Tricity. The initiative aims to equip young people with essential digital and artificial intelligence skills, reflecting Rotary's shift towards innovation-driven service and deeper youth engagement.

The two-day seminar organised by Rotary Districts 3080 and 3090 brought together over 500 leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh. District Governor-Elect Dr Rita Kalra described 'Srijan 2026' as a platform for leadership development and collaboration. She noted that the seminar featured interactive sessions, networking opportunities, and cultural programmes celebrating unity and diversity.

In a parallel development, the Department of Posts, Chandigarh Division released a Special Cover commemorating the Rotary event at GPO Sector 17. The cover will be available to the public during the April 3-4 event

Property dealer declared proclaimed offender in Rs 42-lakh cheque bounce case



GNS News Agency, April 4

Sharma, who operated Om Sai Property in Sunny Enclave, Kharar, is accused of duping Chandigarh resident Saurabh Anand on the pretext of selling a plot. According to the complaint, Sharma collected Rs 42.57 lakh for a plot in Guru Nanak Enclave, located in village Bhagomajra, falsely claiming ownership of the land. "The accused issued cheques

to return the amount, but all of them bounced," the complainant stated.

The Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Kharar, declared Sharma a proclaimed person after he failed to appear before the court despite due proclamation. "The proclamation was duly affixed on February 8, but the accused did not appear even after the lapse of more than 30 days," the court observed. The court has directed the SHO concerned to initiate legal proceedings against the absconding accused. Additionally, the complainant has been asked to furnish details of Sharma's properties to enable attachment proceedings under Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). As per the complaint, when Anand demanded a refund, Sharma submitted an affidavit before the Kharar Tehsildar, promising to repay the amount by December 23, 2024, or pay double the amount in case of default. However, he failed to honour either commitment. Anand emphasised that Sharma was known to his family since childhood, which led to misplaced trust. "He exploited our long-standing acquaintance to carry out the fraud," he said.

Inside Mysore Concerns, Matunga's 87-year-old coffee institution

GNS News Agency, April 4 Much before we wanted to understand how coffee beans are roasted and the word roastery became cool, a young gentleman in Matunga was already at it. His drive was simple: to have the perfect cup of filter coffee available to himself and all those like him who had migrated from various parts of South India to Bombay in search of a better life. That man was G.V. Venkatram, who hailed from Gargeshwari village near Mysore and set up Mysore Concerns — a coffee roastery and grinding company — in Matunga in 1939, arguably Mumbai's first. He began at home, manually roasting green coffee beans from Karnataka over his gas stove and grinding them on a stone. Coffee was one of several ventures. There was a Mysore printing press, a boarding house, and even a production company that made a Kannada film starring Vyjayanthimala. "The film was shelved, but we managed to digitise the music from old reels," said his granddaughter Shweta Shrikant, 36. "It is believed to be one of the earliest Kannada recordings by Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammed Rafi."



ers who want traceability. Among the latter is Monsoon Malabar, a uniquely Indian coffee created through exposure to monsoon winds and moisture, a process that originated accidentally during colonial trade routes.

The coffee is ground and packed at Mysore Concerns in Matunga. Photo courtesy: Special Arrangement The coffee is ground and packed at Mysore Concerns in Matunga. Photo courtesy: Special Arrangement "Our core philosophy has always been about home brewing," said Shweta. "Success, for us, isn't just scale. It's when someone walks in because of the aroma, learns about coffee, buys a packet and a filter, and starts making coffee at home." The roastery, now called Shrikant & Daughters Coffee Company and spread across two units in an industrial estate, houses both an old manual machine and a new 25-kg German Probat roaster. "We are among only three people in India to have it," she said, explaining how green beans — single origin or blended — are roasted to a specific profile, cooled, then ground and packaged at the Matunga store before going out to restaurants, cafes and homes from Nagaland to Ladakh. Annual production, she said, is anywhere between 80–100 tonnes. "Sales have been growing at around 20 per cent year-on-year," she added.

The challenges, however, are mounting. "Arabica beans that cost Rs 300 per kilo a decade ago now cost upwards of Rs 700," she said, adding that climate change is a quiet but persistent disruption — rising temperatures are affecting yields at altitude, Arabica is increasingly sensitive, and estates are beginning to shift towards more resilient varieties like Robusta, Excelsa and Liberica. "It's not a shortage yet," she said, adding, "But we are looking at constrained supply and rising prices. This will also require a shift in consumer preferences." At the Matunga store, which is roughly 20 by 15 feet, equipment lines the shelves alongside the coffee: South Indian filter, moka pot, French press, pour-over, AeroPress. Staff will help you understand your palate, your preferred flavour profile, which blend suits you and which brewing method fits your life. "Legacy is only meaningful if it's upheld through quality and consistency. Otherwise, it's just a name," said Shweta, adding that as the third generation of women-led coffee roasters, their intention is simple — to un-complicate coffee while staying rooted in the craft. "What was once a simple beverage, now comes with extensive rules, chemistry and rankings. We believe that good coffee is the one you enjoy. With intentional sourcing and precision roasts, we want to help you experience the joy of brewing, minus the jargon."

After Kanshi Ram appeal, Congress now invokes Jagjivan Ram to win Dalit voters in UP

GNS News Agency, April 4

In a renewed push to consolidate Dalit support ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections, the Congress has shifted focus to its own Dalit icon, former Deputy Prime Minister Jagjivan Ram, after having invoked BSP founder Kanshi Ram earlier. As part of its outreach, the party is organising a seminar and felicitation programme at the UP Congress headquarters in Lucknow on the eve of Jagjivan Ram's 118th birth anniversary on Saturday. According to sources, the event will centre on his legacy of social justice, equality and inclusive development. Former Lok Sabha Speaker and Jagjivan Ram's daughter Meira Kumar arrived in Lucknow on Friday and will attend the event as the chief guest. Senior party leaders and workers are expected to participate in large numbers, sources said.



Ram was propagated by Jagjivan Ram ji much before him. We will celebrate all such leaders. "Another senior Congress leader said, "There had been a growing sentiment within the party that along with other icons, we should also promote our own icons." The party has been organising 'Samvidhan Sammelans' across Uttar Pradesh as part of its Dalit outreach. One such event in Lucknow was addressed by Rae Bareilly MP and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, while others have been led by AICC General Secretary Avinash Pandey in Sitapur and Barabanki, focusing on constitutional values and social justice. The move is seen as politically significant as Uttar Pradesh goes to polls next year, with all major parties trying to consolidate Dalit votes. Leaders within the INDIA bloc believe their improved performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections was also due to a shift in Dalit support, making the community a key focus area in the run-up to the next state election.

Pune rail division posts 3.7% revenue growth in FY26; passenger numbers rise 6.3%



GNS News Agency, April 4

Pune Division of Central Railway recorded a total revenue of Rs 2,238.20 crore during FY 2025-26, registering a growth of 3.7 per cent over the previous year, officials announced at a press conference on Friday. Passenger numbers rose 6.3 per cent over the same period. Passenger revenue reached Rs 1,657.24 crore, while ticket checking revenue stood at Rs 30 crore. Among non-fare revenues, commercial publicity contributed Rs 15.67 crore, Pay & Park Rs 4.15 crore, and catering Rs 3.96 crore.

To meet increased passenger demand, Pune Division operated a large number of special trains during the year. A total of 1,109 Diwali and Chhath special trains were operated — nearly three times the number from the previous year. Additionally, 40 Christmas and New Year special trains and 251 Holi special trains were run during the year. Five pairs of new train services were also introduced, connecting Pune Division to Jodhpur, Rewa, Ajni, Tirupati, and Muzaffarpur. Passenger train services were introduced for the first time on the Amalner-Bheed section, inaugurated by the Maharashtra CM in September last year, fulfilling a long-standing regional demand.

Addressing congestion Under the Pune decongestion plan, major infrastructure works were undertaken across key stations. At Hadapsar Coaching Terminal, development work costing Rs 153 crore expanded yard capacity from 5 to 7 lines, extended platform lengths, and added a second entry connecting all platforms. An additional Rs 26 crore has been sanctioned for a fourth platform and foot overbridge. Khadki Coaching Terminal was upgraded with yard expansion from 5 to 8 lines and an increase in platforms from 3 to 4, at an approximate cost of Rs 50 crore. A further Rs 70 crore has been sanctioned for development

of the station building and other passenger amenities. At Pune station, works worth Rs 398 crore have been sanctioned for yard remodelling, addition of six new platforms, extension of existing platforms, and development of additional entry and exit points, along with modern passenger amenities including lifts, escalators, and train indication systems. The station redevelopment master plan is currently in its final stage. Several key doubling works were also commissioned, including the Shindawane-Ambale, Vambori-Rahuri, and Koregaon-Rahimatpur sections last year, and the Daund-Kashti section in January 2025. Under new line projects, the Beed-Wadwani section of the Ahmednagar-Bheed-Parli Vajinath line was commissioned this year. New infrastructure also included the Ahilyanagari-Narayan Doh section with electronic interlocking, along with Solapurwadi, New Ashti, and Shirsai block cabin. A total of 14 electronic interlockings were commissioned during the year. Safety

Under the KAVACH anti-collision safety initiative, 16 out of 121 planned installations have been completed, trials for three installations have concluded, and five are currently in progress. Of 123 planned towers, 62 have been installed, with work ongoing at the remaining locations. Other safety improvements during the year included correction of nine defective track layouts, elimination of eight level crossings, commissioning of seven road over bridges and road under bridges, electrification of 149 km of track, and conversion of 30 km of overhead equipment from non-regulated to regulated. The division also installed 160 high-resolution CCTV cameras at Pune station and 382 cameras across other stations. RPF operations during the year included Yatri Suraksha, Mahila Suraksha, Operation Satark, Operation Dusara, Operation Nanhe Farishtey, Operation Amanat, Jeevan Raksha, and an Anti-Tobacco and Littering Drive.

Passenger amenities Four lifts were installed at Pune station and one escalator at Chinchwad. Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) certifications were also achieved during the year. Additionally, 17 rakes covering 16 trains were upgraded from Integral Coach Factory (ICF) design to the modern Linke-Hofmann-Busch (LHB) design. Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 20 stations were nominated for development. Of these, Kedgaon and Lonand have been inaugurated, while Wathar, Baramati, and Karad have been completed. Work is in progress at the remaining stations. The division also recorded Rs 50 crore in scrap disposal during the year. Divisional Railway Manager Rajesh Kumar Varma said, "Pune Division remains committed to passenger safety, duty, and improving the travel experience."

57th Shankar-Shad Mushaira in the Capital today

GNS News Agency, April 4

Delhi is set to host the 57th edition of the Shankar-Shad mushaira, perhaps the oldest mushaira in the Capital, on April 4 at Shankar Lal Hall located at Modern School, Barakhamba Road. The mushaira will bring together established and emerging poets on one stage to recite verses on a range of themes. The mushaira came into being a few years after the Partition as an Indo-Pak event to celebrate Urdu poetry, a language that was still the common thread between the two nations. Brainchild of Lala Shri Ram, founder of the DCM conglomerate, it was also an endeavour to honour the memory of his older brother Shankar Lal 'Shankar' and his son, Murlidhar 'Shad' — two poets from the family who were patrons of Urdu poetry and had passed away. At the time, Lala Shri Ram consulted famed Pakistani poet Josh Malihabadi; Shankar Prasad, the then Chief Commissioner of Delhi; Professor Mohammad Mujeeb; then V-C of Jamia Millia Islamia; and famed Hindi poet and essayist Ramdhari Singh Dinkar to put it together. The mushaira was a testament to cross-border camaraderie at its best, where poetry was a powerful conduit for cultural dialogue.

That the mushaira took place in Delhi, where Urdu was born, thrived, and found a home in the evocative poetry of Mir Taqi Mir, Mirza Ghalib, Zauq, Momin and Daagh among others, only added to its charm. So much so that it became an indelible part of the city's cultural calendar, often hosting actor Dilip Kumar as chief guest in the 1980s. "There is something about this city that understands poetry in a way that few places in the world do. It is in the air here, in the old lanes, in the way people speak to each other. And the Shankar Shad Mushaira has always been the most honest



expression of that relationship. I have stood on this stage many times, and every time I do, I am reminded that audiences in Delhi do not merely listen to shayari but they feel it and live it," noted poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar in a statement. "The memories of previous performances live within me. Delhi does not let poetry be merely words. Here, it becomes a shared experience and that is the highest thing poetry can aspire to be," he added. Because India and Pakistan are currently experiencing a diplomatic suspension, similar to the last few years, the mushaira will only feature Indian poets. This year, the mushaira will present poets Azhar Qqbal, Sunil Kumar Tang, Saif Nizami, Shabeena Aadeeb, Rajesh Reddy, Iqbal Ashar, Shakeel Azmi, Sheen Kaaf Nizam among others. While Akhtar, like in many previous years, is likely to be a huge draw, the mushaira will also be headlined by doyen of Urdu poetry, 86-year-old professor Waseem Bareilvi, whose poetry was popularised by ghazal exponent Jagjit Singh.

Two days after cops stop burial, father, brother held for smothering 19-year-old woman to death in West Delhi

GNS News Agency, April 4

Two days after the burial of a 19-year-old woman's body was stopped by a team of policemen in West Delhi amid allegations of murder even as the family claimed that she succumbed to prolonged illness, her father and brother were arrested on Friday for allegedly smothering her to death, said officers. The two accused — Md Islam (55) and his 19-year-old son — allegedly killed the woman as they were against her relationship with a man from their native village in Bihar's Siwan, according to the police. The family presently lives in a village in West Delhi's Hari Nagar. "The two were in a relationship for about two years. The family of the deceased was opposed to this and when the duo didn't relent, the woman was killed," DCP (West) Darade Bhaskar said.



The two accused — Md Islam (55) and his 19-year-old son — allegedly killed the woman as they were against her relationship with a man from their native village in Bihar's Siwan, according to the police.

On April 1, the janaza (procession before the last rites) was headed around 2 pm to the nearby mosque, Badi Masjid, and it was joined by members of Naushad's family. As the crowd proceeded towards the mosque, a team of policemen rushed around 2:30 pm. "They came with a young boy and stopped the burial. The boy was saying something about murder. After they took away the body, we got to know that she was killed. Even as there were frequent fights, we never thought that a murder could happen," recalled Naushad. Gulfam, who lives on the floor above Md Islam, said that most people in the family were reticent. "We didn't even know that the father was a vegetable vendor. We only went because they are neighbours," he said. The post-mortem report on Thursday had confirmed that the teen was smothered to death.

Tehran rejects 48-hour ceasefire proposal from U.S., Iranian media, says Iranian media



GNS News Agency, April 4

An unnamed source told Iran's semi-official Fars news agency on Friday (April 3, 2026) that Tehran had rejected a U.S. proposal for a 48-hour ceasefire. The source said the proposal was made on Wednesday (April

1, 2026) through another country, which was not named. Iran-Israel war LIVE updates There was no immediate comment or confirmation from the U.S. The refusal highlights a continued hardening of Tehran's position amidst the current regional situation. The collapse of these diplomatic efforts coincides with a sharp escalation in military hostilities. American forces have successfully retrieved a crew member from a U.S. fighter jet that was brought down over Iran, according to a report by CNN, citing three sources familiar with the situation. The rescued individual is reportedly alive and has been placed "in U.S. custody and receiving medical treatment", as confirmed by two of the sources. However, while one person has been recovered, the fate of the second crew member remains uncertain. CNN reported that "search and rescue operations were ongoing" following the loss of the aircraft over Iranian territory. Technical details provided by a U.S. source confirmed that the downed plane was an "F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet".

Iran fires missiles at Israel after Trump threatens weeks of strikes

GNS News Agency, April 4

Israel said it came under Iranian missile fire on Thursday (April 2, 2026) after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to bomb the Islamic republic into the "Stone Ages" with heavy strikes in the next two to three weeks. In a speech from the White House, Mr. Trump sought to reassure war-weary Americans that the military campaign that began on February 28 was coming to an end, vowing "extremely hard" strikes against Iran.

"Thanks to the progress we've made, I can say tonight that we are on track to complete all of America's military objectives shortly, very shortly," Mr. Trump said. The war's "core strategic objectives are nearing completion", he said, warning however that "over the next two to three weeks, we are going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong". His address came as Britain was set to host a meeting on Thursday (April 2, 2026) with about 35 countries on how to reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz that Iran has effectively blocked without a deal to end the war.

The U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran that started the war killed senior officials in the Islamic republic's military forces and government, including supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose son has since replaced him. Mr. Trump, whose approval rating is sinking over the war, indicated that talks may be possible with Iran's new leadership, which he described as "less radical and much more reasonable" than its predecessor. He warned that if no agreement with Tehran was struck, Washington had "our eyes on key targets including the country's electric generating plants".

Despite Mr. Trump's threats, Israel's military said Iran twice fired missiles at the country after his address, part of four barrages detected within six hours on Thursday (April 2, 2026). Iran has dismissed Washington's ceasefire overtures, describing U.S. demands to end the conflict as "maximalist and irrational".

"Messages have been received through intermediaries, including Pakistan, but there is no direct negotiation with the US," said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei, quoted by the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) on Thursday (April 2, 2026). Pro-government Iranians in the capital Tehran were also defiant at the funeral of a Revolutionary Guards naval commander who was killed in an Israeli strike. "This war has lasted a month. However long it takes, we will continue," said Moussa Nowruzi, a 57-year-old pensioner. "We will resist until the end." Gulf protection Mr. Trump also assured regional allies Israel and Gulf nations that Washington would protect them from Iranian retaliatory fire, as more attacks were reported across the region on Thursday (April 2, 2026). He addressed Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain — battered by Iranian drone and missile attacks — that the United States "will not let them get hurt or fail in any way, shape or form". As Israel prepared for the Passover holiday, which began at sunset on Wednesday (April 1, 2026), air raid sirens sounded repeatedly in the Tel Aviv area. On Thursday (April 2, 2026), the United Arab Emirates said its air defences were again responding to missile and drone "threats".

Downed planes spell new peril for Trump as Tehran hunts missing U.S. pilot

GNS News Agency, April 4

Iran's forces were hunting on Saturday (April 4, 2026) for a missing U.S. pilot from one of two warplanes downed over Iran and the Gulf, officials from both sides said, while two airmen were rescued. The incidents show the risks still facing U.S. and Israeli aircraft over Iran as the war entered its sixth week, despite assertions by President Donald Trump and his Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth that U.S. forces had total control of the skies. Iran-Israel war LIVE updates The prospect of a U.S. service person alive and on the run in Iran raises the stakes for Washington in a conflict with low public support among Americans and no sign of an imminent end. Tehran mocks Trump's war aims

Iranian fire brought down a two-seat U.S. F-15E jet, officials in both countries said, while two U.S. officials said the pilot ejected from an A-10 Warthog fighter aircraft that crashed in Kuwait after being hit by Iranian fire. Two Black Hawk helicopters engaged in the search for the missing pilot were hit by Iranian fire but made it out of Iranian airspace, the two U.S. officials told Reuters. The scale of injuries to the crew was unclear. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said it was combing a southwestern area near where the pilot's plane came down, while the regional governor promised a commendation for anyone who captured or killed "forces of the hostile enemy."

Iranians pummeled by American air power since the U.S. and Israel began their attacks on February 28 celebrated the plane downings. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on X the war had been "downgraded from regime change" to a hunt for pilots. Mr. Trump has been in the White House receiving updates on the rescue effort, a senior administration official told Reuters. The Pentagon and U.S. Central Command did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Iran has told mediators it is not prepared to meet with U.S. officials in Islamabad in coming days and that efforts led by Pakistan to reach a ceasefire have hit a dead end, the Wall Street Journal said on Friday.

The war has killed thousands, sparked an energy cri-

sis and threatened lasting damage to the global economy since the initial strikes that killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The conflict has killed 13 U.S. military service members, with more than 300 wounded, the U.S. Central Command says. Trump threatens bridges, power plants Iran has rained drones and missiles on Israel and taken aim at Gulf countries allied to the United States, which have held back from joining the war directly for fear of further escalation. On Saturday (April 4, 2026), authorities in Dubai said no injuries were reported after debris from aerial interceptions hit the facades of two buildings in the emirate. In a security alert on Friday (April 3), the U.S. embassy in Beirut said Iran and armed groups aligned with it may target universities in Lebanon and urged U.S. citizens to leave while commercial flights still operated. Israel has been waging a parallel campaign against Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon after the militant group fired at Israel in support of Iran. Early on Saturday (April 4), Israel's military said it was striking the militants' infrastructure sites in Beirut. Iran struck a power and water plant in Kuwait on Friday (April 3), after Mr. Trump threatened to hit Iran's bridges and power plants, underlining the vulnerability of Gulf states that rely heavily on desalination plants for drinking water.

On Thursday (April 2), Mr. Trump posted images of billowing dust and smoke as U.S. strikes hit the B1 bridge set to open this year, linking Tehran and nearby Karaj. He threatened more attacks. "Our Military, the greatest and most powerful (by far) anywhere in the World, hasn't even started destroying what's left in Iran. Bridges next, then Electric Power Plants!" he wrote. On Friday (April 3), a drone hit a Red Crescent relief warehouse in the Choghadak area of Iran's southern province of Bushehr. Kuwait Petroleum Corp said drones hit its Mina al-Ahmadi refinery, while other attacks were reported to have been intercepted in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. Missile debris landed near the Israeli port of Haifa, site of a major oil refinery. Oil markets were closed after benchmark U.S. crude prices jumped 11% on Thursday after Trump offered no clear sign of an imminent end to the war in a speech.

Pakistan rejects media reports of collapse of initiative to facilitate U.S., Iran talks



GNS News Agency, April 4

Pakistan on Saturday (April 4, 2026) rejected media reports that its initiative to facilitate talks between the U.S. and Iran to end the ongoing conflict in West Asia had hit obstacles after initial exchange of peace proposals. Speculation emerged after a senior official of the Foreign Ministry briefed a select group of journalists on Pakistan's efforts to find a negotiated settlement of the ongoing conflict. "We have noted several reports in the media, including on social media, citing so-called official government sources regarding the ongoing conflict in the region and Pakistan's efforts to promote peace and dialogue," he said.

"We categorically reject these false insinuations attributed to purported official sources as baseless and a figment of imagination. Any attribution to official sources in this regard is incorrect." He said that it was a matter of con-

cern that the briefing held on Friday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been "misrepresented". He said that at a time of heightened regional sensitivity, diplomacy requires both discretion and responsibility. "We therefore urge all media platforms to exercise due diligence, avoid speculation and rely exclusively on officially issued statements and media readouts for accurate and timely information," he said.

The Dawn newspaper had reported that the unnamed official said some ground had been covered, with messages relayed between Washington and Tehran, but the absence of a clear Iranian signal has slowed momentum at this critical stage. "It is surprising that despite the obliteration of significant naval, air force, and other military and civilian infrastructure, Iran has not responded positively to calls for negotiations," the official, who is familiar with the discussions, was quoted as saying. He said both Pakistan and China had urged Iran to engage, but "Tehran has so far not conveyed its readiness to take part in the dialogue". He added that Pakistani leaders, despite Tehran not giving a reply, have remained in contact with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Earlier Pakistan sprang to action after the war started, partially out of necessity, as it was supposed to defend Saudi Arabia in case of an attack by Iran. Though it has failed so far to arrange a ceasefire but succeed to keep itself away from the war. The U.S. and Israel jointly attacked Iran on February 28, killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several top commanders. The retaliation by the Islamic Republic extended the war to the entire Gulf region. The conflict has taken a major toll on energy supply chains, especially across the Strait of Hormuz.

Pakistan says onus on Afghanistan to end hostilities

GNS News Agency, April 4

Pakistan said Thursday (April 2, 2026) that the burden of ending its cross-border conflict lay with Afghanistan, as the two sides held preliminary talks to try to end hostilities. The neighbours and one-time allies have been locked in an escalating conflict over claims from Islamabad that Afghanistan is harbouring militants responsible for cross-border attacks, which the Taliban government denies. Negotiations in Urumqi, in northwest China, were announced Wednesday (April 1, 2026) by Pakistan, after Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar travelled to Beijing for talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Tahir Hussain Andrabi told reporters in the capital that the government hoped for a "durable solution". "Our participation (in talks) is a reiteration of our core concerns," he said. "The burden of real process, however, lies with Afghanistan, which must demonstrate visible and verifiable actions against terrorist groups using (its) soil against Pakistan." Following China's request for talks, the Taliban government said it had sent a "mid-level delegation" to Urumqi. The Afghan side "intends to hold comprehensive and responsible talks with the other side on good neighbourliness, strengthening trade relations, and effective management of security issues", Foreign Ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said.

Pakistan described the negotiations as "working level talks". "Our delegation has not returned yet," Islamabad's Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Beijing deployed a special envoy to try to broker a deal last month, but the diplomatic effort was followed by Pakistani strikes on a Kabul rehab centre that prompted international



condemnation. More than 400 people were killed in the attack, according to Afghan officials, which Islamabad said targeted military installations. The two sides then announced a pause in fighting to mark the end of Ramadan, at the request of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. But sporadic attacks have been reported in border areas since the temporary truce ended. Pakistani shelling killed two civilians and wounded 10 others on Wednesday (April 1, 2026), a provincial official said. Two of those wounded were in critical condition, Najib Hanif, Kunar province information chief, told AFP. While addressing hostilities with its neighbour, Pakistan has also been engaged in a flurry of diplomacy to try to bring Washington and Tehran to the table and end their war. China has backed Pakistan's efforts, aligning itself with the aims of Gulf countries affected by the spread of the conflict in the region.

Court extends detention of ex-PM KP Oli in deadly protest probe



GNS News Agency, April 4

A Nepal court extended the detention of former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and his ex-Home Minister for a further two days as investigators probe their alleged roles in a deadly crackdown on protests last year. Police arrested Mr. Oli, 74, and former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak on Saturday (March 28, 2026), a day after Prime Minister Balendra Shah was sworn in following the first elections since the September uprising that toppled Mr. Oli's government. Authorities are investigating their alleged involvement in the crackdown on demonstrations in 2025 that killed at least 76 people. Neither man has been formally charged and both deny responsibility for the violence. "The court has granted two days extension," Kathmandu District Court information officer Deepak Kumar Shrestha told AFP. The court decision said investigators required more time as Oli's statement was still being recorded. The order marks the second extension after the court initially granted police five days' detention on Sunday (March 29, 2026). Mr. Oli remains hospitalised, where he was admitted on Saturday (March 28, 2026) for what police described as a procedural medical check-up, adding that he suffers from heart and kidney problems. On Monday (March 30, 2026), Nepal's Supreme Court ordered the government to explain Mr. Oli's arrest after his wife filed a petition claiming the detention was unlawful.

Police said on Thursday (April 2, 2026) they had submitted their response. The arrests of Mr. Oli and Mr. Lekhak came after an inquiry commission recommended prosecuting the four-time ex-prime minister and other officials for failing to stop security forces from opening fire on demonstrators. The commission's report said the statements given by the two men suggesting they did not know about the violence were part of a bid to shift responsibility and amounted to "criminal negligence". Mr. Oli's CPN-UML Marxist party has described the arrests as "a vengeful act" and called for protests. But Rabi Lamichhane, leader of the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), rejected that claim.

"The first right to receive justice belongs to the mother of the martyr, this cannot be called revenge," Lamichhane

said Thursday (April 2, 2026) as he addressed the opening session of Parliament. The unrest in early September began over a brief social media ban, but tapped into longstanding fury over economic hardship. It spread nationwide the following day as parliament and government offices were set ablaze, resulting in the collapse of Mr. Oli's government. Mr. Shah, a 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician, led the Rastriya Swatantra Party to a sweeping election victory on a platform of youth-driven political change and defeated Oli in his own constituency.

Nepal holds its first post-poll parliament session

GNS News Agency, April 4

Nepal's newly elected lawmakers met Thursday (April 2, 2026) for the first parliamentary session since deadly anti-corruption protests toppled the government in September 2025 and left the old Parliament building in flames.

Lawmakers, elected in March, met within the new Parliament building, with many of the politicians taking their seats for the first time. That includes the Himalayan nation's new leader, rapper-turned-politician Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who led the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) to sweep the polls, winning 182 of the 275 seats, just short of a two-thirds majority. Mr. Shah, 35, was dressed all in black, including his trademark dark sunglasses that he kept on inside the hall. The Prime Minister has remained silent publicly since his RSP party won the election, beyond taking the oath as leader and the release of a rap song, where he said that the "strength of unity" was his "national power". Rabi Lamichhane, president of the RSP, spoke to lawmakers on Thursday (April 2, 2026). "The votes we have received are not just of support, but for change... and I can proudly say we have begun that change," he said. "Our work, and the government's work, will speak," he said. Mr. Lamichhane asked the opposition to "monitor us 24 hours", and use their experience to point out their mistakes. Younger government The new Parliament is markedly younger compared to the previous government, with nearly 60 directly elected members under the age of 40. The deadly September demonstrations began over a brief social media ban but tapped into longstanding fury over corruption and economic hardship. At least 76 people were killed over two days of unrest. Three high profile arrests -- including four-time ex-Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli -- linked to the unrest have been made so far. An inquiry commission into the violence had recommended that Oli and ex-Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, as well as the capital Kathmandu's former Chief District Officer Chhabil Rijal, be investigated under laws addressing deaths caused by negligence.

In Nalanda, faith turned fatal



On March 23, when the results of the Bihar School Examination Board for Class 12 were announced, Kundan Kumar, a 20-year-old resident of Mathurapur village in Noorsarai town in Bihar, was thrilled. He had secured 65%, which meant he achieved a first division. His mother, Rekha Devi, 45, was overjoyed too, and handed him 1,000 to buy new books. A few days later, the family visited the Sheeta Mata temple in Maghra village of Nalanda district, about 10 kilometres away, to offer their prayers and celebrate Kundan's success.

According to temple priest Shubham Kumar, 30, Sheeta Mata is considered an avatar of Goddess Durga in Hinduism, as mentioned in the religious text, Skanda Purana. The temple, spread over 1.5 acres, attracts devotees who believe that bathing in the cool waters of its pond can help cure skin diseases. On March 31, the day Kundan's family went to the temple, the crowd grew quickly. It was the last Tuesday of the Chaitra month in the Hindu calendar, believed to be a significant day for spiritual practices, particularly for worshipping Goddess Durga. Locals say that on any regular day, 500-1,000 devotees visit the temple. However, according to the police, more than 10,000 people had gathered for the special prayers that day.

This sudden surge led to a stampede between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m., claiming nine lives, including Rekha Devi's. Eight were women, and one was an unidentified man. Most of the victims were from Nalanda. Rekha Devi's daughter, 24-year-old Sharmila Kumari, who got married last month, had also accompanied her mother to the temple. "My mother was the one who used to take care of us because our father is mentally ill," Sharmila says. "He has been undergoing treatment at the Central Institute of Psychiatry [in Kanke, Ranchi] for the last decade." Following the incident, she worries not only about her father, but also her two younger brothers. Kundan clutches the new books to his chest, weeping. "My mother always encouraged me to study and become a big government officer so that our financial burden would lessen," he says. "All she did was to go to pray. She never returned." Kundan's biggest regret is that he was not inside the temple; he was standing outside when the incident took place.

The anatomy of a stampede Sharmila, her husband Vijendra Kumar, Rekha Devi, and Kundan reached the temple at around 8:30 in the morning, Sharmila recalls. They bought flowers for the puja and joined the crowd.

Sharmila says there was no proper queue. Only she and her mother went inside the temple, while her brother and husband stayed outside. Although men are allowed to enter the temple, it is generally women who come to worship. At 9:30 a.m., they finally entered. Within minutes, there was chaos. She saw people pushing one another. Then someone yelled, "Mar gayi, mar gayi (She is dead, she is dead)."

"People started falling over each other," Sharmila says. "My mother also fell down. I could not understand what was happening. Hundreds of people were around me, and they were all shouting the names of people they were with." In the melee, she lost sight of her mother. "People pushed me into a corner, but my mother was left in the middle of the crowd," she says. After some time, she began searching for her mother near the exit. By then, Kundan had found his sister. About half an hour later, locals and devotees began pulling out bodies lying inside the temple premises just a few meters away from the inner sanctum. Rekha Devi was among them. They rushed her to the Bihar Sharif Sadar hospital, about 6 km away, on a scooter, as no ambulance had arrived. "The doctors declared her brought dead," Sharmila says.

Sharmila is as grief-stricken as she is angry. She says there was not a single police person in sight, either inside or outside the temple to manage the crowd. She also alleges that a temple priest was taking money from devotees and allowing them to enter through the exit gate. "Because of this, the exit gate also got blocked," she says. Trapped inside Punam, who had gone to the temple with her mother, alleges that when chaos broke out, authorities shut the gates and put up bamboo barricades, worsening the situation. She claims that both the entrance and exit were blocked. She had gone to celebrate scoring 63% in the Bihar School Exam Board. "My mother had promised we would visit the temple if I passed with a first division. Within minutes of reaching, I lost her," she says.

Dinesh Rajak lost his wife, Rita Devi, 50, in the stampede. A father of six and a resident of Sakunat locality in Bihar Sharif, he came to know about the incident only some two hours later. Dinesh, who earns a living by going from one village to another selling spices, says his wife and daughter had gone to the temple that day without mobile phones. "At around 12:30 [p.m.], I received a call from an unknown number," he says. "I heard my daughter crying. She told me that her mother had fainted in the temple and had been taken to Sadar hospital." He rushed there. "I found my daughter standing outside the postmortem centre. My wife's body was lying inside." For 55-year-old Arjun Singh, a vegetable seller, tragedy has struck twice in the last few years. In 2024, Arjun lost his second son in a train accident. And on March 31, he lost his wife in the stampede. Nine family members had gone to the temple at around 7:30 a.m., he says. At the entrance of the sanctum, there was a pot-hole, Arjun recalls. "We did not see it as we were looking ahead. As soon as we stepped in, more than a hundred people fell over us."

He adds, "For almost an hour, we were in pain. Nobody came to help. My wife died on my lap." Arjun has filed a First Information Report against the temple priest for allegedly allowing entry in exchange for money. "Had the police or temple management made proper arrangements, many lives would have been saved and the incident could have been avoided," asserts Arjun, a father of five. The aftermath

While nine people died in the incident, 12 others were injured and admitted to Sadar hospital. Priti Devi, 30, who is recovering from injuries, says the temple is located on a narrow lane lined with shops selling flowers and prasad, which delayed the ambulance from reaching the site. Mukesh Kumar, a resident of the area, says those who fainted were first taken to a nearby Urban Health and Wellness Centre. Injured devotees undergoing treatment at the Bihar Sharif Sadar Hospital in Nalanda. Injured devotees undergoing treatment at the Bihar Sharif Sadar Hospital in Nalanda. [Auxiliary Nurse Midwife Sumitra Sinha, 45, who

was on duty at the centre, says at least 12 people were brought in. "One woman was brought dead," she says. "For the others, we checked blood pressure, provided ORS (oral rehydration solution), water, and administered CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) where needed." Pankaj Kumar, whose sister Anushka Sinha, is also hospitalised, says he was able to withstand the pressure of the crowd, but his sister could not. Before the stampede, there was not a single policeman around, he says. "After an hour of the stampede occurring, hundreds of policemen reached the site."

Another resident of the area, Alok Ranjan (46), alleges that most of the police had been deployed in Rajgir. They had been sent there for the visit of President Droupadi Murmu, who had arrived to attend Nalanda University's convocation. Later, Murmu expressed her condolences and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. Soon after the stampede, several senior government officials visited the spot, including Bihar Director General of Police (DGP) Vinay Kumar; Nalanda Superintendent of Police (SP) Bharat Soni; District Magistrate Kundan Kumar; Inspector General (Central Range), Patna, Jitendra Rana; and Director General (Operations) Kundan Krishnan. Following reports of security lapses in their area, Soni suspended Deep Nagar SHO Rajmani and four other police officers. The government also set up a Special Investigation Team to probe the incident.

On March 31 night, the police conducted raids and arrested four temple priests — Anuj Kumar, Awadhesh Kumar Mishra, Vivekanand Pandey, and Niranjan Kumar Pandey. They have been charged under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which deals with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and have been sent to judicial custody. So far, 40 people have been booked in the case for violating security norms and alleged mismanagement during the religious gathering. However, locals claim that several of those booked were not present at the site during the stampede.

Crowd management concerns Locals and officials say poor crowd control was a major reason for the incident. "The temple management should have anticipated the overcrowding and taken special care," says one resident. "The structure should have been built to channel the crowd safely."

Bihar DGP Vinay Kumar says, "As soon as I got information about the stampede, I rushed to the site and inspected the premises. We found many lapses. Even a crowd of 1,000 people would have been difficult to manage. That day, there were around 10,000 people." He adds that the temple's structure was not adequate for large gatherings and recommended a security audit for temples where large crowds assemble. Initial investigations too have found inadequate crowd management and poor arrangements to be the reasons for the tragic incident. The chairperson of the Bihar State Religious Trusts Board, Ranvir Nandan, visited the temple the day after the incident and admitted that there were lapses on the part of the temple management.

"It is the duty of the temple management to hold discussions and chalk out a plan to manage crowds before any large religious gathering. I will ensure that this temple is registered under the Board, which will look after the temple management," Nandan says. According to 2025 data, the Board monitors nearly 2,500 registered temples and trusts. The Board has also identified 2,512 unregistered temples and mutts in Bihar. After the incident, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced ₹6 lakh for victims' families — ₹4 lakh from the Disaster Management Department and ₹2 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences and announced ₹2 lakh in financial aid to be paid to the families from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, and ₹50,000 to the injured. All the affected families have received ₹6 lakh each from the District Magistrate's office after postmortem reports confirmed that the deaths were due to compressive asphyxia.

Dinesh Rajak, who lost his wife, says he would save the compensation he has received, for his youngest daughter's marriage.

Incidents like these have happened before in Bihar. On November 19, 2012, as many as 22 people were killed at Adalatganj Ghat in Patna during the Chhath festival. A stampede at Gandhi Maidan in Patna claimed 33 lives during the post-Ravan Vadh programme on October 3, 2014, and three people died in a stampede at Begusarai's Simaria Ghat on November 4, 2017. The day after the 2026 incident, devotees remained undeterred though the crowd was smaller than usual at the Sheeta Mata temple. Sushma Kumari, 45, who came to offer prayers on April 1, says, "I heard about the tragic incident in which several women were killed at the temple, but I could not stop myself from visiting. They all died on the lap of Sheeta Mata. I will pray for their souls."

Iran-Israel conflict: Kin of Indian seafarer killed in strike off Oman move Bombay HC, seek return of remains

The family of an Indian seafarer, who died in a missile strike on a vessel off the Oman coast during the West Asia war, has filed a petition before the Bombay High Court seeking directions to authorities to repatriate his mortal remains. The petitioners, Amratlal Gokal Solanki and his daughter Mitali Amratlal Solanki, have sought a writ of mandamus against the Union of India and other respondents including the Directorate General of Shipping and V Ships India Pvt. Ltd. The deceased, Dixit Amratlal Solanki, was serving as an oiler in the engine room aboard the vessel MT MKD Vyom. Captain Sadler Rebeiro informed the family on March 1, 2026 that the vessel had been struck by a missile, the petition said. An initial casualty report stated that Solanki was missing due to a hole on the shipside following the explosion and fire. The petitioners have a right to receive the mortal remains of the deceased family member and perform rites guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, the petition states. It contends that the respondents are under a legal obligation to ensure speedy repatriation of the mortal remains under Article 21 read with the Merchant Navy Act, 2025. The family was later informed that Solanki had been declared deceased. While the remaining 21 crew members were rescued, the petition alleges that Solanki was left behind on the vessel. The petitioners have made several representations to authorities including the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and the Indian Consulate in Dubai seeking intervention for recovery and repatriation of the mortal remains.

NIMHANS review flags enduring impact of child suicides on parents, mental health professionals



A recent review by researchers from NIMHANS, Bengaluru, has underlined the profound and long-lasting impact of suicides among children and adolescents on both bereaved parents and mental health professionals, and has called for stronger, structured support systems. The paper, titled "The impact of suicidal deaths of children and adolescents among parents and mental health professionals: A systematic review and meta-synthesis", has been published in the British Psychological Society journal - Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice. It draws on an analysis of 25 studies to examine shared and distinct experiences of grief.

What the review found Bino Thomas, additional professor of psychiatric social work at NIMHANS, who is one of the authors, told The Hindu that the loss of a child to suicide leaves both families and clinicians grappling with unanswered questions. "After months of therapy, there is always a relationship that mental health professionals build with children. When a child dies by suicide, it leaves us with questions - whether we did enough, whether we missed something, what went wrong," he said. He pointed out that such losses often bring emotional strain for professionals as well. "There is a belief that doctors do not feel pain, but we do. We regulate our emotions, but the grief is real," he said, stating that in some cases, parents and therapists grieve together, which can help make sense of the loss.

Shared grief, different contexts The study finds that parents experience intense and prolonged grief marked by guilt, self-blame, and a persistent search for answers. Many

struggle with stigma and isolation, while their mental health vulnerabilities may increase over time. At the same time, mental health professionals experience a parallel emotional burden. The death of a client can trigger self-doubt, fear of blame, and questions about professional competence. "Losing a client challenges our core belief that we should be able to keep every child safe," Dr. Thomas said. The review also highlights that predicting suicide remains complex and uncertain, with clinicians often unable to foresee outcomes despite careful assessment.

The review points to gaps in postvention - support provided after a suicide - for both parents and professionals. While some support mechanisms exist, they are often fragmented or short-lived. "For professionals, support systems are available, but they need to be actively used - through colleagues, mentors, and supervisors," Dr. Thomas said. He stressed that younger practitioners, in particular, must be encouraged to seek guidance rather than suppress their distress. "Pushing away grief does not make it disappear," he said. For families, the challenge is more acute. "Support often ends with the child's death, but the grief and guilt continue. Many parents find it difficult to return to the same system for help," he said.

The researchers have called for integrated, trauma-informed approaches that ensure continuity of care for bereaved families, along with structured institutional support for professionals. They emphasised that parents should be engaged as active participants in their child's mental health care with transparent communication on suicide risk, while postvention support must be long-term, flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of families rather than confined to the immediate aftermath. At the same time, institutions need to create non-judgmental and reflective spaces for mental health professionals to process grief, strengthen supervision and peer-support systems - particularly for younger practitioners - and put in place clear protocols to support clinicians in the event of a client's suicide. Dr. Thomas said NIMHANS has initiated family-based programmes and support groups for parents across the country, with participation varying each week. "We need to continue holding the hands of these parents even after the loss. Postvention cannot be an afterthought - it is as important as prevention," he added.

94% of world's childhood cancer deaths occur in low, middle-income countries, study finds



The analysis of data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) also estimated 377,000 new cases of childhood cancer worldwide in 2023, resulting in about 144,000 deaths. [Image used for representational purpose only] The analysis of data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) also estimated 377,000 new cases of childhood cancer worldwide in 2023, resulting in about 144,000 deaths. [Image used for representational purpose only] Photo Credit: SHAJU JOHN

Ninety four per cent of childhood cancer deaths and 85% of new cases occur in low and middle-income countries, highlighting persistent inequities in healthcare access and treatment, according to a global analysis published in The Lancet journal. Total childhood cancer deaths in 2023 were estimated at 17,000 in India, 16,000 in China, and about nine thousand each in Nigeria and Pakistan. The analysis of data from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) also estimated 377,000 new cases of childhood cancer worldwide in 2023, resulting in about 144,000 deaths. Researchers forming the GBD 2023 Childhood Cancer Collaborators said deaths due to childhood cancer across the world reduced by 27% from 1.97 lakh in 1990, but increased in Africa by 55.6%.

They added that childhood cancer was the eighth leading cause of childhood deaths, with global burden contribut-

ing substantially to global childhood disease and cancer burden and weighted disproportionately towards resource-limited places. Among nations with a low-middle sociodemographic index, including India, childhood cancer was found to be the eleventh highest contributor to global cancer deaths across all ages in 2023. It is also the tenth highest contributor to the world's child disability-adjusted life years (DALY) in 2023. One DALY represents the loss of one year lived in full health. "The majority of childhood cancer burden occurred in settings with limited resources, with 85.1% of incident cases, 94.1% of deaths, and 94.1% of DALYs occurring in LMICs (comprising low-income, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries by World Bank grouping)," the authors wrote.

"Global childhood cancer burden remains a substantial contributor to global childhood disease and cancer burden and is disproportionately weighted towards resource-limited settings," they said. Deaths due to leukaemia (45,900) was found to be the highest contributor to the world's childhood cancer deaths, followed by cancer of brain and nervous system (23,200) and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (15,200, cancer of the lymph system). "While outcomes for many childhood cancers have improved in high-income countries, these gains have not been equitably shared," said lead author Lisa Force, from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington School of Medicine, US, which co-ordinates the GBD study.

"The vast majority of children with cancer live in low and middle-income countries, where delays in diagnosis, lack of access to essential cancer treatment, and other health system limitations and barriers to care can contribute to disparities in childhood cancer burden," Force said. The study emphasises that improving outcomes will require an expanded investment in cancer control systems, particularly in low and middle-income countries, including referral systems that support timely diagnosis, workforce training, access to chemotherapy, surgery and radiotherapy, as well as stronger cancer registration and surveillance systems, the researchers said.

Why offices are starting to look like boutique hotels

The idea of what an office should be is undergoing a quiet but decisive change. No longer defined by rows of desks and secluded cabins, offices are increasingly being reimagined as spaces that prioritise experience, comfort and human interaction, borrowing heavily from the world of hospitality. According to JLL's 2025 Experience Matters research, nearly two-thirds of people globally now expect the spaces where they live, work and spend time to offer enjoyment, variety and meaningful value. That expectation is fast reshaping how companies think about office design, especially in India, where the concept of 'hotelification' is gaining traction. This trend reflects a broader rethinking of the workplace: not as a fixed piece of infrastructure but as a service. Employers are recognising that the physical environment plays a critical role in influencing how people feel, collaborate and perform. As a result, offices are beginning to resemble boutique hotels or high-end lounges, where aesthetics and functionality are equally important.

As early adopters of hospitality-led design, flexible workspace operators have long focused on creating environments that combine functionality with experience — offering everything from thoughtfully designed common areas and community programming to concierge-like services and premium amenities. In many ways, coworking spaces have served as live prototypes for what the modern office could become, influencing even large enterprises to rethink their own workplaces. Their emphasis on flexibility, community and service has set new benchmarks, pushing the broader office market towards more human-centric, experience-driven design.

Behind this shift lies a growing body of evidence linking employee experience to business outcomes. Research by McKinsey & Company suggests that improving em-



ployee wellbeing could unlock as much as \$11.7 trillion in global economic value. Meanwhile, a study by Gallup found that organisations with highly engaged employees report 41% lower absenteeism, 17% higher productivity, and 21% higher profitability. Beyond desk

For companies, the message is increasingly difficult to ignore: investing in employee experience is not just a cultural decision. It is a financial one. In a competitive talent market, the workplace itself has become a differentiator, shaping recruitment, retention and even brand perception. This growing focus on employee experience is also reflected in the introduction of thoughtful workplace amenities and engagement initiatives. Beyond infrastructure, there is a stronger push towards community and wellbeing through curated programs like Zumba sessions, and lifestyle and health-related initiatives that encourage a more balanced work routine. At the same time, safety remains a priority, with regular fire and safety mock drills being conducted to ensure preparedness and build a secure work environment.

Why knees produce sounds and when medical attention is needed, experts explain



teoarthritis," Dr. Raja explained, adding that knee popping following a fall or twisting injury should always be evaluated to rule out internal damage. Dr. Dakshinamoorthy said that even painless popping may need attention in older adults or those with risk factors such as obesity or previous knee injuries. He pointed out that knee osteoarthritis affects an estimated 28–30% of Indians above the age of 45, making vigilance important as people age.

Ageing plays a key role in how knees sound. As cartilage naturally becomes thinner and less smooth over time, friction within the joint increases, making sounds more noticeable. "With age, there is also a reduction in joint lubrication, which can add to stiffness and crepitus," Dr. Dakshinamoorthy said. Activity levels matter too. Athletes and individuals engaged in repetitive knee-loading activities may experience popping due to overuse or muscle imbalance, while a sedentary lifestyle common in urban settings can weaken thigh muscles and reduce joint stability. Regular low-impact movement such as walking helps stimulate synovial fluid production and maintain joint lubrication. Joint alignment is another factor. Conditions such as bow legs -- a condition where a child's legs curve outward at the knees; knock knees or abnormal kneecap movement can alter how load is distributed across the knee, contributing to recurrent sounds, doctors said. Most cases of knee popping can be managed conservatively.

Strengthening exercises for the quadriceps and hip muscles, flexibility training to reduce tendon friction, weight management, and activity modification are commonly advised. Physiotherapy-guided correction of posture and movement patterns can also help. Dr. Dakshinamoorthy recommends regular low-impact exercises such as walking, cycling and swimming, along with avoiding prolonged sitting and sudden high-impact movements. "Knee popping is normally harmless, but the body should never be ignored," he said, stressing that early referral and lifestyle changes can prevent long-term joint problems. Surgery, experts emphasise, is rarely required. "Most people improve with appropriate exercise and care," Dr. Manivannan said, adding that timely evaluation helps identify mechanical issues before they progress.

Election Commission signals nationwide SIR



Defending the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls amid ongoing controversy, Gyanesh Kumar, the Chief Election Commissioner of India, said the exercise had been "completely successful", citing Bihar as its most definitive example. In a video message delivered during the 16th National Voters' Day event in Bengaluru organised by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Karnataka, he said the SIR had ensured that every eligible elector was included in the rolls while eliminating inaccuracies. The event was attended by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M. Maheshwar Rao and Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka, V. Anbukumar.

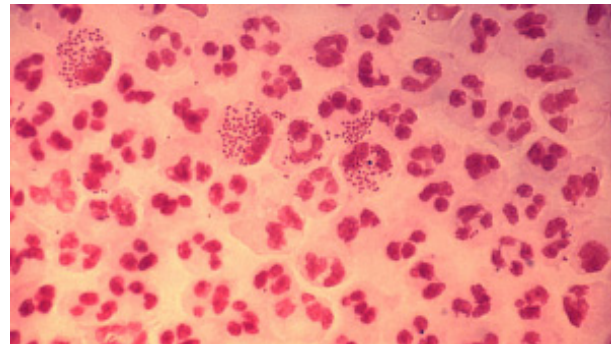
The Chief Election Commissioner said the SIR had already been completed in Bihar and was currently under way in 12 states and Union Territories, adding that it would be rolled out across all states. Pointing to Bihar, he said no application had been filed against the final electoral roll there, which, according to him, established its sanctity and credibility. Following the Election Commission of India's remarks that the SIR of electoral rolls would be implemented across the country, Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer Anbukumar, when asked whether the exercise would be undertaken in the State, said, "We will see."

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, during his address, called upon voters to exercise their franchise without fear, pressure or inducement. Calling voting both a right and a duty, the Governor likened participation in elections to a sacrifice made for the republic. "When we vote, we do not merely elect a government, but strengthen public policy, the country's development direction, the future of coming generations and the idea of social justice. Every vote strengthens the foundation of democracy," he said. He also requested newly registered voters to understand democratic values and act as responsible citizens. During the programme, the Governor presented State-level awards to election officials for excellence in electoral management, including five District Election Officers, 10 Booth Level Officer (BLO) Supervisors and 34 BLOs, alongside others.

All you need to know about: gonorrhoea

The condition is frequently asymptomatic, especially among women, and when located in the pharyngeal, and rectal sites. The bacteria infects only humans, and operates through the colonisation of mucosal surfaces. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 82.4 million new infections were diagnosed among adults aged 15 to 49 years, globally, in 2020. It is also reported that gonococcal infections are higher in men than in women since 2013. What are the causes and symptoms?

The common cause of gonorrhoea is unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex. Besides this, chemical irritants, spermicides and trauma are other causes. In women, trauma from intercourse, cervical procedures, yeast infections, allergic reactions to spermicides, latex condoms, diaphragms and intrauterine devices could also cause the condition. Gonorrhoea could cause pain or a burning during urination, an increased urgency to urinate, a pus-like or clear discharge and itching or tenderness at the tip of the penis. Some may have hematuria (blood in urine). Though most women may have no symptoms in those who do, it could be abnormal vaginal discharge, which could be yellow, grey or pus-like, pain during sexual intercourse, bleeding between periods, pain during a pelvic exam, painful, frequent urination and pelvic or abdominal pain. Since the condition is asymptomatic, the infection can be transmitted to others. If left untreated in women, gonococcal infections could result in scarring of the fallopian tubes leading to infertility or ectopic pregnancies. Gonorrhoea is diagnosed through identification of the bacteria in the cells, either through a urine test or a swab test of the affected region. The Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) is the gold standard for diagnosing gonorrhoea. A study, 'Anatomic site distribution of Neisseria gonorrhoeae in men who have sex with men attending a tertiary care hospital in north India', published in the July-Dec 2024 edition of the Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS, found the infection is common in the men who have sex with men (MSM) group. The article, by Verma, Rachna, Gupta et al. was based on their survey of 127 MSM patients attending the STI clinic in the dermatology outpatient department of AIIMS, Delhi. The study found that 20% of the patients in the study (26 persons) tested positive for Neisseria gonorrhoeae. It also found



that around 60% of the infections were missed if the testing site was limited to genitals alone. NACO rules for treatment: The National Technical Guidelines on STI and RTI of the National AIDS Control Organisation, India, advises that all infected persons should be instructed to abstain from sexual intercourse until they complete treatment for 7 days following a single-day of therapy and until resolution of symptoms in them and their sexual partners. Treatment is with antibiotics. The NACO guidelines recommends giving Ceftriaxone 500 mg, intramuscularly, in a single dose. NACO further states that diagnosed persons should be screened for HIV, chlamydia and syphilis as well. If symptoms do not resolve within 3-5 days post treatment, a laboratory culture test is recommended and all suspected cases for treatment failure should be assessed for antimicrobial resistance. Protecting newborns: If left untreated, the bacteria could infect newborns, which manifests 2–5 days after birth. Babies contract the infection during birth from the mother's infected birth canal, causing redness, swelling and discharge in the eyes. This condition, ophthalmia neonatorum can result in perforation of the globe of the eye and blindness. Babies less than 28 days old are especially susceptible. The babies could also contract sepsis, which can include arthritis and meningitis. Less severe manifestations include rhinitis, vaginitis, urethritis, and scalp infections. Babies who develop gonorrhoea are also treated with antibiotics. Prenatal screening and treatment of pregnant women, to prevent the infection being passed on to babies, is the optimum solution.

Study finds research by women may spend more time in peer review; could help understand gender gap



view system against women. A comprehensive understanding of how women are treated by the peer review system requires a thorough examination of biomedicine and the life sciences -- scientists in these fields produce 36 per cent of research articles published yearly worldwide, the team said. Peer review of articles with a female first author typically took seven days longer, compared to that of articles with a male first author. Articles with a female corresponding author typically took 13 days longer in peer review, compared to those with a male corresponding author, the study found. A first author is usually the main researcher who executes a large portion of the work throughout the research process, signifying a higher intellectual contribution, while a corresponding author manages the pre and post-publication duties, serving as a point of contact for communication. Articles with a woman first author and a woman corresponding author spent 15 days longer in peer review, compared to those with a man first author and a man corresponding author. Articles authored by all-female teams were estimated to spend nine days more in peer review, compared to those authored by all-male teams.

Women-authored scientific research articles may typically spend up to 15 per cent more time in peer review, compared to those authored by men, according to an analysis that helps explain gender gap in publication rates and representation. Researchers from the US' University of Nevada estimated, "for every 50 papers published by a female author, she will have spent on average 350-750 days longer than her male counterparts waiting for reviews and editorial decisions and/or revising manuscripts".

Peer review is a quality control activity in which a research paper is assessed by independent experts in the field before publication to ensure validity, originality and scientific rigour. Time taken from a paper being submitted for peer review until it gets accepted for publication is counted as peer review time. The study, published in the PLOS Biology journal, looked at 3.65 crore articles published across more than 36,300 biomedical and life sciences journals. Articles indexed until the end of 2023 in the 'PubMed' database, managed by the US' National Institute of Health, were included in the analysis.

Results from the "largest analysis to date" show that "the median (typical) amount of time spent under review is 7.4 per cent to 14.6 per cent longer for female-authored articles than for male-authored articles, and that differences remain significant after controlling for several factors." The team said that women are underrepresented in academia, especially in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine), at top institutions and in senior positions. Studies also suggest that the gender gap in representation may be specific to certain fields of research, the researchers said. A reason contributing to the disparity could be the many obstacles that women face compared to their male counterparts, the researchers said, adding that there is a substantial debate around biases in the peer re-

Tell WHO to re-classify arecanut from 'carcinogenic' to 'possibly carcinogenic to humans': Karnataka farmers



view system against women. A comprehensive understanding of how women are treated by the peer review system requires a thorough examination of biomedicine and the life sciences -- scientists in these fields produce 36 per cent of research articles published yearly worldwide, the team said. Peer review of articles with a female first author typically took seven days longer, compared to that of articles with a male first author. Articles with a female corresponding author typically took 13 days longer in peer review, compared to those with a male corresponding author, the study found. A first author is usually the main researcher who executes a large portion of the work throughout the research process, signifying a higher intellectual contribution, while a corresponding author manages the pre and post-publication duties, serving as a point of contact for communication. Articles with a woman first author and a woman corresponding author spent 15 days longer in peer review, compared to those with a man first author and a man corresponding author. Articles authored by all-female teams were estimated to spend nine days more in peer review, compared to those authored by all-male teams.

Fearing that the World Health Organisation (WHO) might recommend banning arecanut on the ground that it causes cancer, a leading cooperative body of arecanut farmers of Karnataka and Kerala has written to Union Health Minister J. P. Nadda to recommend to WHO to re-classify arecanut from Group I to Group II-B. Currently, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), under WHO, has placed arecanut under Group I (carcinogenic to humans) while arecoline, one of its principal constituents, is classified under Group II B (possibly carcinogenic to humans), stated S. R. Satishchandra, president, Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Limited (CAMPCO), Mangaluru, in his January 24 letter to the Minister. "Such contradictions underscore the need for further rigorous, India-specific scientific scrutiny before arriving at any policy-level conclusion," the letter states.

Mr. Satishchandra said that the re-classification (from Group I to Group II-B) be done 'at least as an interim measure' till the Indian government's on-going 'evidence-based research on arecanut and human health' is completed. The multi-institutional research is led by the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The All-India Institute of Medical Sciences; the National Botanical Research Institute; the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology; the Indian Institute of Science; Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research; the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI); Kasturba Medical College; K.S. Hegde Medical Academy, and SDM College of Medical Sciences and Hospital are part of the research team. The CAMPCO, over a 50-year-old multi-State cooperative body of Karnataka and Kerala farmers, wrote the letter in view of WHO's South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) organising a webinar on January 30 on the topic 'Areca Nut Challenge: Turning Policy into Impact in South-East Asia'. The letter stated that the webinar follows deliberations arising from a declaration made in Sri Lanka in October 2025, and appears to focus on policy transition and implementation related to arecanut. The WHO classifi-

Abhishek: where fearlessness meets consistency

Fearlessness. It's a great trait to espouse, but not always the easiest to embrace. When fearlessness translates to breathtaking outcomes, it is hailed as a virtue, a masterstroke. When it results in one's downfall, especially early in the innings, the same 'virtue' can become a millstone. It takes conviction, therefore, to continue to place faith in that quality even in the face of odd failure. Easier said than done, of course. Unless one is Abhishek Sharma.

It's a little shy of 19 months since India were crowned T20 World Cup winners for a second time, in Bridgetown. Abhishek wasn't in the squad; he had made his way into the larger scheme of things after a breakout season with Sunrisers Hyderabad in IPL 2024. But with even the likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill struggling to get a look-in once India decided to push Virat Kohli up the order to partner Rohit Sharma against the new ball, Abhishek knew he had to bide his time. Fortunately for him, that biding wasn't a long process. Within a week of the World Cup triumph, India travelled to Zimbabwe for a five-match T20I series, under first-time skipper Gill. Abhishek's international debut was inauspicious as he courted a four-ball duck after opening the batting alongside his captain and his dear friend. Retribution was immediate; Zimbabwe were punished for their impunity in the very next game when the left-hander clattered to his maiden century off just 46 deliveries. His second fifty came off an incredible 13 balls, with three fours and five towering sixes. This fella, he was quite something.

There have been numerous false dawns in Indian cricket, but Abhishek most certainly isn't one of them. In no time, he made himself indispensable, with his intrepid ball-bashing that wasn't built on a wing and a prayer. With Rohit and Kohli retiring in the immediacy of the seven-run heist against South Africa at Kensington Oval, there were two opening slots up for grabs, and Abhishek's century in his second T20I had given him a headstart. How spectacularly he has built on that. Within a year of his debut, Abhishek surged to the top of the ICC T20I rankings for batters, displacing his opening partner at SRH, Australian Travis Head. They say that it is easier -- not easy, just easier -- to get to the top than to stay there. Abhishek has made the not-so-easy appear terribly straightforward, and is now indisputably the most feared opener in the world. And he is only 25.

Putting on a show Let's return to fearlessness, just for a brief while. After kicking off the five-match series against

New Zealand with a scorching 35-ball 84 in Nagpur on Wednesday, Abhishek was dismissed first ball in the next outing. The bigger-sized arena at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium in Raipur consumed him, as much as anything else. The first ball he received, from Jacob Duffy, was well within his hitting arc, a shot he has mastered through hours of toil in the anonymity of practice sessions. Full and on his pads, it begged to be deposited over the fence. Abhishek obliged with his trademark aerial flick with a flourish, and even though he timed it well enough, it didn't have the legs to clear Devon Conway on the square boundary on the leg-side. Conway had put down a similar offering from Sanju Samson at the same position off the first ball of the contest, but Abhishek wasn't as lucky, trudging off disconsolate after making no contribution to what in theory was a stiff run-chase of 209. You'd think a first-ball dismissal would force most batters to at least be desperate to get off the mark with a cheap single in the next outing. But Abhishek has shown in the last year and a half, if not more, that he is nothing like 'most batters'.

And therefore on Sunday, in Guwahati where India were confronted with a modest target of 154 to clinch the series at the first time of asking, he charged down the track to his first ball, also from Duffy, and drop-kicked it over long-on for the most outrageous of sixes. In the previous over, Ishan Kishan, the pint-sized dynamite, had elicited an admiring, defeated smile from Matt Henry after dismissing him for a six, just two deliveries after Samson had been bowled first ball. Duffy wasn't in a similarly obliging mood, though after the match which ended with an Indian win with 60 deliveries to spare, he almost snatched Abhishek's bat to check for 'springs' or some such illegal aid that helped propel the ball to long distances. Twice in three matches now, New Zealand have felt the full fury of Abhishek's scything willow. Batting first in Nagpur allowed him to blast 84; a modest target in Guwahati meant the large gathering had to be satisfied with an unbeaten 68, which came off a measly 20 deliveries, with not a single dot ball in the equation. Despite the first-ball blob in Raipur, Abhishek now has 152 runs for the series at an average of 76; he has smashed 12 fours and 13 sixes, largely responsible for a staggering strike-rate of 271.43. And he has done so with supreme nonchalance, hardly seeming to hit a ball in anger even though it has sailed miles up in the air and multiple rows back in the stands.

India-flagged LPG tanker Green Sanvi crosses Strait of Hormuz, seventh Indian vessel to exit Persian Gulf since early March



Another India-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanker—Green Sanvi—that had been anchored in the Persian Gulf crossed over to the east of the Strait of Hormuz on Friday evening using a corridor through Iran's territorial waters, according to ship tracking data. The tanker is estimated to be carrying around 44,000 tonnes of LPG, which is half a day's worth of India's pre-West Asia war LPG consumption. The country's current LPG consumption is lower amid a supply crunch due to the war. According to experts and industry insiders, two more India-flagged LPG tankers—Green Asha and Jag Vikram—are also expected to cross the Strait and head to India over the next few days.

Green Sanvi is the seventh India-flagged merchant ship to have transited the fraught waters of the Strait since the West Asia war began; all seven have been LPG tankers. With Green Sanvi's transit, there are now 17 India-flagged vessels in the Persian Gulf, which is to the east of the Strait of Hormuz. These include three more LPG tankers, four crude oil tankers, one liquefied natural gas (LNG) tanker, one chemical products tanker, three container ships, two bulk carriers, and two vessels undergoing routine maintenance.

India has been engaged with Iran at the diplomatic level for safe passage of Indian ships through the Strait of Hormuz, where Tehran has brought vessel movements to an effective halt amid the ongoing West Asia war. Last week, Iran said that non-hostile vessels linked to countries other than the US, Israel, and their allies can cross the strait in coordination with Iranian authorities. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had said the strait remains operational for nations that have engaged with Tehran and are considered friendly, adding that vessels from China, Russia, India, Iraq, and Pakistan had been allowed to move their vessels from through the maritime chokepoint, according to Iranian State TV. While transiting, Green Sanvi was signalling that it was an Indian ship with Indian seafarers on board. Such identity broadcasts have become a standard of sorts among vessels crossing the Strait in coordination with Iranian authorities, which are regulating vessel movements through the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that connects the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea and is a critical maritime chokepoint for global energy flows.

Scores of vessels have been stranded in the Persian

Gulf since the war began, with only a few being able to safely transit the Strait, and that, too, with Iran's nod. Like most other vessels that have been able to cross the Strait, Green Sanvi also through Iranian waters between Iran's Larak and Qeshm islands, instead of taking the shorter and straighter conventional path through the middle of the strait, ship tracking data shows.

Green Sanvi, a very large gas carrier (VLGC), is owned by MOL India, according to shipping databases. MOL India is the Indian arm of Japan-based global shipping giant Mitsui OSK Lines. The tanker has a deadweight capacity of nearly 50,000 tonnes. Deadweight tonnage is the total weight a vessel can carry, including cargo, fuel, fresh water, ballast water, provisions, and crew. Prior to Green Sanvi, six other India-flagged LPG tankers—Shivalik, Nanda Devi, Jag Vasant, Pine Gas, BW Elm, and BW Tyr—safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz over the past few weeks. The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz has created a major headache for India, which depends on imports to meet a bulk of its energy needs. Around 40% of India's crude oil imports, over 50% of its LNG imports, and a whopping 90% of its LPG imports transited the Strait, making the chokepoint particularly critical for India's LPG supplies. India's annual LPG consumption stands at a little over 33 million tonnes, with an import dependency level of 60%. With 90% of India's LPG imports coming from West Asia, the Strait of Hormuz effectively sees the movement of around 54% of India's LPG consumption. Last week, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the country has adopted a "reasonable approach" by implementing "a series of precautionary measures" to prevent the "additional risks on ships and seafarers in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman". "Accordingly, and as repeatedly emphasized, the Strait of Hormuz is not closed, and maritime traffic through it has not been suspended. Navigation in the Strait continues, subject to compliance with the aforementioned necessary measures and considerations arising from the wartime situation," it said in a statement.

Non-hostile vessels, or those belonging to or affiliated with other countries, provided that they do not participate in or cooperate with acts of aggression against Iran and comply with the declared safety and security regulations and measures, may, in coordination with the competent Iranian authorities, benefit from safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz," it added, while maintaining that vessels linked to the US, Israel, and their allies "do not qualify as engaging in normal and non-hostile passage". "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran once again emphasizes that any arrangements, initiatives, or mechanisms related to the safety and security of navigation in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman must be undertaken with full respect for the rights and interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in coordination with its competent authorities, and with due regard to the realities arising from the aggression and the situation of conflict," the statement read.

Govt gives full customs duty exemption on critical petrochemical products till June 30

With an aim to reduce cost pressure for downstream sectors and key industries using petrochemical products as primary inputs amid the ongoing West Asia war, the government has given full customs duty exemption on critical petrochemical products till June 30. "In light of the ongoing conflict in West Asia and the consequent disruptions in global supply chains, the Government of India has decided to provide full Customs Duty exemption on critical petrochemical products till 30th June, 2026," the Ministry of Finance said in a statement. This measure has been taken as a "temporary and targeted relief" in order to ensure continued availability of critical petrochemical inputs for domestic industry, reduce cost pressures on downstream sectors, and safeguard supply stability in the country, the Ministry said. Exemption is expected to be helpful for sectors dependent on petrochemical feedstock and intermediates such as plastics, packaging, textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, automotive components, and other manufacturing segments. "This will also provide relief to consumers of final products," the Ministry said.

The customs duty exemption for petrochemical products for three months is expected to have a revenue loss of Rs 1,800 crore for the government, an official said. Since the global geopolitical and economic situation is dynamic, the revenue implication figure is not final and needs to be seen in that context, the official added. About 40 petrochemical products have been given the customs duty exemption including anhydrous ammonia, toluene, styrene, dichloromethane, methanol, acetic acid, ammonium nitrate, polypropylene, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyols, polycarbonates, polyurethanes, and poly butadiene, styrene butadiene.

With an increase in crude oil prices following the Israel-US strikes on Iran on February 28 and the continuing conflict, industries have faced cost pressures and sourcing gaps for ensuring smooth supplies for production. From shortage of gas availability for car paint shops to technical grade urea in the automotive value chain to increase in price of sulphuric acid — a critical input in fertilisers — to glass and other packaging materials, the supply chains for many industries have been disrupted. Domestic petrochemical production has been hit due to the government-mandated diversion of important feedstock streams—butane and propane—to maximise the production of LPG, a critical fuel on which crores of Indian households depend. Moreover, the government has also restricted natural gas supplies to petrochemical plants and refineries in a bid to ensure that high-priority sectors get adequate natural gas supplies. As much as 90% of India's LPG imports and around 60% of liquefied natural gas imports came from West Asia via the Strait of Hormuz.

The government has been taking a series of measures to address the supply-chain bottlenecks. On Friday, the Centre had increased the allocation of commercial LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) to states and union territories by another 20%, bringing the total to 70% of the pre-crisis level, to meet the requirements of industries. The additional allocation was meant for labour-intensive industries and those providing support to other essential sectors, with priority to steel, automobiles, textiles, dyes, chemicals and plastics. Special priority is being given to process industries or those requiring LPG for specialised heating purposes that cannot be substituted by natural gas. Also, the government has made it mandatory for commercial and industrial consumers of LPG to register with public sector fuel retailers, and



also apply for a piped natural gas (PNG) connection to become eligible to get commercial LPG, with exceptions for industries where LPG is used for special processes or purposes and cannot be replaced by natural gas.

On Wednesday, the government announced a one-time concessional measure for manufacturers in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for one year allowing eligible manufacturing units in SEZs to undertake sales to the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) at concessional rates of duty. Before that, the Reserve Bank of India extended an earlier concession for exporters by allowing pre- and post-shipment export credit to run for up to 450 days for all disbursements made till June 30. In November last year, the RBI had extended the credit window from 270 to 450 days for loans sanctioned up to March 31, 2026 in view of the impact due to the US tariffs.

Maruti Suzuki adds 502 service touchpoints in FY26, expands network

New Delhi: India's largest automobile firm, Maruti Suzuki, on Friday said that it added 502 new service touchpoints in the financial year ended March 2026, in the highest single-year network expansion in the automaker's history, bringing its total after-sales service footprint to 5,926 touchpoints spread across 3,000 cities and towns nationwide. The newly added locations span a range of formats, including ARENA and NEXA workshops, Maruti Suzuki Sales and Service Points (MSSPs), and Service-on-Wheels, reflecting the company's push to serve customers across metros, small towns, and remote up-country markets alike. "Whether customers want to visit a workshop, opt for doorstep service, get their vehicle serviced at locations they frequently visit or require service support during a road trip, a Maruti Suzuki service touchpoint is always within reach," Maruti Suzuki India MD & CEO, Hisashi Takeuchi, said. Takeuchi added that the company intends to expand the network to approximately 8,000 touchpoints by FY2030-31. The scale of the current expansion stands in sharp contrast to the company's earlier pace of growth. The company inaugurated its first service workshop in 1983 and took roughly 14 years to reach 1,000 touchpoints by 1997. Moreover, the auto firm has recorded 5 per cent year-on-year growth in its March retail sales, while full-year FY26 volumes climbed about 3 per cent over the previous fiscal.

The 2-tablespoon rule: When coughing up blood becomes a medical emergency



Seeing a streak of blood when you cough can be deeply unsettling. It often triggers a flood of anxious thoughts, with worst-case scenarios quickly dominating your mind. But is a single instance of blood-tinged sputum a direct indicator of something life-threatening? Not necessarily, confirms Dr Nimish Shah, Consultant in Respiratory Medicine at Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre, clarifying that in many cases, it could stem from simple throat irritation or a lingering infection. According to him, "The most common cause of coughing up blood-streaked mucus is an upper respiratory tract infection, such as pharyngitis or laryngitis," the pulmonologist points out while explaining that these infections can inflame the throat and airways, sometimes leading to slight bleeding.

"It can also result from persistent or excessive coughing due to allergies or throat irritation, which may cause rupture of small mucosal capillaries, leading to blood-streaked mucus." In some cases, it may also be an early sign of a viral or bacterial pneumonia. Importantly, the blood may not always originate from the lungs. "It could be trickling down from the back of the nose and then being coughed out." Severe acid reflux is another possible cause, where acid reaching the vocal cords can lead to irritation and blood-streaked mucus. Coughing if the root cause is not identified even after multiple tests and exams, the final step of evaluation is a bronchoscopy (Image: Wikimedia commons) When

it may need attention

Since the reasons can vary so widely, identifying whether the issue is minor or serious depends largely on the individual's medical history. If a person is otherwise healthy and has clear preceding symptoms like a runny nose or sore throat, the condition can be monitored initially. But persistence is a red flag. "However, if you have any health comorbidities such as diabetes or hypertension, or if you are on blood thinners, or if you have a fever which is not settling down, or if you start to feel breathless, then it is not something to be ignored and needs to be looked into by a specialist." He also clarifies that "when we talk about coughing up blood, this refers to fresh blood, not blood mixed with mucus." This is called hemoptysis, and anything more than two tablespoonfuls should receive immediate medical attention, as it can be life-threatening. How doctors investigate the cause? Diagnosis typically starts with a clinical examination, followed by a chest X-ray and blood tests to detect infection. If results remain unclear, further imaging such as a CT scan of the chest—and sometimes the sinuses and nose—is recommended. If the cause is still not identified, the final step is bronchoscopy. "Bronchoscopy is a procedure in which a small camera is inserted into the lungs to directly visualise them and check for any abnormalities." This helps detect even very small issues that may not appear on scans. Doctors can also take samples and perform biopsies through this route if needed.

Could it be something serious? Even a single episode of coughing up blood should not be ignored. "If you experience hemoptysis or coughing up blood, it should not be ignored and needs to be evaluated, even if it has occurred only once." Tuberculosis (TB) can often present with coughing up blood, and in those with a past history, a cavity in the lungs may rupture and lead to bleeding. More serious conditions, such as cancer, also need to be evaluated—especially if symptoms have been occurring for several months. In such cases, timely investigation and appropriate treatment become crucial.

From gas to fatigue: 5 warning signs you might have a real gluten sensitivity

Persistent bloating, abdominal discomfort, and irregular bowel habits are increasingly common complaints in gastroenterology clinics. While many patients suspect gluten intolerance, experts say the condition is often misunderstood and requires proper medical evaluation before dietary changes are made. According to Dr Saiprasad Lad, Consultant – Gastroenterologist, Hepatologist and Therapeutic GI Endoscopist at S.L. Raheja Hospital – A Fortis Associate, gluten-related symptoms are often linked to Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity (NCGS).

"Patients often come to me complaining about prolonged abdominal discomfort and bloating. Many also report issues with bowel obstruction, especially when they consume anything that has gluten in it, which is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye," he tells indianexpress.com. Dr Lad clarifies that NCGS is different from Celiac disease, an autoimmune condition in which gluten damages the small intestinal lining. In contrast, NCGS does not cause structural damage, but symptoms can still significantly affect quality of life.

Dr Vikram Uttam Patil, Consultant – Gastroenterologist, Hepatologist and Interventional Endoscopist at Sahyadri Super Speciality Hospital – Nagar Road, explains: "Non-celiac gluten sensitivity (also called gluten intolerance) may cause chronic intestinal disorders by irritating the gastrointestinal lining and interfering with how food is digested in the digestive system; however, unlike Celiac disease, this condition does not trigger an autoimmune reaction." He adds that wheat allergy is another distinct condition and can present with immediate allergic symptoms such as hives or breathing difficulty, though it is less common.

In gluten intolerance, consuming gluten may trigger inflammatory changes in the gut without the autoimmune destruction seen in Celiac disease. Dr Patil reveals that this may result in increased intestinal permeability ('leaky gut'), abnormal intestinal motility, and fermentation of ingested food by intestinal microbes. "This may cause gas and discomfort in the individual, leading to bloating and abnormal bowel habits." Some of the common symptoms that may



highlight gluten sensitivity, as pointed out by the gastro specialists, include: Abdominal bloating and cramps Excess gas and flatulence Diarrhoea or constipation Nausea and fatigue Post-meal heaviness or incomplete digestion Dr Patil also notes: "Individuals who are gluten intolerant also tend to experience a sense of incomplete digestion, which is often felt after a meal containing gluten has been consumed." Because symptoms overlap with Irritable Bowel Syndrome, diagnosis is often challenging.

Doctors strongly advise against self-diagnosing or eliminating gluten without medical guidance. Dr Lad warns that starting a gluten-free diet prematurely can interfere with testing for Celiac disease. Dr Patil explains: "Gluten intolerance is largely diagnosed as a diagnosis of exclusion. In the first instance, conditions like Celiac disease and Wheat allergy are excluded using blood tests, as well as endoscopy, if necessary." He adds that when tests are negative, a supervised elimination diet followed by a gluten challenge is used for confirmation, as no specific lab test exists for NCGS. Management and prevention Treatment depends on diagnosis. Celiac disease requires lifelong strict gluten avoidance, while NCGS may only need reduced gluten intake. Doctors also recommend a dietitian's support to prevent nutrient deficiencies and maintain a food-symptom diary. Experts conclude that persistent digestive symptoms should always be medically evaluated rather than self-treated for safe, long-term gut health.

'Isn't about too much water': Dietitian shares real reason menopause causes sudden bloating; gynaecologist on how to fix it

Bloating, puffiness and a feeling of heaviness are common complaints during menopause, yet many women struggle to understand why they suddenly retain more fluid despite drinking water, eating normally or staying active. In an Instagram post, dietitian Shweta J Panchal explained that menopause-related bloating is less about excess water and more about internal imbalances.

In the caption, she wrote, "Menopause water retention isn't about 'too much water' — it's about imbalance." According to her, fluid retention during menopause can increase due to changes in hormones, mineral levels and circulation. She added that when sodium levels are high, and potassium or magnesium levels drop, the body may hold on to fluid as a protective response. "During menopause, fluid retention often increases due to shifts in hormones, minerals, and circulation. When sodium is high, and potassium or magnesium is low, the body holds on to water." Her suggestions focused on restoring balance rather than eliminating certain nutrients entirely. She noted that "?? Potassium-rich foods (like potatoes, spinach, coconut water) help release excess fluid," and "?? Magnesium supports vessel relaxation and reduces bloating." She also cautioned against extreme dietary restrictions, explaining that "?? Cutting salt completely can backfire—balance matters," while "???? Movement improves lymphatic flow and fluid drainage," and "?? Proper hydration tells your body it's safe to let go of water." Summing up her message, she said, "Water retention is a mineral + hydration issue, not a water problem."

But what hormonal and physiological changes during menopause contribute to water retention?

Dr Gaana Sreenivas, obstetrician and gynaecologist at Bone and Birth Clinic and Rainbow Hospital, Banerghatta Road, tells indianexpress.com, "During menopause, fluctuating and eventually declining oestrogen and progesterone levels affect how the body regulates fluids. Oestrogen influences the renin-angiotensin system and kidney func-

tion, which can lead to temporary fluid retention and bloating. Progesterone has a mild diuretic effect, so its decline may also contribute to the feeling of swelling." Mineral balance plays an important role in fluid regulation. Dr Sreenivas notes, "Excess sodium encourages the body to hold water, while potassium helps maintain cellular fluid balance and supports kidney function. Magnesium supports muscle relaxation, reduces inflammation, and helps regulate electrolyte balance. When these minerals are not balanced due to diet, stress, or metabolic changes common in midlife, women may notice increased bloating or puffiness."

How can women adjust their diet and hydration habits to reduce bloating and fluid retention?

The goal should be balance rather than restriction. Dr Sreenivas suggests that adequate hydration helps the kidneys regulate sodium and prevents the body from retaining excess fluid. Drinking water consistently throughout the day is more helpful than reducing intake. Dr Sreenivas adds, "Dietary choices can make a meaningful difference. Increasing potassium-rich foods such as bananas, coconut water, spinach, and lentils helps counter sodium-related fluid retention. Including magnesium-rich foods like nuts, seeds, whole grains, and leafy greens can also help reduce bloating. Reducing highly processed foods, which are typically high in sodium, is more effective than eliminating salt from home-cooked meals." Regular physical activity, she says, especially walking and strength training, improves circulation and reduces fluid accumulation. Good sleep and stress management are equally important because cortisol fluctuations can worsen water retention during menopause. Mild bloating or temporary swelling is common during the menopausal transition, but persistent or severe fluid retention should be evaluated. "Women should seek medical advice if swelling is sudden, painful, affects only one limb, or is associated with breathlessness, rapid weight gain, or fatigue," stresses Dr Sreenivas.

‘He did not perform at all’: Harbhajan Singh slams Sanju Samson’s innings in CSK’s IPL 2026 against PBKS



GNS News Agency, April 4

Former India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh has questioned Sanju Samson’s batting approach during the Chennai Super Kings’ IPL 2026 match against the Punjab Kings on Friday. The 45-year-old said that the wicketkeeper-batter had a lot of expectations riding on him, but did not meet them in his side’s first home of the season. Samson made a run-a-ball 7 in the match before falling to Xavier Bartlett in the second over. Harbhajan praised Ayush Mhatre for his approach, saying that it was his knock that took CSK to their eventual total of 209 runs.

“There were a lot of expectations from Sanju Samson,

but he did not perform at all. Ruturaj also played a very slow knock. He was taking singles, and there was Ayush Mhatre at the other end, who deserves a lot of praise. He played really well, and that is why they could reach that total,” he said on his YouTube channel. The 103-Test veteran also praised Sarfaraz Khan for his innings of 32 runs in 12 balls, adding that his knock gave CSK the impetus they needed for their innings. “The one who added impetus was Sarfaraz Khan. Sarfaraz dhoka nahi dega (Sarfaraz won’t betray), this is correct as Sarfaraz ne dhoka nahi diya (Sarfaraz did not betray). Akash told me that Sarfaraz had prepared a pitch at his home, where he played very fast balls. The space was just 15 yards, because of which his reflexes have now become so strong. He provided the acceleration that was required,” Harbhajan added.

The 45-year-old, who won the IPL with CSK in 2018, admitted that bowling was a weak link for the franchise this season, and there was not a single threat in this attack that could challenge the opposition. “Chennai’s bowling is very weak. They got all out for 125-130 in the last match. They scored 209 here, but it did not seem that any bowler could take a wicket. They were just waiting for things to happen,” he said. After losing their first two matches of the new season, CSK will now travel to Bengaluru to take on the reigning champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the evening clash of the double-header on Sunday.

Why was Aakash Chopra critical of CSK’s selection against PBKS: ‘Was just the third time in this tournament’s 19-year history’

GNS News Agency, April 4

In the game against the Punjab Kings on Friday, the Chennai Super Kings picked only two overseas players, which has only happened the third time in the Indian Premier League’s history. However, the combination picked could not have come into question if Chennai had won the game, but they lost to Punjab. In the opening game against Rajasthan Royals, Chennai has played Matthew Short and Jamie Overton both of the game did not play yesterday. Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra questioned CSK’s decision to play just two foreigners and said it’s hurting them.

“It was just the third time in this tournament’s 19-year history that only two overseas players were fielded. Why would that have happened? We had asked yesterday whether the decisions Chennai took are hurting them. Exactly the same thing happened because they don’t have the confidence at all,” Chopra said on his YouTube channel. “You picked only two overseas batters, out of which one is injured and the second is not worthy of playing only because you feel why you should play him in the middle order. You made him sit out after one match. I didn’t understand the second one. I felt they would play with three, but they didn’t bring Jamie Overton as well. He scored runs in the last match and he bowled decently,” he added. “They played Prashant Veer, but didn’t make him bowl. Why ex-



actly did you play him? Things that never used to happen with Chennai are hurting Chennai repeatedly now. The auction strategy is hurting and what they are doing now is also hurting slightly,” he observed. Chopra also lauded Ayush Mhatre’s innings of 73 runs. “Let me start with Ayush Mhatre. He is a shining star because he is batting at No. 3, although he likes opening otherwise. He batted extremely well.

He has changed his technique a little. He used to go deep inside the crease earlier. He used to get slightly stuck, but now he is playing with a slight forward press,” he said in the same video.

GT vs RR Playing 11, IPL 2026 Today Match: Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals unlikely to tinker with familiar XIs



GNS News Agency, April 4

IPL 2026, Gujarat Titans (GT) vs Rajasthan Royals (RR) Playing 11 Today Match, Full Squad: Rajasthan Royals’ Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will be taking on the the trioka of Gujarat Titans’ Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj and Prasad Krishna as well as the wily Rashid Khan when the two teams face each other at the Narendra Modi Stadium. With both teams unlikely to tinker much with their lineup, the Gujarat Titans will hope that their misfiring top 3 comes to the party in their home ground. Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler are the top batters in the GT lineup but couldn’t quite get going against Punjab Kings. Meanwhile, their middle order hasn’t exactly inspired confidence but it’s unlikely GT will ring the alarm bells and go for wholesale changes in the early stages. On the other hand,

Rajasthan who thrashed Chennai Super Kings by 47 runs will likely go with the same combination which looks pretty well balanced at the moment. GT vs RR Predicted XI

Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), Sai Sudharsan, Jos Buttler (wk), Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Shikhar Dhawan, Rahul Tewatia, Rashid Khan, Kagiso Rabada/Jason Holder, Ashok Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, Prasad Krishna/Rajasthan Royals: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Riyan Parag (c), Shimron Hetmyer, Donovan Ferreira, Ravindra Jadeja, Jofra Archer, Ravi Bishnoi, Sandeep Sharma, Nandre Burger, Brijesh Sharma

GT vs RR Squads Gujarat Titans Squad: Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill(c), Jos Buttler(w), Glenn Phillips, Washington Sundar, Shikhar Dhawan, Rahul Tewatia, Rashid Khan, Kagiso Rabada, Ashok Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, Prasad Krishna, Jason Holder, Jayant Yadav, Manav Suthar, Kumar Kushagra, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore, Ishant Sharma, Luke Wood, Tom Banton, Kulwant Khejroliya, Anuj Rawat, Arshad Khan, Gurnoor Brar, Nishant Sindhu/Rajasthan Royals Squad: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Dhruv Jurel(w), Riyan Parag(c), Shimron Hetmyer, Ravindra Jadeja, Jofra Archer, Nandre Burger, Sandeep Sharma, Ravi Bishnoi, Brijesh Sharma, Donovan Ferreira, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Ravi Singh, Sushant Mishra, Tushar Deshpande, Adam Milne, Dasun Shanaka, Kuldeep Sen, Yuvraj Singh Charak, Shubham Dubey, Kwena Maphaka, Vignesh Puthur, Aman Rao Perala

Delhi Capitals top order under pressure ahead of Mumbai Indians clash

New Delhi: The spotlight will firmly be on Delhi Capitals’ top order when they face a confident Mumbai Indians in their first home fixture of the IPL 2026 season here on Saturday. DC, who tried as many as seven opening combinations last year, had hoped for greater stability this season, but early signs suggest the issue persists. Chasing a modest 142 against Lucknow Super Giants in their opener, the Capitals’ top order crumbled quickly, with KL Rahul falling for a first-ball duck and Nitish Rana and Pathum Nissanka departing in quick succession to leave the side at 26 for four. What followed, however, was a display of composure and maturity by 22-year-old impact substitute Sameer Rizvi, who struck an unbeaten half-century. Combining with the experienced Tristan Stubbs, the duo scripted a six-wicket victory with an unbroken stand that rescued DC. While Rizvi’s fearless strokeplay stood out, the vulnerability of the top remains a concern, particularly against a Mumbai attack led by Jasprit Bumrah. Still in pursuit of their maiden IPL title, the Capitals will be eager to see greater

stability at the top. They have the option of turning to either Abhishek Porel, who showed promise last season, or Prithvi Shaw, who has struggled with consistency. “It’s just been one game, we haven’t pushed the panic button yet,” Kuldeep Yadav said at the pre-match press conference when asked about the top-order collapse. In contrast, DC’s bowling unit looked more assured even in the absence of Australian quick Mitchell Starc, who remains unavailable. South African pacer Lungi Ngidi continues to use slower deliveries effectively and T Natarajan, who has spent considerable time on the sidelines due to injury, chipped in with a three-wicket haul against LSG, while Mukesh Kumar was economical. The spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and skipper Axar Patel applied pressure through the middle overs, ensuring the opposition never broke free. This blend of pace variations and spin control will be key for Delhi against MI’s batting line-up that includes Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma. Rohit turned back the clock, scoring a fiery 78, marking his return to T20 cricket in emphatic fashion.

‘Is Ruturaj Gaikwad feeling threatened by Sanju Samson?’: Former cricketers weigh in on CSK leadership in IPL 2026



GNS News Agency, April 4

Ruturaj Gaikwad’s captaincy has come under scrutiny at the Chennai Super Kings after successive defeats at the start of their IPL 2026 campaign. While former CSK batter S Badrinath openly criticised Gaikwad’s tactics, other pundits feel the presence of Sanju Samson will challenge Gaikwad’s security as a leader this season. Despite scoring 209 in their first home game of the season against the Punjab Kings on Friday night, CSK suffered a crushing defeat, compounding Gaikwad’s woes as captain. With Samson emerging as the preferred choice to succeed MS Dhoni as CSK’s next wicket-keeping talisman, Gaikwad will feel the heat, according to pundits Michael Vaughan and Simon Doull. In a chat with former England captain Vaughan, Doull was asked whether Samson’s presence would affect Gaikwad’s leadership. “Absolutely threatened” “What about the captain, Gaikwad? Do you think he feels threatened [by Samson]?” Vaughan asked the former New Zealand seamer on Cricbuzz. Vaughan too observed that Gaikwad will face ample pressure in Samson’s presence. Despite the poor start to his captaincy tenure, Gaikwad continues to find the

backing from the CSK team management. Gaikwad has now lost 13 of the 21 matches he has led the five-time champions in since 2024, while Samson’s signing comes after his extensive reign as Rajasthan Royals captain between 2021 and 2025.

“So that’s another kind of dynamic that you’re looking at. [One of the league’s] youngest captains, Gaikwad, he’s done it a bit now and you kind of go, ‘Go on, we’re gonna back you, you’re the captain. But by the way, we’re signing Sanju, who’s a very good captain and he’s a keeper. And guess what? We’ve had a keeper who was a captain for a long period of time and did very well, and we’re gonna try and replace him. But you carry on captaining and hope it doesn’t affect you,” remarked Vaughan.

Stiff for Samson too. Meanwhile, Doull declared embracing a high-profile role at CSK will be a challenging proposition for Samson too. Involved in a Rs 18 crore trade from Rajasthan, Samson’s start with the franchise has involved two cheap dismissals this week. “Tough challenge for him, and it’s one of those situations you find yourself in when you’re not desperate, but when you want to play for a certain side and you want to put on a show,” Doull had said before Friday’s match against Punjab Kings. Doull said Samson could seek inspiration from his own performances in the T20 World Cup last month, where he emerged as India’s leading star in the knockouts. “He is a South boy, isn’t he? He is a Kerala boy. He wants to put on a show. I think he feels like he’s more at home. In the South, the trade happened; it was a big trade as we’ve talked about, you’ve lost 2 high quality players for one player. So the pressure’s quite enormous, the pressure of maybe what they see him as in the future as well. But he just got to think back to a few weeks ago, doesn’t he? And how was he playing in the last 3 games [in the T20 World Cup],” Doull added.

‘Don’t think there is a thing called finishers anymore,’ says CSK head coach Stephen Fleming

GNS News Agency, April 4

On a day where Chennai Super Kings ended up losing after putting on 209/5 on board, their head coach Stephen Fleming has said that they could have been better defensively with the ball. Defending a big total, CSK were straightaway put under pressure by Priyansh Arya, who scored 39 off 11 deliveries before Shreyas Iyer’s 50 off 29 deliveries gave Punjab Kings their fourth win on the trot at Chepauk in the last four seasons.

For Chennai, this was a defeat that showed them the mirror. Having let go of Matheesha Pathirana and Nathan Ellis ruled out of injury, Chennai’s attack is devoid of any bowlers who could make an impact. At the mini-auctions, where they went with the second-highest purse, they spent Rs 14.2 crore each on two young uncapped Indian players, Kartik Sharma and Prashant Veer. Despite the likes of Lungi Ngidi, Gerald Coetzee, Otneil Baartman, Jacob Duffy, Alzarri Joseph, and Ben Dwarshuis available to pick from, they didn’t spend big on strengthening the attack. Their hesitance to go for Ngidi, a pacer who has been part of the set-up and has worked with their bowling consultant Eric Simmons, came as a surprise. That Ngidi has evolved into a reliable T20 bowler has only rubbed salt into their wounds.

When asked about the reasons, Fleming didn’t reveal much. “I’m trying to think back to the auction process around all those names that you talked about were mentioned. I don’t, I can’t remember the dynamics. There was a large list of bowlers that we looked at and missed out on that might have been out of form at the time but are in form now. Trust me, we went over everything. I can’t remember those dynamics,” Fleming said.

Post last season, CSK went for a complete revamp of



the squad and the batting group has had a total makeover. However, there are still some concerns with the most of the batsmen being top-order batsmen, which means they are short on options in the middle and lower-order and especially for the finisher’s role. But Fleming believed there is no room for finishers in T20 anymore. “Look, I don’t think there is a thing called finishers anymore. It’s right from ball one, everyone is going at a rate of knockers. It’s not ‘build up to the 16th over and then go harder’. Everyone’s going hard from ball one. So the run rates of 10, 11, 12 all the way through are what’s expected and you’re not really getting the big peaks towards the end.” It’s just a more aggressive approach to get 240. So you actually have to have players all the way through that are going to be aggressive and that’s certainly the team that we’ve got. Keep in mind we’ve got (Dewald) Brevis on the sideline and you’ve got one of the best finishers in the MS (Dhoni) and there’s some power there but Brevis is in the middle. I’m really content with the pace that we can go,” Fleming said.

MS Dhoni isn’t the solution to CSK’s problems and Chepauk can no longer live in denial

GNS News Agency, April 4

Chennai Super Kings have lost their first two games – one away, one at home. Early in the season, they have a crisis at hand and it is unlikely that their designated fire-fighter MS Dhoni – out for two weeks because of a calf injury – has it in him to put the house in order. Actually, he can complicate matters, push them further in the maze. But will CSK have the courage to keep their Thala on the bench? Two years back, CSK got a new captain in a young Ruturaj Gaikwad, and this season they signed up India’s World T20 hero Sanju Samson. They also have in their ranks one of India’s bright young star, the under-19 captain, Ayush Mhatre, along with India’s most trusted game-changer Shivam Dube. But still, the CSK faithful look to Dhoni to bring them back on track.

Till a few years back, there used to be this very popular old Indian cricketing folklore that would end with ‘... and then Dhoni saved the day’. The superhero has aged, his powers have diminished, and that tale has started to sound fictional. At Chepauk, though, they still believe in him and his myth. Are the fans being sentimentally unreasonable? If Dhoni’s form and attitude in the last two seasons are anything to go by, they are. Be it mortals, legends or GOATS; age catches up with everyone. Law of nature says humans lose their athletic ability post 40, and the body gives enough signs of slowing down. Many acknowledge the change; others don’t.

Floating between No. 5 to 8, Dhoni has even batted as low as No. 9 in the last few seasons. (IG: chennaiipl) Floating between No. 5 to 8, Dhoni has even batted as low as No. 9 in the last few seasons. (IG: chennaiipl) Roger Federer, just a month short of 40, tamely lost in the Wimbledon quarter-final to Poland’s Hubert Hurkacz. A top star not making it to the semis is a usual Grand Slam story, but that day Federer was blanked 6-0 in the third and final set. This happened in his backyard – Wimbledon’s Centre Court. It was tragic to watch Federer minus his ever-reliable serve, the backhand without grace and the missing threading-the-needle down-the-line pass at crunch time. This was it – the fans thought. So did Federer. In a year, at 41, the Swiss legend said his final goodbye. He didn’t want the world to remember him as a stumbling, fumbling player well past his prime. Sadly, the present-day stumbling, fumbling Dhoni threatens to wipe out the memories from his golden days. Many years back, at the launch of Dhoni’s biopic, the great movie-maker SS Rajamouli, of Bahubali fame, beautifully

captured the essence of Dhoni and what he meant to the fans.

“My generation started watching cricket in the mid ’80s. In that era, we watched cricket with fear, not joy. After Dhoni became the captain, we started watching cricket without fear ...,” he had said. Sadly, that joy has gone. For the old Dhoni fans, it’s not even fear these days. There is a sense of disappointment when Dhoni fails to get CSK past the post like he used to. To make matters worse, Dhoni keeps dropping himself down the order. Floating between No. 5 to 8, he has even batted as low as No. 9. Vintage Dhoni would want to be in the thick of things, take the game by the scruff of the neck. Remember how he promoted himself in the 2011 World Cup final, ran down the Wankhede stairs as the game was slipping. These days, he ambles to the field when the game is as good as over. Dhoni was known to leave it late but sensationally pull off miraculous wins. That’s history, now – cricket’s Houdini is no longer the escape artist he used to be. T20 is also not what it used to be. In the modern game, the fall of wickets is no excuse to play dot balls. Young batsmen in their early 20s wallop every ball they face. The Mahi-way was about waiting for the right time and right bowler to strike. These days every ball and every bowler is targeted. With 200-plus being a par score now – effectively a 6 and four is mandatory in every over – waiting and watching is so yesterday.

Dhoni joining the team this season would rock the boat. After the one-sided loss in the first game, CSK showed marginal improvements in their second. Young Ayush Mhatre showed he had it in him to be a match-winner, Sarfaraz Khan played a stunning cameo, Shivam Dube excelled as a seasoned finisher. They scored 200 plus for the first time at home since 2024, and the team showed signs of settling down. Dhoni’s re-entry would give an unwanted shake-up to the batting line-up. His larger-than-life presence behind the stumps would again make the new leadership group – Gaikwad, Sanju, Shivam – conscious. Once reputed for its knowledgeable crowd, Chennai needs to get out of its trance. For far too long, they have been indulging the star who made CSK into a champion team and a high-value brand. They are being courteous and loyal but not rational. When CSK wins, it’s because of Dhoni. When they don’t, it is the pitch, the coach or wrong auction picks. Chepauk needs to end its stupor; the collective suspension of disbelief from the stands needs to be lifted. CSK can’t afford to live in denial any longer.

Maamla Legal Hai 2 review: Ravi Kishan show builds on its strengths, with only a few missteps



was in the first season, and the fancy-schmancy Harvard-returned lawyer Ananya (Grewal) learns how to do pro bono without feeling all righteous about it. Picking on the lighter side of things has the advantage of leaving us smiling, which is what most of the other episodes do, some served with a side of thoughtfulness: there's one in which an unwitting triangle — two men and a woman, triangulated by desire and convention — is left fighting over a prize property in south Delhi. There's another in which a mother-in-law-from hell tries very hard to drive a wedge between her son, a total mama's boy, and his wife (played by Prasanna Bisht, so effective in Chiraiya as the newly-minted bride), which show us the insides of a family court and the over-the-top dramas that can happen in there.

The cat-fighting between two female lawyers, with Kusha Kapila as a new addition to the cast, as natively turned out as Naila Grewal, feels more like a distraction than anything else. How a criminal stayed hidden in plain sight, featuring Dibyendu, trails off, and an episode in which rats are accused of having polished off loads of marijuana (I read a news report on a similar incident from a Gujarat maalkhaana just a couple of days back, so these adventurous rats are clearly all over the country!) lacks a certain edge. The good-natured bickering — who gets a coveted iPhone, who doesn't get a party invite — amongst the group of judges makes up for it, though: what else can you do but crack up when people you think of as stern judgement-deliverers play games of oneupmanship. Or shall we dub it judgementship: don't call us out, please, as most judges are still male: the lone woman in the well-appointed judges' chamber shares a tip about smiling. A judge can't risk a smile at anyone or he/she can be accused of bias: does that mean never being able to smile, if you preside over a courtroom?

The crazy levels of babugiri and bureaucracy which creates layers of responsibility — everyone pointing fingers at everyone else, no one taking any accountability — finds an echo in a terrific episode involving the proverbial 'act of god' with a moving end: a poor vendor handing out a plate of freshly-made kachoris, which are then eaten with relish in a high chamber. You are left with a lump in the throat, but keeping in tone with the show, things move briskly on, without milking the moment. A special mention for the sparring between the excellent pair of Bisht and Batra, schooled by the calm and collected Rajoria who's been there, seen everything, and still has wisdom left to spare. Vijayant Kohli's smarmy rivalry with Kishan, Brijendra Kala's practiced drollery, and new entrant Dinesh Lal Yadav Niharua's hilarious supplicant, whose burnt-arms-with-a-dodgy-deo are a character in themselves, Anant Vijay's fondness for a specific brand of samosas — all demand our attention. I wished there was more space created for Tanvi Azmi, though, as she comes on for a blink, and disappears, just like last time. And, also, just for those who will miss him, there's no Yashpal Sharma this time around. But the rest of it stays enjoyable: maamla mazedaar hai. Bring on the third season, quick. Maamla Legal Hai 2 cast: Ravi Kishan, Nidhi Bisht, Naina Grewal, Anant Joshi, Anjum Batra, Vijay Rajoria, Amit Vikram Pandey, Kumar Saurabh, Kusha Kapila, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Vijayant Kohli, Brijendra Kala, Dinesh Lal Yadav Niharua, Tanvi Azmi

Maamla Legal Hai 2 review: Our Patparganj-based kisse kachcheri ke are back, and we're here to tell you that Maamla Legal Hai 2 is all round better— funnier and crisper. The court com, as I'd dubbed it in 2024 when it popped up as a streaming choice, broke the clutter. It had a distinct voice and tonality: a lower court in India's capital, with the kind of characters and creatures that go with the surroundings, and a handful of cases, some serious, some quirky, all culled from real-life incidents which make the headlines in small fonts in smudged newsprint. It's tough to do a serio-comic show around legal matters, but Maamla Legal Hai pulled it off with just a few hiccups. This time around, the court com has ironed out the kinks, and except for the odd episode which doesn't land, it builds on exactly that tone which drew us in the very first time, which allowed us to marvel at the human condition, with all its complexities, anxieties, insecurities, and happy oddities, without getting all heavy about it.

The second season starts from where the first left off (with writing credits split between Kunal Aneja, Syed Shadan, Mohak Aneja, and Tatsat Pandey), with our cutting-comers-smart-cookie-vakeel Tyagi finding himself in a judge's hot seat. He is left wrestling with the kind of dilemmas those worthies have to take in their stride, especially when it comes to that hardest block of all— delivering a hanged-until-death sentence. The penitent man in the dock is just 24, but does his youth, and the prospect of a life in prison, mitigate the heinousness of the crime?

Yes, there's one episode (there are eight in all) which bravely does go there— two young people murdered, with the perpetrator showing remorse, and two devastated sets of parents— smartly leaving the gory details to our imagination. Kishan, who has always been good at broad comedy, lifts his conflicted Justice Tyagi by revealing a deeper, more thoughtful side to his persona. The rest of the cast, which endeared themselves to us in the first season, is doing just fine too. Sujata Didi (Bisht) and Mintu (Batra) find themselves ensconced in a prize chamber that used to be Tyagi's, and snappily circle around each other till they find a convivial middle ground. Anant Joshi is as sprightly as he

'Asrani was getting paid less than Bollywood stars' entourage,' says Priyadarshan: '40-60 people are there with 4 actors'



'Earning much more than known faces like Asrani' He added that people in these entourages often earn more than veterans and legends like Asrani used to, saying, "They're earning much more than many known actors, like people like Asrani sir and all. They were getting much less money than these people. This nuisance is not there in the South. Even if they are there, they don't enter the set. Only when the actors call, they come. Here, they just come and stand there."

Priyadarshan also fondly recalled working with the late Asrani, who passed away last year in October. "Asrani sir, I am so lucky. I finished both the films with him, the last two films I directed, and the last shot was taken, and two days later he died," he said. Asrani will be posthumously seen in Priyadarshan's Bhoot Bangla, which is slated to release on April 17, 2026, co-starring Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, and Wamiqa Gabbi. About Bollywood entourage culture, SCREEN reported in 2024 about the entourage costs skyrocketing and how it was 'bleeding' the film industry. At a time when Hindi films were struggling to make a mark on the box office post the pandemic, this became a talking point as film budgets ballooned because of the rising entourage costs. Since then, filmmakers like Karan Johar, Sanjay Gupta, Anurag Kashyap and many others have been quite vocal about the increasing budget of Hindi films because of actors' entourage cost.

Over the years, the discourse around the entourage culture in Bollywood has become increasingly prominent, as several producers and filmmakers have spoken out about how stars often arrive on sets with huge groups of people. This, they say, inflates film budgets and creates logistical challenges. Recently, even director Priyadarshan weighed in on the issue, saying it is something that "is worst thing in Bollywood" and is largely absent in South Indian cinema. "Four actors are there with 40-60 people" Speaking to Filmfare, he said, "I tell you, I hate it. That's the worst thing happening in Bollywood. Where four actors are there, 40-60 people are also there with them because of that I can't even see my frame. They're all around, touching the hair, nothing to touch, most of them don't even have hair, so what they're doing there? And I'm saying, 'please clear, please clear'. There is so much crowd. The paraphernalia around actors is more than my entire setup."

Aadi Sai Kumar's 'Saira Banu' promises a vibrant love story

Hyderabad: Telugu star Aadi Sai Kumar's next film, which is being directed by Phani Krishna Siriki, has been titled 'Sairabanu', its makers announced on Friday. Well known producer Razesh Danda, fresh off the sensational success of 'K-Ramp', is to bankroll the film under the Hasya Movies banner, with Krishnakanth Paruchuri as co-producer.

Bandhavi Sridhar has been roped in as the female lead opposite Aadi Sai Kumar for this film. Sources say that Aadi Sai Kumar, who scored the biggest blockbuster of his career with 'Shambhala', is now steering towards concept-driven films with strong commercial appeal.

Titled fascinatingly 'Saira Banu', the film was unveiled through a visually delightful poster. The design radiates a vibrant, dreamy romantic tone. A gigantic heart-shaped pink cloud, brushed in soft pastel textures, floats across the top. Beneath it lies the tagline 'A Fun Filled Journey of Love, Faith & Destiny.'

The bottom half paints a striking fantasy-infused visual—a water-drenched Charminar, a peaceful Vizag beach road, and Rajahmundry Godavari bridge, all set in a sur-

real, storybook-like landscape. The clear, serene sky and gently scattered clouds add to the whimsical, imaginative world the film seems to promise. Hasya Movies took to its social media timelines to announce the title of the film. Sharing the title poster, it wrote, "A formal beginning... to a love story that breaks every boundary. #SairaBanu Pooja Ceremony commenced today. Clap by @Kiran_Abbavaram. Camera switched on by @RamAbbaraju. @saikumaraactor garu Script handover by @konavenkat99 @JainsNani. First shot direction @filmsyogi. Shoot begins soon."

Sources claim that Phani Krishna Siriki has crafted a unique Hindu-Muslim love story laced with humour, with the narrative unfolding in Rajahmundry and Hyderabad. The project was launched on Friday with an auspicious pooja ceremony.

Backed by a strong technical team, the film aims to be a rich visual and emotional experience. The film is to have cinematography by Raam Reddy and music by Shekar Chandra. Chota K Prasad is to handle the editing of this film while Brahma Kadali will serve as the production designer.

Ranbir Kapoor 'looks a little harsh' as Lord Rama, says Sunil Lahri: 'The innocence is a little less, he suits more for Lakshman or Bharat'



Nitesh Tiwari's ambitious Ramayana's teaser was unveiled on Thursday, and introduced Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, setting the tone for what is being billed as one of India's biggest cinematic spectacles. While many viewers liked the scale and ambition, others were not impressed, particularly by the visuals, VFX, and even the casting choices. Sunil Lahri, who famously played Lakshman in Ramanand Sagar's iconic Ramayan, refrained from harshly judging the VFX, noting that a teaser is only a preview but he added that he is not convinced with Ranbir's look as Lord Rama. In an interview with DNA, Lahri said, "Ranbir looks ok, but the innocence is a little less. The patience, calm, and innocence Arun (Govil) had, are missing here. But I'm sure he'll justify the role with his acting." The comparison to Arun Govil, whose portrayal of Lord Rama remains iconic, continues to shape audience expectations

decades later.

Lahri also addressed a widely discussed concern: whether Ranbir, coming off his intense and violent role in Animal, can convincingly embody the serene and composed deity. He agreed with the sentiment, saying, "He looks a little harsh; he suits more for Lakshmana or Bharat. For such a role, it's always better to cast a fresh face. A new actor, with no image or controversy, is always an ideal match." Interestingly, Nitish Bharadwaj, known for playing Lord Krishna in Mahabharat, liked the teaser. Reacting to the teaser, he said, "Ramayana in a global avatar. Best wishes to Nitesh Tiwari & the team."

Meanwhile, Dipika Chikhlia, who portrayed Sita in Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan, was clearly impressed. She said, "I watched the teaser, and it's very grand. Bahut rich lag raha hai. Unhone bahut achhe se banaya hai. So now I'm awaiting the film, and it's looking very beautiful, there's no doubt about it." Speaking about his double role to Collider, Ranbir said that he used his body language and voice to depict the different temperaments of Rama and Parshurama. He said, "Lord Vishnu had different avatars. Lord Rama was an avatar, and Lord Parshurama was an avatar before Lord Rama." The cast also features Yash as Ravana, Sai Pallavi as Sita, Sunny Deol as Hanuman, and Ravi Dubey as Lakshman. The ensemble also includes Kajal Aggarwal, Rakul Preet Singh, Arun Govil, Kunal Kapoor, Adinath Kothare, Sheeba Chaddha, and Indira Krishnan. Backed by producer Namit Malhotra, Ramayana is being mounted on a staggering Rs 4,000 crore budget, making it the most expensive Indian film ever and one of the costliest productions globally. The film is planned as a two-part saga.

Ranbir Kapoor recalls Quentin Tarantino showing him the finger, Natalie Portman shooing him away: 'Waited 3 hours to see Al Pacino'



Ranbir Kapoor has kickstarted the promotions of his highly anticipated film Ramayana. After the film's recent teaser release, many fans were awed by its grand scale. From being shooed away by Hollywood stars Natalie Portman and Quentin Tarantino to now taking his magnum opus to a global audience, Ranbir has come a long way. During a recent interaction, he spoke about meeting his Hollywood idols.

Speaking to Collider, Ranbir said, "I am a geek when it comes to films. I have been watching a film a day for the

last 35 years. Apart from my local heroes where I grew up in India, whenever I have travelled, I have been shooed away by Natalie Portman. Quentin Tarantino has shown me the finger. I have met Bill Murray. Have stood outside when Al Pacino was doing a reading of Salome on Broadway. I was a student at that time and stood outside for 3 hours just to get a shout out from him. I met Robert De Niro in India. These are my screen idols and just to meet them has given me immense joy." Before releasing the teaser of Ramayana for the world, the makers screened it for a limited audience in Los Angeles. At the same screening, Ranbir spoke about how he manifested taking a film rooted in Indian culture to a global audience — something that has now materialised with Ramayana.

Speaking at the event, Ranbir recalled an anecdote from his school days. He said, "In 2000, I was in school of visual arts and my Italian school mate asked me what you're gonna do in future? Are you going to work in America? Are you going to get an agent in the USA?" He responded to his friend and said, "I replied, 'I'd rather come to America with a film which is from my culture, from my country' and today I'm sitting here and talking about Ramayana it's just feel so surreal." Ranbir has worked on Ramayana for years. It is the biggest project of the actor's career and the most expensive Indian film, with a reported budget of Rs 4,000 crore. It also stars Sai Pallavi, Ravi Dubey, Yash, Sunny Deol and others. The film is set to release on Diwali 2026.

Ranbir Kapoor confirms playing double role of Lord Rama and Lord Parshurama in Ramayana: 'It was fantastic'



The first look of Ranbir Kapoor's highly anticipated film Ramayana received a roaring response from fans, with many calling him a perfect fit to play Lord Rama. In a recent interaction, Ranbir revealed that he isn't just playing the role of Lord Rama in the film, but will also portray Lord Parshurama in Nitesh Tiwari's magnum opus. Speaking about his double role to Collider at the recently held teaser launch in Los Angeles, Ranbir admitted that he used his body language and voice to depict the different temperaments of Rama and Parshurama. He said, "Lord Vishnu had different avatars. Lord Rama was an avatar, and Lord Parshurama was an avatar before Lord Rama."

Ranbir Kapoor added, "Just to get the opportunity, you know, how I got to play Lord Rama, to also play Lord Parshurama was fantastic. I think as an actor, apart from body language, I think if you deeply understand the spirituality and the emotionality of the characters, I think everything starts from there. I think that's what I did the year leading up to the shoot of Ramayana, to understand who these people and characters are, what they stand for and what their motives are." As per the epic, Lord Rama, who is an avatar of Lord Vishnu, was confronted by Lord Parshurama, another avatar of Lord Vishnu, while travelling to Ayodhya after his marriage to Sita. Lord Parshurama confronted Lord Rama for breaking Shiva's bow during Sita's Swayamvara. However, he soon realises that Lord Rama is also an avatar of Lord Vishnu, and the confrontation does not escalate into a fight. The teaser shares a tiny glimpse of this moment, where Ranbir's Lord Rama is seen thwarting an axe attack, believed to belong to Lord Parshurama. In the scene, Arun Govil as Dasharath and Ravi Dubey as Laxman are seen standing behind Ranbir's Lord Rama. Ramayana is set to release on Diwali 2026. The film also stars Yash as

Ravana, Sai Pallavi as Sita and Sunny Deol as Hanuman. The film is directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced by Namit Malhotra.

Ram Charan reveals Peddi shoot nearly complete

Hyderabad: Actor Ram Charan, who plays the lead in director Buchi Babu Sana's eagerly awaited rural action drama 'Peddi', has now dropped a big update on the film's status, much to the delight of fans and film buffs.

The actor has now disclosed that the talkie portions of the film have been completed and that there is just one song left to be shot in the film. Ram Charan made this disclosure, while speaking to the team of 'Rakasa', which had visited him on the sets of 'Peddi'.

It may be recalled that the makers of the film had only recently released a glimpse video titled 'Peddi Pehelwan Glimpse' from the film to mark the birthday of actor Ram Charan. The glimpse video that was released on Friday showcased another completely different facet of the actor in the film, much to the delight of fans and film buffs.

While a clip from the film that was released some months ago had showcased Ram Charan's skills with a cricket bat, leading many to believe that he could be playing a cricketer in the film, the glimpse video released on Friday had showed Ram Charan as a menacing wrestler as well.

The glimpse video begins with a voiceover that says, "Kusthi (wrestling) is not a sport where you carry a bat and face an oncoming ball. This is a sport where you pledge your life and stand against death. Now tell me, are you going to get into the ring or are you opting out?" The glimpse video then, among other things, shows Ram Charan practising with a mace. The actor sports a well-toned body and the glimpse video makes it evident that the actor has put his heart and soul into the role.

The glimpse video ends with Ram Charan responding to the question asked to him earlier. He says, "The game is my pride."