

Fire Breaks Out in YTPS in Nalgonda, None Injured

Hyderabad: A major fire broke out in unit-three of Yadadri Thermal Power Station (YTPS) in Nalgonda district on Sunday.

The fire-fighters, who carried out a fire-fighting operation, said the flames would have originated from the turbine driven boiler feed pump area. The initial assessment is that the accident occurred due to oil leakage at the pump. The entire area was engulfed with thick smoke after the incident.

Girl Tops Eapcet's Engineering Stream

Hyderabad, May 17

M. Rushi of Medchal and Mukkaram Ahmed of Hyderabad secured first rank in engineering and agriculture and pharmacy streams, respectively, in the Telangana Eapcet 2026 results released on Sunday. Rushi is believed to be the first woman topper of the engineering

cured the second. Three girls featured in the top ten rankers list — Sahiti Geetika Gunithi (Rank 3), Nathan Sheba Jerusha (AP, Rank 6), and Rutambika Mohanty (Rank 10).

The other top rankers are Mayuk Jayasimha (Rank 4), Amair Anas (Rank 5), Periketi Anurag (AP, Rank 7), Bura Sai Sharan (Rank 8), and Mirthipati Maruthi Satya Sai (AP, Rank 9).

A total of 2,10,766 registered for the engineering stream. Of this, 1,97,242 appeared and 1,44,704 (73.34 per cent) qualified. Similarly, 90,977 students applied for agriculture and pharmacy. Of this, 84,954 appeared and 73,294 (86.27 per cent) qualified.

In the gender-wise report in the engineering stream, 90,670 girls registered. Of which 84,495 attended and 62,291 qualified recording a percentage of 73.72 per cent. Of these, two girls were in the top 10 list. A total of 1,20,096 boys registered, 1,12,747 attended and 82,413 qualified, recording 73.10 per cent. In the agriculture and pharmacy stream, 69,349 girls registered, 64,913 attended and 56,320 qualified with a qualifying percentage of 86.76. Three

were in the top 10. As many 21,627 boys registered, 20,040 attended and 16,973 qualified with 84.70 percent, one transgender student also appeared for the exam and qualified. Government adviser Dr K. Keshava Rao, along with TGCHS chairman Prof. V. Balakista Reddy, education department secretary Dr Yogita Rana, commissioner of technical and collegiate education A. Devasena, JNTU Hyderabad Vice Chancellor Prof.T. Kishen Kumar Reddy, and Eapcet convener Prof .K. Vijaya Kumar Reddy released the results. Officials said the admission schedule for UG engineering courses will be released in a week. They also said that JNTU-H had conducted the examination smoothly and error-free. No objections were received for the A&P stream preliminary, while 16 objections were received for the engineering stream, compared to thousands of objections in previous years, they added. All the objections were rejected.



stream in Telangana; in 2022, Nakka Sai Deepthika had come second.

Among the top 10 rankers in the engineering stream was another girl, Mallavarapu Aasna at sixth rank. Aasna was the female topper in JEE Main 2026.

Other top engineering toppers include Bejugama Anshul, (Rank 2), Adula Sai Nikith (Rank 5), Vivan Sharad Mahishwari (Rank 7), a JEE Main topper, Telluri Shreyas Reddy (Rank 8), Bommireddy Sameeraj Reddy (Rank 9) and Rapolu Jayanth (Rank 10).

Two Andhra Pradesh students — Maraka Vamsidhar from Pulivendula in Kadapa district and J. Roshan Manideep Reddy from Tadepalle, Guntur — got third and fourth ranks in engineering streams. In the agriculture and pharmacy stream, Mukkaram Ahmed secured the first rank with a score 150.1/160, and Tadur Nivrutt Sai Venkat se-

Farmer attempts self-immolation over procurement delay in Jangaon

Warangal: A farmer allegedly attempted to set himself ablaze at a paddy procurement centre in Enebhavi village of Jangaon district on Sunday, protesting against the prolonged delay in procurement. Alert locals and fellow farmers intervened in time and stopped him from taking the extreme step. The farmer, identified as Ponnam Thirumalesh, is learnt to be associated with the Congress party at the local level. Distressed over the delay in procurement of his paddy stocks, he allegedly poured diesel on himself after an argument with officials at the procurement centre. Videos of the farmer questioning the delay are circulating on social media.

Modi Receives Sweden's Prestigious Award Royal Order of Polar Star

Gothenburg (Sweden), May 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Sweden's highest honour, the 'Royal Order of the Polar Star, Degree Commander Grand Cross,' on Sunday, in recognition of his exceptional contributions to bilateral ties and his visionary leadership. The award is the highest distinction that can be given to a Head of Government. This is Prime Minister Modi's 31st international honour.

"A reaffirmation of friendship! Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden conferred upon PM @narendramodi the 'Royal Order of the Polar Star, Degree Commander Grand Cross' in recognition of his exceptional contribution to the India-Sweden relationship and his visionary leadership," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.

"The Prime Minister dedicated the honour to the historic ties between India and Sweden, and described it as a tribute to the warmth and affection shared between the people of India and Sweden," he added.

The Royal Order of the Polar Star was instituted in 1748 and is intended to recognise personal endeavours for Sweden or for Swedish interests, particularly within public activities, as well as the successful performance of public tasks and duties, according to the official website.

Also, PM Modi and his Swedish counterpart Ulf Kristersson exchanged special gifts commemorating Rabindranath Tagore and the enduring civilisational and intellectual ties between India and Sweden in the presence of Swedish Crown Princess Victoria.



Tagore, the first non-European Nobel Laureate, was unable to travel to Sweden in 1913 to receive the Nobel Prize. He was later received by King Gustav V during his visit to Sweden in 1921. This year also marks the 100th anniversary of Gurudev's historic visit to Sweden in 1926.

Modi arrived in Sweden on Sunday for a two-day visit. He was received by his Swedish counterpart, Ulf Kristersson, at the Gothenburg Airport.

Indian killed in drone attack on Moscow

Moscow: An Indian worker was killed and three others injured in a drone attack in the Moscow region, the Indian embassy said Sunday. The incident comes amid escalating hostilities between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine carried out overnight attacks targeting installations in Moscow.

"One Indian worker has lost his life and three others have been injured in a drone attack in (the) Moscow region earlier today. Embassy officials have visited the location and met the injured workers in the hospital," the

Indian Embassy in Russia said on 'X'. "The Embassy connotes the loss of life and is working with the company management and local authorities to provide necessary assistance to the workers," it said, even though it did not disclose the identities of the deceased or the injured persons.

Russia and Ukraine have stepped up long-range drone and missile attacks in recent months, even as diplomatic efforts to find a negotiated settlement to the more than three-year-old conflict have continued.

Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation Celebrates 10th Anniversary and Completion of 15 Crore Cumulative Meals



In association with Aurobindo Pharma, the Foundation marks a Decade of service and nourishment to millions of people.

Sri Jayesh Ranjan, IAS, participated as the Chief Guest in the 10th Anniversary celebrations of HKM Charitable Foundation and commemorated the milestone of serving 15 crore cumulative meals. On the occasion, he also inaugurated newly installed modern kitchen equipment aimed at enhancing the foundation's large-scale meal preparation capacity, efficiency, and commitment to serving nutritious food to the needy and underprivileged.

Narsingi, Hyderabad, May 16, 2026 (Saturday) : The Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation (HKMCF) commemorated a remarkable journey of service by celebrating the **10th Anniversary** and the milestone of serving **15 Crore cumulative meals** to the needy and underprivileged across society of its **Centralised Kitchen at Narsingi**.

The event was graced by distinguished guest **Sri Jayesh Ranjan, IAS, Special Chief Secretary to the Government of Telangana, Metropolitan Area and Urban Development Department, and Special Officer, GHMC, CMC and MMC**, who inaugurated the foundation's advanced kitchen equipment aimed at further enhancing the kitchen's capability to serve the underprivileged more efficiently.

The celebrations were held in the auspicious presence of **His Grace Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa Prabhuji (M.Tech, IIT Chennai), President, Hare Krishna Movement, and Regional President, Akshaya Patra Foundation**.

The program was attended by **Special Guest Sri Dr. M. Siva Kumar, Director, Aurobindo Pharma Ltd.; Guests of Honour – Sri Badavath Santhosh, IAS, Additional Commissioner, GHMC; Sri N. Ravi Kiran, Additional Commissioner, GHMC; Sri Kaunteya Dasa, CEO, HKM Charitable Foundation;** along with senior functionaries and representatives of HKMCF.

The event began with a detailed kitchen tour for the dignitaries conducted by key functionaries of the foundation.



dation. The guests were briefed about the entire cooking process and introduced to the advanced technologies and facilities efficiently deployed in the kitchen's operations.

During the visit, **Sri Jayesh Ranjan** inaugurated the Automated Dosa-making Machine and vessel sealing machine, the latest additions to the kitchen infrastructure, both of which were designed by HKMCF's in-house design team. He also interacted with volunteers and kitchen staff, appreciating their dedication towards social welfare initiatives and service to the underprivileged.

He lauded the foundation's efforts in combining technology, efficiency, and compassion to serve society through nutritious food distribution. Later, he flagged off **food delivery vehicles** that carry hot and nutritious meals daily to beneficiaries across Hyderabad.

Speaking on the occasion, **Sri Jayesh Ranjan** emphasized the importance of food security, community participation, and social responsibility in building a healthier and more compassionate society. He appreciated the foundation for consistently reaching thousands of beneficiaries through its food relief programs, hospital feeding initiatives, disaster relief services, and daily meal distribution activities for the underprivileged and extended all possible support from the Govt. in all future programs.

Addressing the gathering, His Grace Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa Prabhuji said :

"Inspired by Srila Prabhupada's vision that no one within a 10-mile radius of our center should go hungry, HKMCF has dedicated the last decade to serving nutritious meals to the needy, the sick, and the underprivileged. Reaching the milestone of 15 crore meals has been possible only because of the tireless efforts of our volunteers, donors, and well-wishers. We are deeply grateful to Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri Revanth Reddy Garu and the Government of Telangana for their continuous encouragement and support towards our service initiatives. We also sincerely thank Aurobindo Pharma and Sri K. Nityananda Reddy Garu for their generous partnership and longstanding support in establishing and supporting the Narsingi, Mahabubnagar, Srikakulam, and Kakinada kitchens. Their contribution has played a major role in helping us reach millions of beneficiaries across society."



During the 10th Anniversary Celebrations of the Narsingi Kitchen, **Sri K. Nityananda Reddy, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of Aurobindo Pharma Ltd and Director of Aurobindo Pharma Foundation**, in his message expressed pride in the decade-long partnership with HKM Charitable Foundation in serving society through large-scale food distribution initiatives. Highlighting Aurobindo Pharma Foundation's contribution towards establishing four centralized kitchens in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, along with additional support extended during the COVID-19 pandemic, he stated that the collaboration has helped serve close to 15 crore meals over the last ten years. He also thanked the Government of Telangana for launching welfare initiatives such as Canteens and hospital feeding programs, which have enabled organizations like HKM Charitable Foundation to extend their services to the needy on a larger scale. He appreciated the efforts of volunteers and stakeholders and reaffirmed the Foundation's commitment to continuing humanitarian service in the years ahead.

The celebration culminated with dignitaries serving food to the beneficiaries and with a renewed commitment to further strengthen food distribution programs and reach more needy individuals in the coming years.

Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation (HKMCF) :

Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation (HKMCF) is a registered Trust initiated by Hare Krishna Movement – Hyderabad, with its operations spread across the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

With the vision that **"Nobody should go hungry within a 10-mile radius of our center,"** HKMCF is primarily engaged in charitable activities such as providing free food in hospitals and market yards in partnership with donors, as well as subsidized meals to the needy in collaboration with Government bodies through its state-of-the-art centralized community kitchens.

Its major initiatives include :

• **Breakfast Feeding Program** – 15 meal program in partnership with Municipal Corporations and Municipal-



- ties
- **Swasthya Ahara** – Breakfast feeding program
 - **Bhojanamrita** – Meal distribution for hospital patient attendants
 - **Saddhimoota** – Food distribution for farmers and hamalis in market yards

Through these programs, HKMCF currently serves approximately 71,000 meals every day.

Over the past 10 years, the Trust has served a cumulative total of approximately 15 crore meals, benefiting lakhs of individuals across society.

About Aurobindo Pharma :

Aurobindo Pharma Foundation is the philanthropic and CSR arm of Aurobindo Pharma Limited, working towards the social and economic upliftment of the nation through impactful CSR initiatives. Along with implementing projects through its expert teams across multiple locations, it also collaborates with community groups to support public welfare programs.

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Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation.

EDITORIAL

Indian Chronicle

Speed up cervical vaccination drive

India accounts for one of the world's highest cervical cancer burdens, with more than 1.2 lakh new cases and nearly 80,000 deaths being reported each year. It is paradoxical that cervical cancer, despite being a largely preventable disease, is the most common cause of cancer-related deaths among women in India. According to a modelling study published in the medical journal The Lancet, India can prevent more than 10 million cervical cancer cases over the next century if it achieves the World Health Organisation's targets on HPV vaccination — 90% of girls to be vaccinated by age 15; 70% of women to be screened at ages 30 and above; and 90% of patients to receive treatment. Against this backdrop, the nationwide launch of the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination for adolescent girls is a laudable initiative in the war against cervical cancer. However, a closer look at the ongoing vaccination drive shows that participation has been uneven. Lack of public awareness, particularly in rural areas, shortage of trained healthcare professionals and social stigma associated with the HPV virus are among the reasons for low screening. Only around 2% of eligible women undergo regular testing. Even within the country, disparities are stark. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, the screening rates are above 10%, while Assam and West Bengal register figures as low as 0.2%. As a result, the outcomes vary widely. A majority of cases are diagnosed at advanced stages, making treatment less effective and increasing mortality.

For many women — especially those in rural districts, poorer households and socially marginalised communities — access to early screening, reliable diagnosis, treatment that is not prohibitively expensive and preventive vaccination remains a distant reality. As a result, India's ambitious goal of eliminating cervical cancer by 2030 faces significant challenges due to the high burden of disease, low screening rates, and sociocultural barriers. Apart from the vaccination drive, there is a need for a comprehensive approach that is multisectoral, involving strengthening of primary healthcare infrastructure, training healthcare workers, and utilising innovative models like mobile clinics. Fragmented health policies with limited coverage for cervical cancer, coupled with societal issues like stigma and limited access to healthcare, particularly in rural areas, pose significant challenges. Additionally, India must step up investments in science and technology to support long-term research efforts. Leveraging artificial intelligence for screening could help bridge the gap in rural access. A dedicated national policy with clear objectives, strategies, and accountability mechanisms is crucial for successful cervical cancer control. Learning from the experiences of other countries will help fine-tune the policies. The ongoing vaccination drive places India among a handful of countries that include the HPV vaccine in their national immunisation programmes. Over 140 countries in the world have implemented vaccination against HPV infections, and the global data have confirmed its safety and effectiveness.

State Top Ranker in Engineering Honoured by Chikanagar Congress Leaders

UPPAL, MAY 17(INDIAN CHRONICAL): "Rushi, daughter of Malladi Kondal Reddy, a resident near the Indira Gandhi statue area in Chikanagar Division, secured the State First Rank in the Telangana EAPCET Engineering stream, the results of which were announced on Sunday. "On this occasion, Chikanagar Division Congress Party President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj visited the



residence of Kondal Reddy and spoke with Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy. He conveyed his congratulations and appreciated Rushi's outstanding achievement. "Later,



Rajesh Mudiraj felicitated Rushi and her parents with shawls in recognition of her success. "Speaking on the occasion, Rajesh Mudiraj said that it is a matter of pride that a girl from their locality secured the state's top rank. He expressed hope that Rushi would achieve greater heights in the future and said that she would serve as an inspiration to many students. He also encouraged students from the division to take motivation from her achievement and excel in their studies. "Congress Party members including Amareshwari, Nallavalli Mahender, Macharla Balaram, Amar, Satyam, Surender, Samata, Sumalatha, Kiran and others participated in the programme.

Just for asking to return the money they had lent... they were called and brutally killed.

Elderly women who went missing in Tandur... brutally murdered at Moinabad farmhouse... Tandur police skillfully cracked the case... Missing mystery solved



... "Indian Chronicle Vikarabad (may 17) "A shocking incident occurred in erstwhile Rangareddy district where two people were killed for lending money. The news that two elderly women who had been missing for the past few days were killed and buried at a Moinabad farmhouse has created panic in the district. "The incident shocked district residents: the elderly women had helped the accused by lending them money when needed. When they asked for the money back, the accused conspired to eliminate them. They lured the women to a farmhouse in Moinabad, far from Tandur, on the pretext of returning the money "with interest," and brutally killed them. "Abeda Begum (60) from Kasimpur village of Basheerabad Mandal, Vikarabad district, worked as an Anganwadi ayah and went missing from home on the 5th of this month. As her whereabouts could not be traced, a complaint was filed with Basheerabad police on the 10th. "Similarly,

Mahaboob Bi (58) from Indiramma Colony in Tandur town went missing on the 9th of this month. Her family members filed a missing complaint with Yalal police on the 10th, stating that Mahaboob Bi was missing. "While investigating the missing cases registered at different police stations, Tandur Rural police grew suspicious of a husband and wife, Rehman and Karima Begum, living in Indiramma Colony of Tandur town. When Tandur police interrogated them in their own style, shocking details emerged. "The couple, Rehman (an auto driver) and Karima Begum, who had borrowed money, along with Karima's brother-in-law who works at a Moinabad farmhouse, had planned in advance. They deceived the two women who had lent them money, called them separately, and brutally murdered them at different farmhouses in Moinabad and Chevella. They then buried the bodies there. "This double murder case has caused severe uproar in Rangareddy district. The two elderly women, aged



over 60 from the Tandur area of Vikarabad district, had been having financial disputes with some people for some time. In this sequence, the accused convinced the victims that they would return the money owed and called them to Tandur from here. "After the victims arrived, the accused moved them separately. One woman was brutally murdered at a farmhouse under Moinabad Police Station limits, and the other woman was brutally murdered at another farmhouse under Chevella Police Station limits. Later, to avoid suspicion, they secretly buried the bodies in the respective farmhouses. "Police have already recovered one woman's body from the farmhouse under Moinabad limits. Arrangements are being made by officials to exhume the body of the other elderly woman buried at the farmhouse under Chevella limits. Based on clues team findings and technical evidence, police have expedited the case. "Three accused are in police custody. According to information, Karim Begum, Rahiman, and another person are in custody.

Kapra Lake to Get Major Facelift with Rs 35 Crore Beautification Project: Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



UPPAL, MAY 17(INDIAN CHRONICAL): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy inaugurated the restoration and beautification works of Kapra Lake at a programme organised under the leadership of senior BRS leader Bairi Naveen Goud on Sunday. "The development initiative, undertaken with the objective of providing a pleasant environment for the residents of Kapra, received an enthusiastic response from the public. Cultural programmes reflecting local traditions, including Bonalu procession dances, performances by folk artists and musical events, attracted the audience during the inauguration ceremony. "Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said the government had specially allocated ₹35 crore for the beautification and restoration of Kapra Lake. He stated that the lake surroundings would be developed with greenery and modern public amenities to create a healthy and attractive recreational space for residents. "He said facilities such as walking tracks, parks, lighting arrangements and seating areas would be developed to enable people to spend quality time during mornings and evenings. He further stated that once the works are completed, Kapra Lake would emerge as a major attraction in the city and provide a healthy atmosphere for local residents. "Former Corporation Chairman Ravula Sridhar Reddy, former corporators Kotha Rama Rao, Prabhudas, Srinivas Reddy, Golluri Anjaiah, Pannala Devender Reddy, BRS state leaders Soma Shekhar Reddy, Sai Jen Shekhar, Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, Gandham Nageswar Rao, Bandaru Neelam Reddy, Damodar, B. A. Ramchander Goud, Sanjeev Reddy, party leaders, activists and local residents participated in the programme.

Uppal Congress In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy Responds Promptly to Sri Sri Nagar Residents' Appeal

UPPAL, MAY 17(INDIAN CHRONICAL): Residents of Sri Sri Nagar Colony in Uppal Division have been facing severe inconvenience and accidents due to the damaged roads in the colony. Concerned over the issue, the colony residents met Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-Charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and submitted a representation seeking immediate action. "Responding promptly, Parameshwar Reddy spoke to municipal officials and brought the issue to their notice. He assured the residents that the road repair works would commence from Monday. "The residents expressed happiness over the swift response and initiative taken by Parameshwar Reddy. Locals praised him as a leader who listens to public grievances and responds responsibly to people's issues. "Residents Arun Kishore Kumar, S. Nagaraju, Bharat Raj Goud, Appana Srinivas, Manne Giribabu, Ramesh Kumar, Y. Sudhakar Rao, P. Satyanarayana, D. Malla Reddy, Vidya Bhushan, G. Ashok



Goud, Shankar Goud, Alle Krishna and Naveen Reddy participated in the programme.

Drinking Water Crisis in Padmashali Township Brought to Parmeshwar Reddy's Attention "800 Families Facing Acute Water Shortage — Uppal Congress In-Charge Responds to Residents' Appeal

UPPAL, MAY 17(INDIAN CHRONICAL): "Residents of Padmashali Township in Kapra under the AS Rao Nagar Division of Uppal constituency are facing severe hardship due to the lack of proper drinking water supply. Representatives of the Padmashali Township Senior Citizens Welfare Association submitted a memorandum to Uppal Congress Party In-Charge Mandumula Parmeshwar Reddy seeking immediate intervention. "The residents stated that the township spans 132 acres with nearly 2,800 plots and around 800 houses, yet there is no proper drinking water pipeline facility. With the increase in G+2 residential constructions, the existing borewells have completely dried up during summer, causing serious inconvenience to families. "Adding to the problem, the colony is located near the Dammaiguda dump yard, leading to contamination of groundwater. Residents alleged that even filtered water has become unsafe for drinking and is posing serious health risks. "Association President V. Chakrapani and General Secretary N. Janardhan explained the difficulties being faced by the residents while submitting the representation to Parmeshwar Reddy. "Parmeshwar Reddy Assures Action "Responding to the issue, Parmeshwar Reddy said: "I cannot remain silent when nearly 2,400 families living across 132 acres are suffering without drinking water. I will speak to HMWSSB officials on a war footing and ensure sanction of a proper pipeline. Providing drinking water to tax-paying citizens is the government's responsibility. "He further stated: "I cannot tolerate people falling sick after consuming contaminated water. I will immediately discuss the matter with HMWSSB officials and work towards resolving the drinking water crisis in Padmashali Township. We will also bring the issue to the



attention of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Protecting public health is our top priority. "Residents including Yadagiri Goud, Mamatha Vijay, Nara Janardhan, Vanam Vijay Kumar, Voval Das Chakrapani, Donthas Srinivas, Mekala Surekha Venu, Deepa Aravind, Karunakar, Yemula Madhusudhan, Punna Navaneeth, Sheshu, Bingi Uday Bhaskar, Sukanya Rajinikanth, Pallavi Srinivas, Srinivas Varma, Jayakar, Suntha Peddabomma Archana, Nagamani, Kavitha Swathi, Priyanka, Subhash, along with Congress leaders Vitthal Naik, Tillu Yadav, and Prakash Reddy participated in the programme.

Students' Success is Telangana's Strength: Move Forward with Lofty Goals — MLA K.R.Nagaraju

Warangal, May 17 (Indian Chronicle): Vardhannapet MLA K.R. Nagaraju emphasized that quality education lays the foundation for a bright future for both students and the state. He stated that the progress of Telangana depends entirely on the strong achievements of its students. "Under the "Praja Palana – Pragathi Pranaliika" (Public Administration – Progress Plan) initiative, the Department of Education organized the "Vidya Vijayotsavalu 2025-26" (Education Victory Celebrations) program on Sunday. Meritorious students from across the district—who achieved outstanding results in the SSC and Intermediate examinations during the 2025-26 academic year—were felicitated and presented with incentives. "The MLA attended the event as the chief guest, accompanied by Warangal District Collector Satya Sarada and KUDA Chairman Inugala Venkata Ramireddy. Officials welcomed the MLA with a floral bouquet. Students who demonstrated exceptional performance in the examinations were honored with shawls, certificates of appreciation, and cash prizes. A special incentive award of one lakh rupees was presented to a meritorious student from a government school in Krishna Colony, Warangal. "Addressing the gathering, the MLA stated that the state government is prioritizing the strengthening of the education sector above all else. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, numerous reforms are being implemented to improve government schools and to ensure that quality education is accessible to students in rural areas as well.

"He stated that a student's success is a reflection of the sacrifices made by their parents, the dedication of their teachers, and their own perseverance. He expressed pride in the fact that students from government schools have achieved outstanding results at the state level, and he lauded students from economically backward sections for serving as inspiring examples. "He emphasized that education serves as a cornerstone not only for individual growth but also for social development. Urging students to pursue their goals with high aspirations, he expressed hope that they would rise to become doctors, engineers, scientists, administrators, and government employees, thereby bringing recognition to Telangana across the nation. He added that fostering the talent of students would boost self-confidence among a wider student body and strengthen public trust in government schools. "Additional Collector Sandhya Rani, DEO Ranganayudu, DAO Vijayalakshmi, education officials, teachers, public representatives, students, and parents participated in this event.

Students honoured for excellence in public examinations

Teachers and parents play key role in academic success, say officials.

KARIMNAGAR May 17 (Correspondent): Students who secured top scores in the SSC and Intermediate public examinations were felicitated at the Collectorate auditorium on Friday as part of the district education department's week-long Vidya Vijayotsavam programme.

Additional Collector (Local Bodies) and District Educational Officer Ashwini Tanaji Wakade presented appreciation certificates and cash awards to the students.

Addressing the gathering, she said that parents and teachers played a key role in shaping the future of students. Teachers contributed significantly to instilling discipline, moral values and academic aspirations among children, she observed.

She urged students to pursue higher education with commitment and contribute to society and national development.

Deputy Mayor Yadagiri Sunil Rao said educational standards in government schools had improved considerably in recent years due to better infrastructure and teaching facilities.

He said government school students were performing well in academics, sports, technology and competitive examinations. The achievements reflected the commitment of teachers, support from parents and hard work of students, he added. RDO Maheshwar, Education Department Assistant Director Madhavi, education officials, teachers, parents, public representatives and students attended the programme.

Drainage and Water Pipeline Issues to Be Resolved Before Road Construction: Chiluka Nagar Division Congress In-Charge Akiti Agam Reddy



“UPPAL, MAY 17(INDIAN CHRONICAL):“Local residents of Beerappagadda Division informed Chiluka Nagar Division Congress In-Charge Akiti Agam Reddy on Sunday that long-pending drainage and drinking water pipeline connection issues in the area behind the Ramalayam temple were being ignored while CC road construction works were underway.“The residents alleged that previous public representatives had neglected these basic infrastructure problems and proceeded with road works without addressing them.“Responding immediately, Akiti Agam Reddy brought the matter to the notice of Uppal Constituency Congress In-Charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy. Following his instructions, HMWSSB line staff were taken to the spot and informed about the existing drainage and water pipeline issues. Officials were directed to resolve the problems at the earliest.“Agam Reddy also contacted the road contractor over the phone and instructed that the road construction works be temporarily halted until the drainage and water pipeline issues are resolved, in accordance with the request of the local residents.“Speaking on the occasion, Akiti Agam Reddy said that under the guidance of Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, the Congress party is committed to preventing wastage of public funds through proper planning. He assured residents that road construction works would begin only after completion of drainage and drinking water pipeline works.“Congress leaders Jagadeesh Mudiraj, Balachander Goud, Rajesh, Vamsi, Kashi, Jagayya, and local residents of Beerappagadda participated in the programme.“[5:30 PM, 5/17/2026] +91 93911 09207: End



Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy's Efforts Bring Major Development to Kapra Lake: Regalla Satish Reddy



“UPPAL, MAY 17(INDIAN CHRONICAL): Telangana State Youth Wing leader and Bhagyanagar Ganesh Utsav Samithi Kapra Convener Bandari Lakshma Reddy's efforts have brought a major transformation to Kapra Lake, said Regalla Satish Reddy.“He stated that MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy had been relentlessly pursuing the government for a long time to secure funds for the beautification of Kapra Lake. As a result of his efforts, ₹35 crore has been sanctioned for the lake's development and beautification works.“Expressing gratitude, Regalla Satish Reddy felicitated the MLA with a shawl and thanked him for securing the funds through HYDRABAD. He said that the people would always remember the services of Bandari Lakshma Reddy, who has been continuously striving to resolve public issues.He further mentioned that even though his party is not in power, the MLA has been approaching ministers and officials to ensure developmental works are carried out, thereby earning the appreciation and support of the public.“[5:40 PM, 5/17/2026] +91 93911 09207: End

Newly elected co-option members of Bhuvanagiri Municipality pay tribute to Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy



“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle...May 17):- The four newly elected option members of Bonagiri Municipality met and respectfully honored our beloved leader Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and discussed some issues. Among such issues, the MLA was asked to stop buses coming from Uppal to Bhuvanagiri to Yadagirigutta at all major intersections and to construct bus shelters at some places to solve the transportation problems of the people. He immediately responded and spoke to RTC MD Nagi

Reddy and Nalgonda R M Gutta DM. Similarly, when the Bonagiri bus stand was requested to be reconstructed, they immediately responded and promised to construct a new bus stop. Bhuvanagiri Municipal Councillor Venkatesh Nayak, Co-option members Pallerla Yadagiri, Sujaya Ali Kausar, Badugu Vijaya Shankar, Battu Varalakshmi Prem, Medaboyina Mahesh and others participated in this program.

Make the 3rd Congress of Telangana Agricultural Workers' Union District being held in Ramannapet today..18.. tomorrow..19 a success:- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District General Secretary Kondamadugu Narasimha

“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle...May 17):- District General Secretary



Kondamadugu Narasimha informed in a statement that the 3rd Congress of Telangana Agricultural Workers' Union District being held in Ramannapet Mandal Center on May 18 and 19 should be made a success. He said that the second Congress of the last district was held in Motkur town on November 26 and 27, 2022. He said that for the last three and a half years, militant struggles have been carried out across the district on many issues faced by agricultural laborers, employment-guaranteed workers and the poor. He said that in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, they have launched movements to provide landowner passbooks for government lands cultivated by the poor and to lift the ongoing land distribution ban in the districts. They have launched movements to address the problems of farmers related to the lands of Malkapuram, Thupranpet, Singaraya Cheruvu, Chinna Kondur and Rachakonda areas of Narayanapuram mandal in Choutuppal mandal, to provide pattas for the lands cultivated by the poor in Jalalpur and Mehan Nagar villages in Pochampally mandal, Hammapuram in Bhuvanagiri mandal, Vartur in Motakondur mandal, and Gundala mandal center, and they have also launched movements to provide pattas to the poor in Maturu village. He said that they have continued their movements to lift the ongoing land distribution ban in Choutuppal, Bibi Nagar, Pochampally, Bhuvanagiri and Bommalararamam

mandals in the district. On the other hand, he said that they have fought for compensation to be paid to the farmers who lost their lands in the Basvapuram reservoir, the poor who are losing their homes, and the agricultural laborers who depend on those lands as per the Land Acquisition Act of 2013. He said that the Modi government is conspiring to repeal the employment guarantee scheme that has brought key changes in the rural economy and provided two meals a day to the laborers by bringing the Giranji Act, and that they have taken up many movements in the past three years against those conspiracies. He said that the minimum wages law should be implemented in line with the rising prices for agricultural laborers, that the government should take responsibility for education, medicine, and employment, that the rulers should implement the promises

made for the welfare of the people, and that Dalit and tribal villages and laborers' villages should be developed. He said that the two-day conference being held in Ramannapet is going to be a platform to review the struggles and movements carried out in these three and a half years and to formulate struggles. A public meeting will be held at the Ramannapet mandal center tomorrow, the 18th, at 5 pm. The chief guest of this public meeting will be All India Agricultural Workers' Association National General Secretary B. Venkat, former Legislative Council member Cherupalli Seetharamulu, state leaders of the farmers' association Yandi Jahangir, district president of the Agricultural Workers' Association Bollu Yadagiri, and the district leadership. 250 representatives from all over the district will participate in the representatives' conference to be held on the 19th. Telangana Agricultural Workers' Association State General Secretary R. Venkatramulu is participating as the chief guest. District in-charges of various public organizations will also participate in the conferences and give their messages, Narasimha said. Narasimha urged the representatives of the Agricultural Workers' Association District General Assembly being held in Ramannapet, the birthplace of the Telangana Armed Peasant Struggle, the area where many labor and land movements were held, and the center of poets, artists, and folk art forms, to participate in the public event being held on this occasion and celebrate the victory.

Meeting with Sanitation Staff and Municipal Auto Drivers: Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar



“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... May 17):“Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar stated that sanitation auto drivers play a pivotal role in maintaining urban cleanliness. On Saturday, she held a meeting with the sanitation auto drivers operating within the municipal limits to inquire about and understand the issues they face. She instructed the auto drivers to visit every household at a designated time early each morning to collect wet and dry waste separately. She emphasized the following points: 1. Punctuality: Waste collection must commence at the scheduled time in every ward each morning; 2. Segregation of Wet and Dry Waste: Drivers must collect wet and dry waste separately while simultaneously creating awareness among the public regarding waste segregation; 3. Minimizing Public Inconvenience: Drivers must strictly adhere to the scheduled arrival times of their autos to avoid causing any inconvenience to the residents. When the drivers brought their grievances to the Chairperson's attention, she assured them that these issues would be resolved in the near future. She called upon everyone to work together towards the collective goal of achieving a "Swachh Bhuvanagiri" (Clean Bhuvanagiri). Municipal Commissioner Chandrashekhar Reddy, DE Kondala Rao, Sanitation Inspectors, and the auto drivers participated in this program.

We will support Congress party workers:- Wanaparthi District President, State Sports Authority President Shivsena Reddy

“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle...May 17):- We will be available to Congress party workers at all times and protect them, said Wanaparthi District President, State Sports Authority President Kothakapu Shivsena Reddy. Former Youth Congress district president Barre Naresh, who recently underwent surgery in Hussainabad, Bhuvanagiri town, visited his house on Saturday. He assured that the workers who worked during the difficult times of the party would be supported in every way, no matter what kind of difficulty they face. Local councillor Tummeti Pandu, Youth Congress leaders Mahender Reddy, Harinath, Enagandla Sudhakar, Muchala Manoj, Cheguri Balu, Sunil, Pandala Sarath, Bollepalli Janakiram, Ram, Bharat and others participated in the program.



How a Bengaluru road rage murder case survived hostile witnesses to end in a conviction



In the early minutes of June 26, 2018, south Bengaluru had settled into the kind of silence that comes only after midnight—when traffic thins, shops shut, and the city briefly pauses. A car moved along the stretch connecting JP Nagar and Electronics City, carrying three young men on their way home after a late outing. There was nothing unusual about the drive, nothing to suggest that it would soon turn into a murder investigation that would take nearly seven years to resolve. The car slowed near BTM Layout 16th Main and pulled over as the men decided to wait for other friends to catch up. Siddharth Koushal, 26, stepped out briefly. In that moment, a motorcycle passed through the narrow stretch and brushed against him, grazing his elbow. It was the kind of minor contact that rarely lingers—an everyday occurrence on city roads. He turned and asked the riders to be careful. What followed was unforeseeable.

The motorcycle stopped. Words were exchanged—sharp, brief, and escalating faster than anyone could anticipate. One of the men picked up a wooden log lying nearby and struck Koushal on the head. Ravi Prakash, who rushed forward to intervene, was also attacked. Before the situation could fully register, the two men fled into the darkness. There was no chase. No prolonged fight. No history between the men. Just a sudden burst of violence between strangers, one that would prove fatal. Koushal collapsed at the scene. He was rushed first to a nearby hospital and later shifted to Apollo Hospital on Bannerghatta Road. Four days later, on June 30, 2018, he died from severe head injuries. At first glance, it seemed like a case that would follow a familiar pattern: a late-night altercation, swift police action, and a straightforward prosecution. In fact, the case moved with striking speed in its earliest phase. However, what the police secured quickly in terms of arrests would take far longer to prove as fact. The case, which began with urgency and apparent clarity, would go on to be tested, challenged, and repeatedly strained over the next seven years. The case was taken up by the Mico Layout police station, with then inspector R M Ajay leading the investigation. But even as arrests were made swiftly, investigators were aware of a critical gap—the most important moment of the crime had not been captured. There was no footage of the assault. “We had no direct CCTV from the spot. What we had was reconstruction,” Ajay said. “We were not working with a complete picture...only fragments.”

Those fragments came from scattered sources. A worker from a nearby establishment, who had been asleep inside, stepped out after hearing the commotion. By the time he reached the road, the assault was over. He saw the attackers only as they were leaving, but managed to note down what he believed was the motorcycle’s registration number. He later filed the complaint based on that recollection.

For a brief period, that detail appeared to give the investigation direction. But the clarity did not last. “The number plate initially given to us was not accurate,” Ajay recalled. “For some time, we were working with a lead that did not match.” Investigators widened their approach. They analysed CCTV footage from surrounding junctions and roads, tracking vehicle movement across multiple cameras. Timestamps were compared and mismatches eliminated to reconstruct the sequence around the crime.

Gradually, a motorcycle matching the general description began to appear across different camera points. Its repeated presence helped investigators piece together a rough timeline—not of what was directly seen, but of what could be logically connected. In parallel, field verification and interrogation helped narrow down suspects. This combination of technical tracking and on-ground work eventually led police to the two accused. Within 48 hours, the police had identified and arrested Girish V, 28, and Mahesh M K, 26. The alleged weapon was recovered, and a chargesheet was filed. But what seemed like an open-and-shut case took seven years to prove: links had to be built, evidence pieced together, and though arrests came quickly, conviction did not. Bengaluru road rage Girish V, 28, and Mahesh M K, 26, were arrested within 48 hours of the road rage incident resulting in murder in Bengaluru.

Kannada, Hindi, and triggered egos?

In the early stages, the case was widely seen as road rage. An attempt to murder case was filed, but as the investigation progressed, that explanation began to feel insufficient. There had been no aggressive driving, no prolonged confrontation, no pursuit. What, then, had triggered such violence? Koushal was on his way to Electronics City with a group of friends, driving ahead while others followed on a motorcycle. Along the way, he pulled over briefly to wait for them. As he stepped aside, a two-wheeler carrying the accused passed close by, its mirror brushing against him before continuing ahead. Reacting to the sudden contact, Koushal told them to be careful—first in Hindi, and then, as the exchange continued, in broken Kannada, an officer familiar with the investigation explained. According to an officer, the turning point was not the caution itself, but how it was perceived. “The victim was speaking in broken Kannada; the accused, being locals, identified him as a non-local and questioned how someone from outside could tell them how to ride. That is how the argument escalated,” the officer added. In that brief moment, the interaction shifted. What began as a routine warning was taken as a challenge. The issue was no longer about a minor road incident, but about identity and ego. “It was not planned. It happened in seconds,” Ajay said. “But those few seconds were enough.”

The trial phase unfolded with uncertainty. The prosecution’s case relied heavily on eyewitness accounts, but as proceedings progressed in court, several key witnesses began to withdraw or contradict their earlier statements, significantly weakening the narrative built during the investigation. Naveen, who was present in the car with Koushal on the night of the incident, denied witnessing the assault during his deposition. Surendra Naik stated that he had seen Koushal only later at the hospital and had no direct knowledge of the attack. Swamy, who was expected to support the identification of the accused, also turned hostile, claiming he was unaware of the case details. Another witness said he had signed statements at the police station without fully understanding their contents. Richard Rai, another friend linked to the case, gave inconsistent testimony: he initially suggested he had seen the incident unfold, but later admitted he arrived after the assault and was relying

on what others told him. With each reversal, the prosecution’s chain of eyewitness evidence weakened further, creating gaps that could not be bridged by direct visual proof.

Ajay said the turning of witnesses was one of the biggest setbacks in the trial. “Several witnesses turned hostile during the proceedings. In a case like this, where there is no direct footage of the assault, witness consistency becomes crucial,” he said. Amid the collapse of multiple eyewitness accounts, one testimony remained consistent throughout the trial—that of Prakash. As Koushal’s close friend and the complainant witness, he consistently maintained that after the initial exchange near the road, the accused returned and attacked Siddharth with a wooden log, while the second accused allegedly instigated the assault.

Even under cross-examination over several years, his version did not materially change. Investigators said this consistency became critical in anchoring the prosecution’s case at a stage when other oral evidence had fractured. “Ravi’s statement matched the medical and forensic findings, which strengthened its credibility.” Officer Ajai said. Medical reports confirmed that Koushal’s death was caused by severe head injuries inflicted by a blunt object. Forensic examination also detected human blood on the recovered wooden weapon. These findings, when read alongside the reconstructed CCTV trail of the accused’s movement, helped corroborate Prakash’s account.

As the trial stretched across nearly seven years, the case became less about a single straightforward narrative and more about piecing together surviving fragments of evidence. Delays caused by procedural factors and the COVID-19 pandemic further slowed proceedings, widening gaps in memory and testimony and some witnesses were even threatened. Investigators noted that the passage of time itself became a challenge. By the time the trial approached its conclusion, what remained was a combination of forensic evidence, reconstructed movement through CCTV inputs, and the testimony of a single witness that aligned with the physical findings. Together, these elements formed the final chain that the court ultimately relied upon to convict the accused. On October 24, 2025, Koushal’s birthday, the court delivered its verdict. Judge Balachandra N Bhat of the 59th Additional City Civil and Sessions Court found Girish V and Mahesh M K guilty of murder, sentencing them to life imprisonment and imposing a fine of Rs 10,000 each. The court observed that striking a person on the head with a heavy object demonstrated clear knowledge that such an act could cause death and that the force used was disproportionate. “The accused No.1 (Girish) was not justified in having used disproportionate force to avenge the calling of the deceased to ride carefully,” the judgment stated. For Koushal’s father, Koushalendra Kumar Pandey, the verdict marked the end of a long wait. “My son’s birthday was on October 24—the day the court pronounced both the accused guilty. I know my son won’t come back, but the conviction coming through on his birthday is justice delivered. A lot of witnesses in the case were threatened, but the police ensured their safety,” he said.

Couple held for flouting bail norm, travelling abroad after claiming surrendered passports ‘missing’



Surat fraud case involving Rs 6.28 crore has led to the arrest of a couple who allegedly violated Gujarat High Court bail conditions by travelling abroad using reissued passports. (File Photo) Surat fraud case involving Rs 6.28 crore has led to the arrest of a couple who allegedly violated Gujarat High Court bail conditions by travelling abroad using reissued passports.

A COUPLE booked for fraud in Rajkot was arrested in Surat for travelling abroad on reissued passports after they reported their surrendered passports as part of a bail condition, as “missing”. They have been booked again under sections of fraud, the Passport Act and the Immigration and Foreigners Act. Ghanshyam Pambhar and his wife Ashmita from Lodhika in Rajkot launched a company by the name of Dhananjay Finance in 2021 and allegedly cheated several people of Rs 6.28 crore by assuring high returns in a short period. They collected large sums of money from investors and when they turned up to collect their returns, the couple had wound up the company and moved to Mota Varachha in Surat.

A case of cheating was registered against them at the Rajkot Taluka police station, but the couple got anticipatory bail from Gujarat High Court on the condition that they would not leave the country without permission and surrender their passports to the local police station. Their cover was busted when a lawyer, Ashok Koyani, who was a victim of their fraud in Rajkot, learnt that the Pambhars had travelled to Dubai and other countries following which he informed the Gujarat HC and also gave an application to the Rajkot Taluka police station on the violation of the bail condition.

The Rajkot police, on finding their passports still in their custody, launched an investigation and found that the couple had registered complaints of their passports “missing” at the Dindoli police station in Surat. On the basis of this FIR, the couple obtained new, fresh passports in their names from the Surat passport office. Surat Assistant Commissioner of Police N P Gohil told The Indian Express that the Surat police seized their new passports on which they travelled abroad. Police booked the two under BNS 212 (Furnishing False Information), 217(b) (Providing False information to a public servant with the intent to cause them to use their lawful power to injure or annoy another person), 318(4) (Cheating), 336(3) (forgery), 338 (forgery of valuable security, wills etc.), 340(2) (Fraudulent or dishonest use of forged documents as genuine one), and The Passport Act 1967 section 12(1-b) and the Immigration and foreigners Act 2025 section 22.

3 employees of Bengaluru college suspended after student forced to remove sacred thread files case



Three staff members of Krupanidhi Pre-University College in Bengaluru were suspended on Friday after a case was lodged against them for allegedly not allowing a candidate appear for the Karnataka Common Entrance Test (KCET) unless he removed his janivara (sacred thread), triggering complaints of hurting religious sentiments. According to the complaint, the incident occurred on April 23. When the candidate arrived at Krupanidhi PU College to appear for the KCET Physics paper, the staff on examination duty allegedly instructed him to remove his janivara before allowing him inside the examination hall. The candidate, who removed the thread and wrote the exam, stated that the act hurt his religious sentiments.

He then approached the Madiwala police station on April 24 and lodged a formal complaint. Based on this, the police registered a case and initiated an inquiry. Sudhakar D, Girijamma, and Saritha R, the three staff members deployed for examination duty and involved in entry checking at the centre, were questioned. Following the incident, the college suspended the three employees pending inquiry. The suspension orders stated they were placed under im-

mediate suspension. They were directed to remain available for inquiry proceedings and not report to duty until further orders. The suspension has been termed a precautionary measure and not a final determination of guilt.

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) said the KCET for Physics and Chemistry was conducted on April 23 across 745 centres in the state, including Krupanidhi PU College in Bengaluru. The KEA stated that clear instructions regarding examination protocols and dress code had been issued, and candidates were not required to remove religious symbols such as the janivara. It also said such instructions were reiterated during training sessions for invigilators. The authority added that if the reported incident is confirmed, it would amount to a serious procedural lapse and may warrant strict action. Senior officials have conducted an inquiry and sought a detailed report. Legal action will be taken as per the rules. Leader of Opposition R Ashoka on Friday alleged that students were being asked to remove the janivara during CET exams with the “support of the Congress government,” and demanded that such incidents be stopped immediately. After meeting Bengaluru police commissioner, he called the incident a “serious violation of religious sentiment” and questioned how it occurred despite court directions. He said forcing the removal of the janivara could cause mental distress to students. “If there is no backing from the government, such incidents cannot happen,” he alleged, adding that he had raised the issue with police and district authorities and criticised the delay in action against the staff involved. Ashoka also alleged that around 20 students were affected, including one from Padmanabhanagar, and said at least six complaints had been filed. He accused the state government of hurting Hindu sentiments and demanded a fair investigation, reiterating his allegations on X.

‘Asked to withdraw complaint’: Mohali ex-councillor questions road quality



Sethi said, despite the claims that the road samples had passed quality tests, the condition of the road, which was constructed around 20-22 days ago, is alarming. Sethi said, despite the claims that the road samples had passed quality tests, the condition of the road, which was constructed around 20-22 days ago, is alarming.

Mohali’s former councillor has raised concerns over a recently built road from Madanpur to Diplast Chowk and said it was improperly layered with tar, and also alleged that officials asked him to withdraw a complaint regarding the same. Manjeet Singh Sethi said he had previously raised the issue during a meeting of the Mohali Municipal Corporation. Sethi said, despite the claims that the road samples had passed quality tests, the condition of the road, which was constructed around 20-22 days ago, is alarming. Sethi warned that if immediate repairs are not carried

out, even a single spell of rain could worsen the road’s condition. He claimed that during a meeting held on March 31, the issue was discussed before Chief Engineer Naresh Batta, who assured that the road would be repaired. According to Sethi, he had also filed a complaint but officials allegedly asked him to withdraw it, assuring that the work will be done. In case there is failure in prompt action, he warned of taking the matter to ministerial level. The former councillor also claimed that the concerned officials, including Executive Engineer Kuldeep Singh, failed to inspect the site and to visit Mohali even once. He alleged that road works worth Rs 27 crore were carried out in Mohali using government grant funds. However, the quality of work was extremely poor, he said. He also claimed that the same contractor repeatedly gets the projects despite unsatisfactory performance, and no strict action was taken against them. Demanding a transparent probe into the matter, Sethi said the taxpayers’ money should not go to waste. He has sought time from the concerned minister, he said.

Once granted a meeting, he will request a vigilance inquiry, as the issue has already been brought to the minister’s attention. Repeated attempts were made to contact Chief Engineer Naresh Batta regarding the matter, but he did not respond. Following this, Municipal Corporation Commissioner Sandeep Singh was contacted. He said a thorough inquiry would be conducted in accordance with rules and regulations, and if anyone is found guilty, appropriate action will be taken against them. Regarding the vigilance inquiry and meeting with the minister, he said that it is everyone’s right, and the councillor is also free to do so.

Bulldozer, bridge, water tank, but all ‘talk’: Congress turns to AI for poll campaign

To bolster its campaigning for the upcoming general elections to local bodies in the state, the Congress has created 20 AI-generated videos that animate issues, such as demolitions, infrastructural mishaps and incidents of health hazards, that the party wants to highlight. One such video made through artificial intelligence (AI), for instance, imagines a bulldozer talking: “I am the BJP’s bulldozer. During the Congress rule, I was used for development works, but the BJP, today is using me for demolishing people’s houses. The Congress will not demolish without rehabilitating people. Havey toh samjho layi ao panjo (better understand now, bring in the Congress)”.

Conceived as a counter to the BJP’s ‘Dada no bulldozer’ campaign, which refers to the demolitions of illegal properties of alleged criminals by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel-led government and show them as achievements, the Congress hopes to send across a message to communities that have claimed to be the victims. A meme on the collapse of a newly built overhead water tank in Surat district in March says: “I am the BJP’s corrupted water tank; I will collapse once you fill water in me. If you want a ‘solid’ water tank and drinking water, remove the BJP and bring the Congress.” “Our focus has been to “recall-and-reconnect” with locals through our social media campaigns by highlighting micro issues,” Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee president Amit Chavda told The Indian Express that the party has drawn from are the Morbi bridge collapse, which killed 135 people in ? the Rajkot TRP game zone fire, which killed 27 people in ? the Gambhir bridge collapse last year, when 22 people died; the Harni boat tragedy of Vadodara, which caused the deaths of 12 schoolchildren and two teachers; and the crackdowns on fake paneer and food products. However, some party leaders admit that they are not sure if these methods will turn into votes in their favour, as the BJP has been in power in the local self-government bodies in Gujarat for at least three decades, with exceptions like the 2015 elections when the tide turned in the opposition’s favour, largely because of the Patidar quota agitation.

Detailing about the campaign, the chairman of the Congress’s social media department, Bhuman Bhatt, noted, “We are talking about issues such as food adulteration, Morbi bridge collapse...through short AI videos to reach out to voters. This is very different from our previous campaigns. Normally, manifestos are released, and political leaders speak with a focus on the manifestos. The AI videos have been created to address issues and catch people’s attention.” Bhatt adds, “We are deploying three approaches [to our campaign]: the negatives, to attack the government on its failures; the positives, our commitments; and the comparison, of what was during the Congress rule and what is now.” The party leaders also admit that its focus this elec-



tion season is mostly on capturing people’s attention through social media over physical campaigning. Revealing the strategy used in creating this campaign, political strategist Kunal Shah, who is the co-founder of Bestsellers Strategies and has been associated with the party since 2016, told this reporter, “We know there is a fatigue, but how to express and show that voter sentiment was a challenge that we addressed through AI. These 10-15 second videos are legally sound creatives developed using a software application. No deepfake or someone’s voice has been used.” While the party has created 20 AI-generated videos, it has released only 15 so far. “In addition to specific incidents such as Morbi, Gambhir, Harni, hyper-local issues—from roads to drinking water—which can be used across the state have been used as subjects for the videos,” Kunal added.

AIMIM expands Gujarat footprint, eyes strong show in local body polls

Hyderabad: The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen party will be testing waters in various towns and cities in Gujarat during the local body elections to be held on Sunday. The party for the first time had fielded candidates from around 400 wards in different local bodies in Gujarat as against a few areas in 2021. AIMIM party president Asaduddin Owaisi had campaigned for the party until the last day of the campaign on Friday and addressed two public meetings including one in Ahmedabad. The party leadership expects it will win a high number of seats in Gujarat due to several factors including under-representation of the minorities in the local bodies in the State.

Asian shares mixed, oil jumps 4% after Trump rejects Iran’s response to ceasefire proposal



Hong Kong: Asian stocks were mixed Monday after Wall Street set more records, and oil surged more than 4% following US President Donald Trump’s rejection of Tehran’s response to the latest US proposal on ending the war in Iran. US futures edged lower. Tokyo’s Nikkei 225 fell 0.4% to 62,486.84 after briefing reaching another record high in intraday trading at above 63,300. Technology-focused investment holding company SoftBank Group, one of Japan’s largest stocks, fell more than 5%. South Korea’s Kospi gained 4.1% to 7,804.71. It also hit an all-time intraday high, led by gains from tech-related stocks including Samsung Electronics and memory chip maker SK Hynix.

Technology-related stocks and growing artificial intelligence-related interest have supported markets in Japan and South Korea despite the Iran war, with the Nikkei 225 and Kospi rising more than 10% and 30%, respectively, over the past month. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng fell 0.3% to 26,319.93. The Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.9% to 4,219.13, following official data Monday that showed China’s factory gate prices rose 2.8% in April from a year ago, the highest since 2022, as well as better-than-expected export figures released over the weekend. Australia’s S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.6%. Taiwan’s TaieX traded 0.9% higher,

and India’s Sensex fell 1.3%. Oil prices jumped early Monday over Iran war uncertainties, after Trump wrote in a social media post that Iran’s response on Sunday to the US’ latest proposal was “TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!” Brent crude, the international standard, gained 4.2% to \$105.57 per barrel. It was roughly \$70 per barrel before the war began in late February. Benchmark US crude was 4.7% higher at \$99.89 a barrel. With the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global oil and gas transport, still largely closed and as the US is continuing its sea blockade of Iranian ports, analysts believe oil prices are likely to remain higher for longer.

The Iran war was also set to be part of the discussion agenda when Trump meets with Chinese leader Xi Jinping later this week. China has close economic links with Iran and the US has been pressing Beijing to leverage its influence to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz. “There remains a glimmer of hope that talks between Trump and Chinese President Xi later this week could yield positive results on Iran,” ING commodities analysts Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a note on Monday. “The hope is that China can use its influence over Iran to push it closer towards a peace deal,” they said. “Clearly, this is easier said than done.” The oil market is still very much “heavily headline-driven,” the pair added. On Friday, Wall Street rose to new records with the benchmark S&P 500 adding 0.8% to 7,398.93 and reaching its latest all-time high, fuelled by market optimism after a solid report on the US job market which was better than what analysts had expected despite Iran war shocks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged up less than 0.1% to 49,609.16, while the technology-heavy Nasdaq composite climbed 1.7% to its own record at 26,247.08. In other dealings, the US dollar climbed to 157.14 Japanese yen from 156.61 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1756, down from \$1.1780.

Trump's feuds, tensions with allies likely to outlast Iran war



WASHINGTON With his decision to pull some U.S. troops from Germany, his threats to draw down forces elsewhere in Europe and his downplaying of Iran’s recent attacks on an important Gulf partner, President Donald Trump’s latest moves foreshadow what could be the war’s enduring legacy: the fraying of ties with key allies. Even as the U.S. and Iran inch toward a potential off-ramp from their 10-week war, Trump’s words and deeds have revived fears among Washington’s long-standing friends - from Europe to the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific - that the United States might be unreliable in a future crisis.

The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. In response, some traditional U.S. partners are starting to hedge their bets in ways that may bring long-lasting changes in relations with Washington, while adversaries such as China and Russia are looking to exploit strategic openings. It is not yet clear whether Trump’s war with Iran will mark a permanent turning point in U.S. relations with the world. But most analysts believe his erratic conduct - since returning to office, essentially upending the rules-based global order, will further erode U.S. alliances, especially with NATO continuing to feel his ire for largely resisting his wartime demands. “Trump’s recklessness with respect to Iran is resulting in some dramatic shifts,” said Brett Bruen, a former adviser in the Obama administration who now heads the Situation Room strategic consultancy. “U.S. credibility is at stake.” Tensions are especially high between Trump and the Europeans since he joined Israel in striking Iran on February 28, claiming without evidence that Tehran was close to developing a nuclear weapon. Iran’s retaliatory closure of the Strait of Hormuz unleashed an unprecedented global energy shock that has made European countries some of the biggest economic losers from a war they never asked for.

Even before that, Trump had rattled allies by imposing sweeping tariffs, pushing to take over Greenland from Denmark and cutting military aid to Ukraine. The rift widened when Trump announced this week he was withdrawing 5,000 of the 36,400 troops the U.S. has stationed in Germany after Chancellor Friedrich Merz angered him by saying publicly that the Iranians were humiliating the U.S. The Pentagon then scrapped a planned deployment of Tomahawk cruise missiles to Germany. Trump - who has long questioned whether the U.S. should remain in the NATO alliance it helped create after World War Two - said he was also considering reducing U.S. forces in Italy and Spain, whose leaders have been at odds with him over the war. The move followed Trump’s accusations that allies have not been doing enough to back the U.S. in the war and his suggestions that this meant Washington might no longer need to honor the alliance’s Article 5 mutual defense clause.

“President Trump has made his disappointment with NATO and other allies clear,” White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said, noting that some requests to use military bases in Europe for the Iran war had been denied by host governments. While insisting that Trump had “restored America’s standing on the world stage and strengthened relationships abroad,” she said he “will never allow the United States to be treated unfairly and taken advantage of by so-called ‘allies.’” Trump had earlier taken aim at British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, deriding him in March as “not Winston Churchill” and threatening to impose a “big tariff” on imports from the UK. And Trump’s Pentagon has floated the prospect of punishing NATO allies it believes have failed to support U.S. operations against Iran, including suspending Spain as a member and reviewing U.S. recognition of Britain’s claim to the Falkland Islands. European governments have responded by stepping up efforts to increase cooperation among themselves, shoulder more of their own defense burden and jointly develop weapons systems to reduce reliance on the U.S., while trying to convince Trump of the value of maintaining transatlantic allies. One European

diplomat called Trump’s threats a clear signal for Europe to invest more in its own security but said leaders were resigned to having to roll with the punches for now.

As “middle powers,” the Europeans have limited options, especially given their dependence on their superpower ally for strategic deterrence against any possible attack from Russia, and analysts say the transition to greater self-reliance will take years. In their efforts to mollify Trump, meanwhile, European officials have quietly stressed that many of their countries are allowing U.S. forces to use bases on their soil and their airspace during the Iran campaign. But European leaders, some of whom had used flattery with Trump to defuse earlier crises, are also becoming wise to his negotiating tactics and more emboldened in standing up to him, analysts say. Jeff Rathke, president of the American-German Institute at Johns Hopkins University, said that while Merz had seemed to charm Trump during earlier meetings, now he “is not trying to hide the critical assessment of what the United States has gotten itself into.”

But the Europeans are also mindful that Trump, barred by law from running again, could feel unrestrained “to do whatever he thinks” on the world stage before he leaves office in January 2029, the European diplomat said. As some European leaders sound the alarm about NATO’s future, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski told a conference in Warsaw there is no need to panic so long as Europe delivers on promised higher military spending, which Trump has long demanded. Even so, the strains on U.S. alliances extend well beyond Europe.

When Iran this week launched missile and drone attacks against the United Arab Emirates, a close U.S. ally, Trump and his aides seemed to turn a blind eye, causing further unease among Gulf Arab states already hard hit by the war. Trump was quick to dismiss a strike on Monday as minor, though it set fire to the important Fujairah oil port and prompted the government to close schools, and even after further attacks later in the week he insisted that a month-old ceasefire was still holding. Trump went to war against the advice of some Gulf partners, and though they soon lined up in solidarity some now worry he could strike a deal that leaves them facing a still-dangerous neighbor.

The war has also stirred anxiety among Asian partners, many heavily dependent on oil that flowed freely through the strait before the conflict. Countries like Japan and South Korea have already been unsettled by Trump’s high tariffs and disparagement of traditional alliances. Some may now wonder whether the vulnerability he has shown to economic pressure at home, including high gasoline prices, could mean Trump might hesitate when asked to help in a conflict with China, such as an invasion of Taiwan. “What worries us most is that trust in, respect for, and expectations toward the United States - the core partner in the alliance Japan values most - have been shrinking,” Takeshi Iwaya, who served as Japan’s foreign minister at the start of Trump’s second term, told Reuters. “It could cast a long shadow over the entire region.” Yasutoshi Nishimura, a former Japanese trade minister, said it has become increasingly important for Tokyo to respond to the shifting global power dynamic by forging closer ties with “like-minded ‘middle powers’ such as Britain, Canada, Australia and European nations. Since the start of the war, Russia and China, long-time allies of Iran, have mostly steered clear, but analysts say they are watching closely. Experts warn that Trump’s use of raw power in a war of choice against Iran, coming just weeks after a U.S. raid in Caracas that captured Venezuela’s president, could embolden China and Russia to intensify coercive moves against their neighbors.

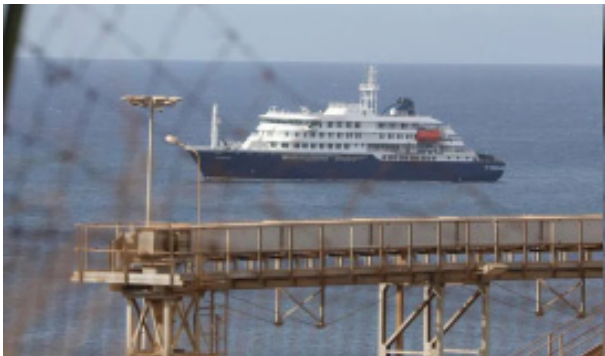
Russia, a leading energy producer, has benefited from higher oil and natural gas prices driven up by the Iran war as well as the U.S. and Europe being distracted from the war in Ukraine. Though the Iran crisis has crimped China’s energy supplies, Beijing may have learned lessons seeing the U.S. having to shift military assets from the Indo-Pacific to the Middle East and how the world’s most powerful armed forces have at times been outmaneuvered by asymmetric tactics such as cheap drones, analysts say. China has also seized the opportunity to try to promote itself as a more reliable global partner than the unpredictable Trump, who is due to visit Beijing next week. But Victoria Coates, Trump’s deputy national security adviser in his first term, said Beijing would have a difficult time using the U.S. war against Iran as “carte blanche to run around the world saying that we’re a destabilizing force.” “They haven’t exactly been a strong partner to their ally Iran throughout all this,” said Coates, now a vice president at the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank in Washington.

One American tested positive for Hantavirus

Washington: An American passenger from a hantavirus-hit Dutch cruise ship has tested positive for the virus, and another has mild symptoms, the US Department of Health and Human Services have announced. All 17 American citizens from the MV Hondius cruise ship are currently en route via an airlift to the United States, with the two travelling in the plane’s biocontainment units out of an abundance of caution, the department wrote in a post on the social platform X.

The airlift will first take passengers to the Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Center (RESPTC) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center/Nebraska Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska, before transferring the passenger with mild symptoms to a second RESPTC at their final destination, it said. “Upon arrival at each facility, each individual will undergo clinical assessment and receive appropriate care and support based on their condition,” the department said in the post. As of Saturday, there were eight suspected cases associated with the outbreak and three deaths, it said.

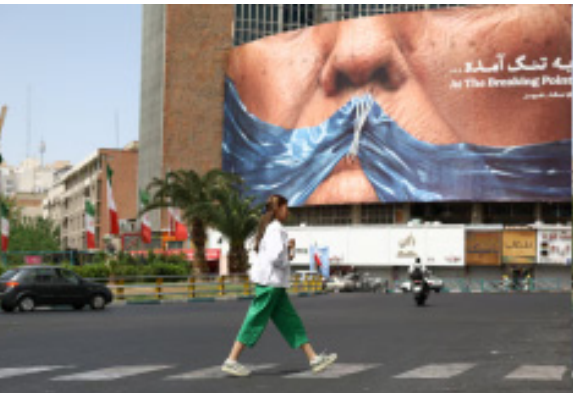
The incubation period for hantavirus, from first exposure to symptoms, is estimated at one to eight weeks, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, reports Xinhua news agency. The disease is usually spread by rodents but can, in rare cases, move from person to person, and kills more than a third of people infected. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, 20 nationals evacuated from the hantavirus-affected cruise ship MV Hondius were isolated in a northwest England hospital upon their return on Sunday, as authorities stepped up outbreak containment and monitoring. The passengers landed in Manchester earlier in the day before being transferred by bus to Arrows Park Hospital on the Wirral, Merseyside, where they will remain under medical observation for 72 hours. In a joint statement, local National Health Service (NHS) authorities said the group would stay in a “managed setting for clinical assessment and testing.” If they remain symptom-free, they will later be allowed to return home



and continue self-isolation for a further 42 days.

The British government said all passengers and crew members returning from the MV Hondius would undergo a total of 45 days of isolation and monitoring. Follow-up work is also underway for individuals who may have been in contact with confirmed or suspected cases. The emergency measures follow a hantavirus outbreak linked to the MV Hondius, which has resulted in at least eight confirmed or suspected cases and three reported deaths. As part of the broader response to the outbreak, the British government also deployed a specialist military and medical team to Tristan da Cunha, a remote British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic, after a British national on the island tested positive for hantavirus. According to the British Ministry of Defence, six paratroopers and two military clinicians from 16 Air Assault Brigade parachuted onto the island, while oxygen supplies and medical equipment were air-dropped simultaneously. Tristan da Cunha, a volcanic island group with a population of 221 people, is regarded as Britain’s most remote inhabited overseas territory. The islands have no airstrip and are normally accessible only by sea. The Defence Ministry described the mission as the first time the British military had deployed medical personnel via parachute to provide humanitarian assistance.

Trump rejects 'unacceptable' Iran response to peace plan, oil prices jump



DUBAI/WASHINGTON, - President Donald Trump’s swift rejection of Iran’s response to a U.S. peace proposal sent oil prices surging on Monday amid concerns the 10-week-old conflict will drag on, keeping shipping through the Strait of Hormuz paralyzed. Days after the U.S. floated an offer in the hopes of re-opening negotiations, Iran on Sunday released a response focused on ending the war on all fronts, especially Lebanon, where U.S. ally Israel is fighting Iran-backed Hezbollah militants. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. Tehran also included a demand for compensation for war damage and emphasised Iranian sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian state TV said. It also called on the U.S. to end its naval blockade, guarantee no further attacks, lift sanctions and end a U.S. ban on Iranian oil sales, the semi-official Tasnim news agency said. Within hours, Trump dismissed Iran’s proposal with a post on social media. “I don’t like it — TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE,” Trump wrote on Truth Social, without giving further detail. The U.S. had proposed an end to fighting before starting talks on more contentious issues, including Iran’s nuclear program. Oil prices jumped more than \$4 a barrel on Monday following news of the continued stalemate that leaves the narrow Strait of Hormuz largely closed. Before the war began on February 28, the waterway carried one-fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas flows, and has emerged as one of the central pressure points in the war.

“The oil market continues to trade like a geopolitical

headline machine, with prices swinging sharply based on every comment, rejection, or warning coming from Washington and Tehran,” said Priyanka Sachdeva, senior market analyst at Phillip Nova. A map showing the inbound and outbound shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz, in addition to the maritime boundary between Oman and Iran. THREE TANKERS TRANSIT THE STRAIT IN RECENT DAYS While traffic through the Strait of Hormuz is at a trickle compared to before the war, shipping data on Kpler and LSEG showed three tankers laden with crude exited the waterway last week, with trackers switched off to avoid Iranian attack. Surveys show the war is unpopular with U.S. voters facing sharply higher gasoline prices less than six months before nationwide elections that will determine whether Trump’s Republican party retains control of Congress. The U.S. has also found little international support, with NATO allies refusing calls to send ships to open the Strait of Hormuz without a full peace deal and an internationally mandated mission. It is not clear what fresh diplomatic or military steps may be ahead. Trump is expected to arrive in Beijing on Wednesday. With mounting pressure to draw a line under the war and the global energy crisis it has ignited, Iran is among the topics Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are set to discuss. Trump has been leaning on China to use its influence to push Tehran to make a deal with Washington. Addressing whether combat operations against Iran were over, Trump said in remarks aired on Sunday: “They are defeated, but that doesn’t mean they’re done.” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the war was not over because there was “more work to be done” to remove enriched uranium from Iran, dismantle enrichment sites and address Iran’s proxies and ballistic missile capabilities. The best way to remove the enriched uranium would be through diplomacy, Netanyahu said in an interview that aired Sunday on CBS News’ “60 Minutes.” But he did not rule out removing it by force. Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a social media post that Iran would “never bow down to the enemy” and would “defend national interests with strength.” Despite diplomatic efforts to break a deadlock, the threat to shipping lanes and the economies of the region remained high. Recent days have seen the biggest flare-ups in fighting in and around the strait since a ceasefire began in early April.

UK's Starmer launches political fightback, putting Europe ties at heart of reset



LONDON, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will begin a political fightback on Monday in a speech that says rebuilding relations with the rest of Europe will be his government’s defining mission, as he moves to quell growing calls to quit. Starmer’s future was thrown into doubt after his Labour Party suffered heavy losses in local elections last week and a former minister threatened to seek lawmakers’ backing for a leadership contest if he fails to offer radical change. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. More than 30 of Starmer’s lawmakers have called for him to quit or to set out a timetable for his departure after the local election defeats, the worst for a governing party in more than three decades. In his latest government reset, Starmer will say that “incremental change won’t cut it” and that the scale of reforms needed to revive the economy, rebuild Britain’s military, and boost energy security are bigger than he had realised, according to extracts of the speech released by his office.

Although no new policies were announced in the extracts, Starmer will say his government “will be defined by rebuilding our relationship and by putting Britain at the heart of Europe”, almost a decade after Britain voted to leave the European Union. A pledge to deepen ties with Europe would be popular among Labour lawmakers and many younger voters, with polls showing that about 60% of Britons now believe leaving the EU was a mistake. However, efforts to

rebuild relations would raise difficult questions, including whether to allow more immigration from Europe in return for better access to European Union markets, and are likely to face opposition from right-wing Eurosceptic parties and some British media outlets. PRIME MINISTER WARNED PARTY HAS ‘LAST CHANCE’ TO CHANGE Starmer won one of the largest parliamentary majorities in modern British history in 2024 with promises to expand the economy, lower illegal immigration, and cut waiting lists in the state-run health service. However, progress has been hampered by policy U-turns, perceptions among some in his party that he is unwilling to take difficult decisions, and a series of political scandals, contributing to some of the lowest approval ratings of any British prime minister. Acknowledging that his government had sometimes failed to deliver the change that voters wanted, Starmer will say “people need hope” and that he is ready to “face up to the big challenges” Britain faces, according to the speech excerpts. The pressure on Starmer increased after his former deputy prime minister, Angela Rayner, warned on Sunday in a rare intervention that the Labour Party may be facing its “last chance” to change direction. Another Labour lawmaker, Catherine West, a little-known former junior minister, over the weekend called on the cabinet to oust the prime minister. She warned that, if it fails to do so by Monday, and she is unhappy with the contents of the prime minister’s speech, she would attempt to trigger a leadership contest herself. POLITICAL TURMOIL HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES OF GOVERNING BRITAIN But the Labour Party has never removed one of its prime ministers in its more than 125-year history. Under the party rules, it would take 20% of the parliamentary party, or 81 lawmakers, to announce they were backing a single candidate to trigger a leadership challenge. So far, none of those who are considered Starmer’s main potential rivals have moved against him. One of the favourites to replace Starmer, Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, is not a member of parliament and cannot stand against him. The threat to Starmer’s premiership, less than two years after his election victory

What makes West Bengal’s brand of political violence unique? An Expert Explains



The killing of a close aide of BJP leader and West Bengal Chief Minister-designate Suwendu Adhikari near Kolkata on Wednesday night was the latest chapter in the decades-long cycle of political violence in the state. That this happened despite the presence of a record number of security force personnel present to monitor and prevent post-poll violence in Bengal only seems to highlight its persistence. Biswanath Chakraborty, professor of political science at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, spoke to The Indian Express about the nature and roots of such violence, what makes it different from that in other states, and what needs to change for it to end.

Political violence is not unique to West Bengal: there have been instances in other states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala, among others. What makes Bengal different? In other states, we often notice that caste violence, religious violence, (and) identity involvement are there, and politics comes later on. But here, it starts from political rivalry and nowadays, it has started turning into identity politics. This is the difference. In West Bengal, political violence is structural and it is everyday violence, unlike other states. Political violence was basically ideological in earlier days — during the early Left period in the 1950s and 1960s. But during the Left regime of 34 years, political violence was used strategically to ensure party dominance against the opposition. During Trinamool Congress rule, it became a structural phenomenon, and secondly, it turned from ideological and political orientation to economic orientation. So, TMC uses political violence to control local resources. That is why both inter-party and intra-party violence have been observed during the TMC regime.

How do you define political violence in West Bengal?

Whatever violence is related with politics, or when political leaders and cadres are involved in different forms of conflict, is called political violence. Under this definition, there are different forms and categories of political violence in West Bengal. Sometimes, mental violence, physical torture, and political murder also comes under political violence. Rape has also been allegedly used as a form of political violence to suppress the opposition. Verbal violence, too: if you attend any political rally in West Bengal, particularly during elections, you will find that political leaders use violent language directed against opponents. In that way, they create mental pressure on the opposition.

What are the roots of such violence and how has its trajectory evolved over time?

There are three or four roots of violence in West Bengal. First of all, during the colonial period in West Bengal, the Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar Samiti, and other organisations wanted to overthrow British rule through violence. So, we nurtured violence against colonial rulers through such organisations. Even Subhas Chandra Bose wanted to overthrow British rule using a counter-military organisation. So, violence was very much part of Bengal politics during the freedom struggle.

After independence, when West Bengal became a state, Congress ruled for more than 13 or 14 years. During the initial stage, the [undivided] Communist Party of India (CPI) was the principal opposition party. Up to 1955, they believed in armed struggle and wanted to overthrow the government through armed struggle — that is why they were banned at times. After the ban was removed, they accepted parliamentary democracy, though they still believed violence had a role in politics. The way they organised mass movements against the Congress government in the 1950s and 1960s involved violence in one movement after another. There were many incidents during the Food Movement [1959 uprising against the then Congress government owing to acute food shortages, hoarding, and high prices] and protests against fare hikes. So, there were many instances when the CPI, the communists, and the Left believed in violence against the government and exercised violence in state politics. The ruling Congress party also used counter-violence through the police administration and party workers. So, violence and counter-violence always remained constant factors in West Bengal politics. During the 1970s, there was the extreme Left group that broke away from the CPI(M), known as the Naxals. They started the Naxalite movement against landlords, intellectuals, and what they called bourgeois classes, and openly declared armed struggle. Mass killings started. After that, when [Congress

leader] Siddhartha Shankar Ray became Chief Minister, he also used police force against the Naxals as counter-violence. But electoral political violence started in West Bengal during the 1972 Assembly elections, when rigged elections first began in the state. After that, in 1977, there was a genuine election, but after five years of Left rule they also started using rigging and election violence. TMC later expanded this violence to an unbelievable scale. If you look at the last three panchayat elections (2013, 2018, and 2023), a large number of people died. Opposition candidates were denied the right to file nominations. Voters' rights were denied. In the 2023 panchayat election, more than 100 people died, hundreds were injured, and many houses and private properties were destroyed.

Even after the 2021 Assembly election, which was conducted by the Election Commission, there was post-election violence. There was a National Human Rights Commission inquiry. After hearings, the Kolkata High Court ordered a CBI inquiry into the post-election violence, but the CBI failed to arrest many of those directly involved or accused of instigating the violence. So, violence is a very useful weapon for Bengal politicians to win and suppress people.

What triggers this form of violence? And how does it manifest in Bengal's everyday life?

Manifestation is in the form of extraction of money. Local politicians use their boys to extract money from shopkeepers, street vendors, and rickshaw pullers. If the opposition organises any programme, rally, or function, immediately the ruling party disrupts the programme. They beat opposition members. If there is any conflict between two families, political parties intervene and create a kind of kangaroo court to decide who is right or wrong. Through these kangaroo courts, they earn money from both conflicting parties. There are different forms: beating opponents, giving verbal threats, threatening to kill someone, throwing bombs. The important thing is that the administration often remains silent.

The main reason for violence is that whoever comes to power politicises the administration at a very high level. Mamata Banerjee personalised the administration. In West Bengal, the administration no longer maintains even a minimum separation between politics and administration — they have become so mixed that it is very difficult for opponents or anyone outside the ruling party to get justice if they are victimised. Even if you go to court, ruling party cadres may come to your home and threaten you further. Another reason is that execution of court orders is very weak in West Bengal. The ruling party often controls lower institutions in one way or another. At the same time, a large section of the media is not free to raise violence-related issues. There is also social tolerance of violence. People often believe the ruling party has the right to exercise violence over the opposition. That is why I say violence is an everyday phenomenon in Bengal. During the Left regime, violence was strategic. Whenever needed, it was used to suppress the opposition. But during the TMC regime, violence shifted from ideological and political motives to economic motives — mainly extraction of money.

After the BJP's victory in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed for "badlaa nahi, badlaav" (change, not revenge). He appeared to echo what Mamata Banerjee herself had said upon coming to power in 2011 after 34 years of Left rule. Yet, the cycle of violence persisted. What needs to change for this to end? First of all, you have to establish the rule of law. You need political will. There has been an absence of rule of law in West Bengal for a long period. Second, depoliticisation of the administration is necessary. In parliamentary democracy, politics and administration should work together at the upper level, but at the grassroots level — municipalities, wards, local governance — everything is determined by politics. We have a political society. Why should everything be determined by politics? Third, we need jobs. Why are people getting involved in violence? Because many people have no work and depend on political leaders for livelihood. I cannot engage in violence because I have a job. If you provide employment, then people will not involve themselves in political violence or work for leaders. Leaders use these boys for political gain because they have no jobs.

You also need to build public trust that this vicious cycle of violence can end. Mamata Banerjee promised change and people believed her, but in practice she used violence even more extensively than the Left. She ensured continuity of her regime through violence and by using criminals in society in a way similar to what other regional leaders did in UP and Bihar. So, the ruling party has to show political commitment, and it must repeatedly show that it is against violence. That is how change can come in West Bengal. TMC supporters can claim that Bengal hasn't seen the kind of mob lynching or bulldozing of houses as in other states. Would you say it has been successful in curbing another kind of violence?

Love mangoes, watermelon and litchis? A doctor explains how much summer fruit is too muchDr Saptarshi Bhattacharya



The Indian summer arrives with a bounty. Mango stalls overflow, watermelon vendors line every corner and litchi season brings its own sweetness. In many Indian homes, large mixed fruit platters become part of daily eating during the hotter months. For people living with diabetes, obesity, fatty liver disease, or even those trying to maintain weight, this seasonal abundance carries a familiar question: how much fruit is too much?

The concern is not that fruits are unhealthy. Summer fruits provide fibre, vitamin C, carotenoids, potassium and hydration. The issue is quantity, timing and combination. Fruits contain fructose, a natural sugar that behaves differently from glucose but can still add significantly to calorie intake when consumed excessively. In large amounts, fructose increases the metabolic load on the liver, contributes to fatty liver disease, raises triglycerides, and worsens insulin resistance. Whole fruits are far better than juices because their fibre slows absorption, but even healthy foods can become problematic when portions are excessive. Mango is a calorie-dense fruit, with a medium Alphonso or Dasheri weighing 200 grams yielding about 28 grams of carbohydrate and 120 calories. Its glycaemic index (a measure of how quickly foods raise blood sugar levels compared to pure glucose) sits in the medium range, but the load adds up quickly when more than one fruit is eaten. For a person with diabetes, about half a medium mango, roughly four to five thin slices or around 100 grams of flesh, is usually reasonable in a day. For individuals without diabetes, one small to medium mango can generally fit comfortably into a balanced diet. The better approach is to consume mango as a snack rather than immediately after lunch or dinner, and preferably pair it with some protein or healthy fat such as nuts, unsweetened curd, roasted chana or paneer. This slows glucose absorption and improves satiety. What should be avoided are mango shakes, aamras, juices, or eating several mangoes through the day simply because they are seasonal. Watermelon often creates confusion because it is mostly water and relatively low in calories. While its glycaemic index is high, the actual glycaemic load (a measure of how much food will raise a person's blood glucose level after eating a certain portion) per serving is modest. The real problem is that people rarely stop at one serving. Large bowls disappear quickly because the fruit feels light and refreshing. One cup of cubed watermelon weighing about 150 grams carries around 45 calories. For a person living with diabetes, about 100 to 150 grams once daily usually works reasonably well, preferably as a mid-morning or evening snack. Others can generally have up to 200 grams

at a time. Watermelon juice, however, is far less healthy because the fibre is removed and the sugar load becomes concentrated.

Litchi deserves more caution Each fruit packs concentrated fructose, and ten litchis contain about 100 calories with 25 grams of sugar. A person without diabetes can usually consume seven to eight litchis safely in a sitting, while someone living with diabetes should ideally restrict intake to three or four. Again, pairing with nuts or paneer helps moderate the glucose rise There is a separate point worth knowing. Unripe litchi contains hypoglycin A, which has been linked to encephalitis outbreaks among undernourished children in Bihar who ate the fruit on empty stomachs. Ripe fruit eaten after a meal is safe, but children should not graze on litchi instead of dinner. Papaya and peaches

Ripe papaya, often the third fruit on a summer platter, carries about 40 calories per 100 grams and a moderate glycaemic index. It is gentler than the others, and 150 to 200 grams a day is reasonable for most people, half that for someone with diabetes. But even papaya contributes carbohydrates, and the mistake is often not the fruit itself but adding it on top of several others in the same sitting. Plums and peaches are increasingly finding their way into urban Indian fruit baskets during summer. Both are relatively moderate in calorie content and usually safer choices when consumed in sensible quantities. Someone living with diabetes can generally consume one medium peach or two small plums in a sitting, while others can take roughly double that quantity. These fruits contain fibre and tend to produce a slower glucose rise compared with fruit juices or concentrated desserts.

What about a mixed fruit platter?

A typical bowl containing mango, watermelon, papaya, muskmelon and litchis may appear healthy, but together they can deliver the carbohydrate equivalent of two chapatis or a large bowl of rice. Most people would hesitate to eat that much starch as a snack, yet they consume it comfortably when presented as fruit. The issue is not variety itself. The issue is assuming that fruit is a "free food" category where portions do not matter. If several fruits are being eaten together, the total quantity should still roughly equal one serving rather than separate servings of each fruit. A person living with diabetes could take two small mango slices, two cubes of watermelon, a few cubes of muskmelon, and two litchis together, keeping the total quantity around 100 grams. Someone without diabetes can roughly double that amount. Variety creates the feeling of abundance even when portions remain controlled. Timing also matters. Fruits are generally better consumed between meals rather than immediately after a heavy rice or roti-based meal. Eating large fruit bowls late at night is another common mistake because glucose handling worsens later in the day. Wherever possible, fruit intake should be shifted toward the first half of the day. A practical summary for one summer day- Mango: half a medium fruit (about 100 g) for a person with diabetes, a whole small to medium fruit (150 to 200 g) for others

Hantavirus outbreak sees 2 Indians quarantined in Netherlands: Why the virus’s long incubation matters



The two Indian crew members on board the hantavirus-affected ship, MV Hondius, have been evacuated to the Netherlands where they will be quarantined, according to the Embassy of India in Madrid. All individuals on-board the ship, which was at the centre of a hantavirus outbreak, disembarked from the ship and reached Spain on Sunday.

"The passengers onboard disembarked from the ship, in accordance with the protocol established by the WHO and Spanish authorities.... As informed by the Spanish National Centre for Emergency Monitoring and Coordination (CENEM), the two Indian nationals who were travelling as crew members, have been evacuated to the Netherlands where they will be quarantined," the communication from the Indian Embassy in Spain said. Hantavirus is a rodent-borne infection that can be transmitted to humans through contact with the urine, faeces, or saliva of infected rodents or by touching contaminated surfaces. It is also possible to get the infection by breathing air that contains viral particles stirred up from these droppings. According to the current information available from the WHO, shared by health ministry officials in the meeting, there are eight probable cases of the infection on the vessel. Of these, five have been confirmed with laboratory tests. And, three deaths have been reported so far. The WHO was notified about the incident in the first week of this month.

Is the long incubation period of the virus a matter of concern?

The hantavirus outbreak has raised concern, particularly because of the virus's relatively long incubation period and its potential severity in some patients. However, infectious disease experts stress that the overall public health threat remains low. "Hantavirus is not a newly emerging pathogen but an old, well-studied family of viruses that has circulated in rodent populations for decades. It is primarily a zoonotic infection, meaning it spreads from infected rodents to humans, usually through inhalation of viral particles from rodent urine, droppings or saliva, especially in enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces such as cabins, storage compartments or other closed environments," says Dr Neha Mishra, HOD and consultant, Infectious Diseases, Manipal Hospital, Bengaluru. The symptoms may not appear immediately after exposure. The incubation period can range from one to eight weeks, with most people who develop illness showing symptoms within two to six weeks of exposure. This delayed manifestation means people, who may have been exposed, need to monitor themselves for symptoms over several weeks rather than expecting immediate illness. "This is why quarantine and active health surveillance are often recommended after confirmed exposure, even if the people feel well initially," says Dr Mishra.

If a patient manifests symptoms after six to eight

weeks, will the infection be mild or severe?

The incubation period mainly reflects how long the virus takes to replicate enough to trigger noticeable illness. "A slower onset doesn't reliably predict a milder or more severe course. The more important issue is what happens after symptoms begin. Once symptomatic hantavirus disease starts, particularly Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, it can worsen rapidly over 24–48 hours, progressing from what looks like a flu-like illness (fever, muscle aches, fatigue) to cough, breathlessness, low blood pressure, and respiratory failure. It can also lead to Haemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS) that causes sudden fever with intense headaches and nausea initially followed by low blood pressure, renal failure and internal bleeding. So if someone develops symptoms even at week six or eight, they need prompt evaluation, especially if there was known rodent exposure or they were part of an exposure event like the MV Hondius," explains Dr Mishra.

What triggers the severity of infection?

According to Dr Mishra, this depends on the kind of hantavirus strain involved, with some being more aggressive than others. "Other than that, we must know the viral exposure level (how much virus the person was exposed to), the person's overall health and underlying conditions, especially lung, kidney, or cardiovascular function and how quickly medical care begins once symptoms appear," she adds.

What about person-to-person transmission?

Despite concerns, person-to-person transmission is extremely rare. Most hantavirus strains do not spread between humans. "The only well-documented exception is the Andes strain reported in parts of South America, where transmission has occurred after prolonged close contact with a symptomatic patient. There is no evidence that asymptomatic individuals transmit the virus. This means that routine contact with someone under observation does not usually pose a significant risk," says Dr Mishra. Even the flight attendant, who was flagged for observation and testing because of possible exposure to a woman from the affected ship with an advanced stage of the disease, was found to be negative. Mortality varies depending on the strain, but severe forms affecting the lungs or kidneys can have fatality rates ranging from 30 to 50 per cent, particularly in people with underlying organ disease.

What about testing?

Testing is usually done through serology-based antibody tests, which detect the body's immune response to the virus. "Screening asymptomatic individuals immediately after exposure is often not helpful because antibodies may not yet be detectable. Instead, current international travel medicine protocols recommend symptom monitoring and prompt testing only if symptoms develop," says Dr Mishra.

What about treatment?

There is currently no specific antiviral treatment approved for routine hantavirus infection. "Management is largely supportive and depends on early recognition. Patients may require oxygen support, intensive care monitoring, dialysis if kidney involvement develops, and aggressive management of complications," says Dr Mishra. This is why experts emphasise immediate medical evaluation for anyone who develops fever, body aches, severe fatigue, headache, abdominal symptoms or breathlessness within six weeks of potential exposure.

Daniel Weber says without wife Sunny Leone ‘everything falls apart’ for him and their kids

Mumbai: On the occasion of Mother's Day, actress Sunny Leone's husband Daniel Weber penned a heartfelt note for her, stating how 'everything falls apart' in his life without her. He wrote, "Happy mothers @sunnyleone . I might not always say it and the kids might not understand it but without you, it all falls apart !! Thank you for being the greatest mama to @nishakweber @ashersweber11 @noahsinghweber11 and thank you for being you !! We love you sooooo much."

The pictures shared by Daniel captured many of their intimate family moments. In one picture, Sunny is seen sitting with all three children, holding them close. Another adorable click shows one of their sons taking tiny steps around the house while his siblings play in the background. In another touching picture, Sunny is seen holding one of her twin son's in her arms while planting a gentle kiss on his



cheek. Daniel and Sunny have often spoken about the importance of family in their lives. The couple, who got married in 2011, are parents to three children, daughter Nisha Kaur Weber and twin sons Asher Singh Weber

and Noah Singh Weber. Sunny and her husband Daniel Weber adopted Nisha in 2017 when she was just over a year old. In 2018, the couple welcomed their twin boys, Asher and Noah, through surrogacy. On the

professional front, Sunny was last seen in Anurag Kashyap's Kennedy.

She was also seen hosting the reality show Spitsville, it being her 10th year hosting the reality show.

A regime of suspicion



In 1994, residents of Greater Bombay in Maharashtra and those of Paharganj and Matia Mahal in Delhi found their names deleted from the electoral rolls. The apparent reason was the respective electoral registration officers' suspicion that they were non-citizens and therefore ineligible to vote. When the matter reached the Supreme Court, a three-judge Bench said such suspicion must be based on material evidence, which ought to have been furnished to the voters whose names were being deleted, along with an opportunity to be heard.

Most important, in its 1995 judgment in Lal Babu Hussein, the Supreme Court held that if the names of such persons were included on the electoral rolls in the previous election, it would ordinarily imply that due verification had taken place prior to their inclusion. This presumption arose from the court's trust that official acts carried out under provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 were regularly performed. The 1994 instance was a limited malaise, targeting approximately 1.67 lakh individuals in specific pockets of Greater Bombay and a few polling stations in Delhi. Thirty-one years later, the Election Commission appears to be re-enacting this practice, but on a different scale in Bihar, just ahead of the Assembly election. The commission's order dated June 24, 2025 mandates that all voters enrolled after 2003 submit proof of Indian citizenship, without any specific allegation or evidence of impropriety. Even more discomforting is that the justification offered is not suspicion of infiltration or fraud but merely that "significant change in electoral rolls has taken place" over the past two decades. Upon widespread criticism of the move, while the Election Commission has emphasised that individuals whose names were included on the 2003 electoral rolls would only need to submit an extract thereof, the reality is that a significant number of voters were enrolled after 2003. These individuals are now being asked to submit proof of their birth in India. Moreover, anyone born after 1987 is required to furnish proof of their parents' citizenship as well. For example, a person born in the 1990s would not have been included on the 2003 electoral rolls, but may have been included on subsequent rolls. Even such a person would now be required to submit proof of citizenship as his previous inclusion is being ignored.

In effect, the Election Commission is undermining its own electoral rolls and elector photo identity cards (EPICs) issued since 2003 — documents that have been used in five Lok Sabha and as many Assembly elections in Bihar, not to mention multiple byelections. The implication is that these official records are no longer considered reliable by the very institution that created them. This institutional self-disavowal is not just bureaucratically absurd — it is unconstitutional in the same breath. Moreover, the commission seems to have forgotten the fact that testing citizenship or requiring proof thereof is not within its statutory remit, making the entire exercise devoid of any statutory backing.

Reclaiming secular politics

The remarks by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar criticising the inclusion of the word "secular" in the Preamble to the Constitution have led to controversy. "Addition of these words in the Preamble during the Emergency signals betrayal of the mindset of the framers of the Constitution," he said. Mr. Dhankar's remarks came in the wake of statements on similar lines by Dattatreya Hosabale, general secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Both have raised questions about the secular nature of the Constitution and most important, the larger structure of Indian politics. In the Constituent Assembly debates, the makers of the Constitution deliberated over varied models of secularism. While they disagreed over which one to subscribe to, the broad political commitment to secularism was unwavering. It was agreed that there shall be no state religion. While accepting that the state should not favour any religion, members like K.M. Munshi believed that India should develop its own secularism and the American "non-establishment clause was inappropriate to Indian condition". This unique conception adopts a flexible approach to the state's relations with religion.

Though the word "secular" was not mentioned in the Constitution, its chief architect, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, suggested that including it in the Preamble was superfluous. He found that the overarching characteristics of the Constitution indicated its secular foundation.

The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion through Article 15. Article 16 mandates that public employment shall not be denied on the ground of religion. Article 25 promises the equal entitlement to "freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion". It also holds that the state is empowered to regulate "economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice". Yet any understanding of rights must not be isolated from political realities. However much strong a Constitution is, it must be held together by a political framework that is robust. Legal scholar Mark Tushnet offers a beautiful exposition of this idea when he says: "The Constitution matters, you're likely to think, because it protects our fundamental rights. The answer I provide here is different: The Constitution matters because it provides a structure for our politics. It's politics, not 'the Constitution', that is the ultimate — and sometimes the proximate — source for whatever protection we have for our fundamental rights." (Why the Constitution Matters, 2010). Therefore, the point is even a secular constitution can be attacked by an unsecular political dispensation, having no regard for protection of our rights. This threat reveals itself not always by strictly breaching the law, but by operating outside the realm of the law. In

Equally alarming is the shifting of the burden of proof. Under the 1950 Act and the 1960 Rules, the standard requirement is a declaration of citizenship by the voter. However, the current exercise demands documentary proof of citizenship. This represents a fundamental departure from the law, and conveniently flips the burden of proof onto the voter. In Lal Babu Hussein, the Supreme Court emphasised that material evidence and an opportunity to be heard must precede any move to question a person's citizenship. Here, however, the presumption is reversed: every voter is treated as a potential non-citizen unless proven otherwise.

This reversal is starkly evident in the commission's June 24 order, which states unambiguously that "the EROs shall treat the electoral roll of 2003 with qualifying date of 01.01.2003 as probative evidence of eligibility, including presumption of citizenship, unless they receive any other input otherwise". This shift in burden is especially problematic because no such requirement exists in the Citizenship Act, 1955. Under Section 3, persons claiming citizenship by birth are not required to make any application or obtain certification to prove their citizenship — unlike those seeking citizenship by registration or naturalisation. The EC's order thus seems to import into the electoral process a regime of suspicion that even the citizenship law does not envisage. Chilling effect

Another concerning aspect of this entire exercise — which demands Herculean compliance in a very short span — is its likely chilling effect on voter participation. In a State like Bihar, which already witnesses low voter turnouts, an exercise like this, coupled with the threat that anyone suspected of being a foreigner will be referred to the competent authority under the Citizenship Act, 1955, will most severely affect the most marginalised and underprivileged. Faced with the prospect of producing documents, engaging with bureaucracy, and being subject to the discretion of a booth-level officer, many may simply opt not to vote at all. Elections must empower citizens. But this exercise flips that ideal: instead of the state proving someone is ineligible to vote, the citizens must now prove they are eligible — a reversal that strikes at the very heart of universal adult franchise. What is unfolding in Bihar can be a cause of concern for those outside Bihar as well. As the June 24 order makes it abundantly clear, the exercise is being undertaken in Bihar in view of the upcoming elections and is actually envisaged for the entire country. If such an exercise — with no statutory backing, no suspicion, and no individualised inquiry — is replicated at the national level, it will amount to mass disenfranchisement by non-inclusion of those failing to submit required documents and by non-participation in the exercise due to the chilling effect it creates. This will normalise distrust toward vast swathes of the population, especially the poor, minorities, and the marginalised — groups that historically have had to struggle for recognition in the democratic process. That such a revision is taking place months before a State election, rather than during the regular annual summary revision cycle under Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, only deepens concerns of constitutional violations and political intent.

The right to vote is a constitutional guarantee, a key facet of India's democratic framework and rooted in the principle of universal adult suffrage. It is not a privilege contingent on paperwork or pedigree, but a core mechanism through which citizens of all walks of life participate in governance and hold the state accountable. By imposing evidentiary burdens on millions of voters without specific allegations or due procedure, the Election Commission's actions in Bihar risk undermining decades of democratic progress. This exercise does not merely revise electoral rolls — it reshapes the relationship between the citizen and the state. It, therefore, sets a dangerous precedent. It is this same exercise of doubting a voter's citizenship without any material that had resulted in the judgment in Lal Babu Hussein. It seems the Election Commission has now found a way to circle around the judgment by not alleging any individual voter to be non-citizen but rather presuming all persons to be potential non-citizens under the garb of an innocuous statement that it is merely revising the rolls and in doing so it must ensure that only citizens are included. This makes the elections in Bihar an example of conditional democracy and not a constitutional one.

the context of secularism, at least three contemporary challenges emerge. The first is selectively criminalising certain actions of the minority communities, Muslims in particular. Alleging illegal encroachment, since 2020, a large number of Muslim houses were demolished in various States. An Amnesty International report documents that "at least 617 people, including men, women, children and older persons, were rendered homeless or deprived of their livelihoods" between April and June 2022 alone. The study was conducted in five States - Assam, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh ruled by the Bhartiya Janata Party and Delhi by the Aam Aadmi Party at the time. (Bulldozer Injustice in India, February 7, 2024). By the time a belated judgment of the Supreme Court was pronounced in late 2024 (In Re: Directions in the matter of demolition of structures), the country had witnessed several years of illegal demolitions. People who have lost their houses still await compensation and the government officials who ordered and led the demolitions remain unaccountable. Attempts to seek compensation against the state are likely to be met with questions of proof and problems of delay. In these instances, even while statistics show the targeting of minority communities, matters get complicated by the difficulty in proving discrimination. The story of illegal demolitions reminded how conveniently can an aggressive executive enforce collective punishment, by escaping the rigour of the law. The second challenge is targeting of certain religions in state policy. The anti-conversion laws promulgated in various States showed that members of certain communities were penalised more than the others, though the laws appeared neutral. In a sample study conducted in Uttar Pradesh, out of the "love jihad" cases examined, Muslims were accused in all except one. (Article 14, Amrasha Singh, October 13, 2023). The Waqf Act is the latest in this series. It is said that the government did not conduct any effective consultation with the stakeholders. The amendment mandates the inclusion of non-Muslim members in Waqf management. In comparison to Devaswom Boards having only Hindu members, this proposal has raised questions on the government's differential treatment of affairs of one religion. The law requires people to wait for five years of being a practising Muslim to contribute to Wakf. The third is the symbolic assault on secularism. These are reflected in scattered, but clear attempts to disturb the secular fabric. In Kerala, in two different events attended by the Governor, the image of "Bharat Mata" with a saffron flag, a symbol associated with the RSS, was displayed. In fact, the Tricolour was adopted precisely by the Indian Republic to pronounce that the country's democracy assimilates different beliefs and religions.

Fostering a commitment to stop maternal deaths



In childbirth in India, why should 93 women lose their life while one lakh women have a safe delivery? For the time period 2019-21, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) estimate for India was 93, in other words, the proportion of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births, reported under the Sample Registration System (SRS). "Maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes". But the MMR in India has declined over the years — it was 103 in 2017-19, then 97 in 2018-20 and now 93 in 2019-21.

To understand the maternal mortality situation better, States have been categorised into three: "Empowered Action Group" (EAG) States that comprise Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Assam; "Southern" States which include Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu; and "Other" States that cover the remaining States/Union Territories. In the group of "Southern" States, Kerala has the lowest MMR (20) and Karnataka the highest (63). The rest of the data is Andhra Pradesh (46) Telangana (45) and Tamil Nadu (49). In the EAG States, Assam has a very high MMR (167); the rest of the data is Jharkhand (51), and Madhya Pradesh (175). Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand are in the 100-151 range. In the category of "Other" States, Maharashtra is 38 and Gujarat 53; the rest of the data is Punjab 98, Haryana 106 and West Bengal 109. We need to have a differential approach in strategy to reduce maternal deaths in the different clusters of States. In this, addressing three issues is fundamental. There are "three delays" that lead to a mother dying, according to Deborah Maine of Columbia University — I had incorporated this in the training module on 'Safe Motherhood in India' in 1992. Key factors that endanger a life

The first delay is in recognising impending danger and making a decision to rush and seek expert care. The husband and other family members often experience inertia, thinking that all deliveries are a natural process and so the mother-to-be can wait. Or they may not have enough money or other issues at the family level that prevent them from going to a hospital. If the educational level of family members and their financial position are weak, delaying decision making is detrimental. But empowered, neighbourhood mothers and women's self-help-groups have resulted in a remarkable change; no longer is a mother-to-be neglected by lethargic family members. Ever since Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) began networking with Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANM) since 2005 (when the National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) was launched), institutional over home deliveries have become the better option. The financial incentives for the mother and ASHA were the turning point. The second delay is in transportation. From remote rural hamlets and forest settlements or faraway islands it may take many hours, or an overnight journey for a mother-to-be to reach a health facility with a skilled birth attendant (midwife/staff nurse) or a doctor or an obstetrician. Many women die on the way. However, the 108 ambulance system and other Emergency transport mechanisms under the National Health Mission has made a difference. The third delay, an unpardonable one, is in initiating specialised care at the health facility. The excuses are plenty and difficult to

justify — a delay in attending to a woman in the emergency room; a delay in reaching the obstetrician; a delay in getting a blood donor, in laboratory support, the operation theatre not being ready, an anaesthetist not being available is a list that can go on. The concept of the operationalisation of a 'minimum four FRUs [first referral units] per district of two million population, is crucial. The "first level referral unit" with specialists such as an obstetrician, anaesthetist, paediatrician, blood bank and operation theatre was aimed at preventing maternal death at the doorstep of a hospital. Unfortunately, this has not worked out as expected since 1992. There are problems such as 66% vacancies of specialists in 5,491 community health centres out of which 2,856 are supposed to be FRUs in 714 districts. The lack of blood banks or blood storage units in these designated FRUs was another reason for many mothers not receiving adequate blood transfusion within two hours of the onset of massive bleeding after delivery, leading to fatalities. The biggest killer is bleeding after delivery. This could be due to inadequate and timely contraction of an overstretched uterus with a baby of three-kilogram weight floating in amniotic fluids. When the placenta is separated after delivery, the raw opened surfaces of the uterine wall will bleed profusely unless it immediately contracts. From a total reserve of five litres of blood, more than half is lost in such a short duration, resulting in the mother going into shock and death. If there is underlying anaemia, which has not been treated with iron folic acid supplements in pregnancy, it will also result in tragedy. Thus, there is a need for immediate blood transfusion and emergency surgical care.

The next emergency is obstructed labour where the contracted bony pelvis of an already stunted young mother (who is also malnourished and has low body mass index) does not allow the normally grown baby to emerge. Prolonged labour can lead to foetal distress and a lethal rupture of the uterus. This can be avoided by a Caesarean section. Thus, there is a need for a well-equipped operation theatre and obstetrician/ surgeon and an anaesthetist on call. The third medical cause is hypertensive disorders of pregnancy that are not recognised and treated on time. They can result in a dire emergency with convulsions and coma and very little time to medically control high blood pressure. There are some home deliveries by untrained birth attendants which lead to trauma and puerperal infection, resulting in sepsis and death. Antibiotics could have saved their lives, but the patient is admitted to hospital late. A failure of contraceptive devices, resulting in unwanted pregnancies and crude abortion techniques by quacks, also leads to sepsis and death. In EAG States, associated illnesses such as malaria, chronic urinary tract infections and tuberculosis are also high risk factors. The prescription for averting maternal deaths is early registration and routine antenatal care and ensuring institutional delivery. Many of these systemic deficiencies will be highlighted in the mandatory reporting and audit of all maternal deaths under the NHM. While the EAG States have to focus on the implementation of basic tasks, the southern States group and probably Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Gujarat need to fine tune the quality of their emergency and basic obstetric care. The Kerala model of a Confidential Review of Maternal Deaths, initiated by Dr. V.P. Paily, has some analytical leads on how Kerala can further reduce its already low MMR of 20. It is a model other southern States can emulate. The use of uterine artery clamps on the lower segment, application of suction canula to overcome atonicity of the uterus, and a sharp lookout for and energetic management of amniotic fluid embolism, diffused intravascular coagulation, hepatic failure secondary to fatty liver cirrhosis are strategies taught to obstetricians, which even developed countries have yet to practise routinely. They even address antenatal depression and post-partum psychosis as there were a few cases of pregnant mothers ending their life. Finally, if there is a commitment and a will to stop preventable maternal deaths there is no limit to the varieties of proactive interventions. Dr. K.R. Antony is a Public Health Consultant in Kochi, Kerala, and drafted the first Safe Motherhood module for the Ministry of Health on behalf of UNICEF. The writer acknowledges inputs on the Confidential Review of Maternal Deaths in Kerala from Dr. Smithy Sanel, a Spokesperson of the Kerala Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Study probes motive behind destruction of Queen Hatshepsut statues

After the Egyptian pharaoh Hatshepsut died around 1458 BC, many statues of her were destroyed. Archaeologists believed that they were targeted in an act of revenge by Thutmose III, her successor. Yet the condition of the statues recovered in the vicinity of her mortuary temple varies and many survive with their faces virtually intact. Now a new study by archaeologist Jun Yi Wong re-examines the original excavations and offers an alternative explanation. Much of the damage may in fact be from the "ritual deactivation" of the statues and their reuse as raw material. We asked him to explain.

Why was Queen Hatshepsut?

Hatshepsut ruled as the pharaoh of Egypt around 3,500 years ago. Her reign was an exceptionally successful one — she was a prolific builder of monuments, and her reign saw great innovations in art and architecture. As a result, some regard her as one of the greatest rulers — male or female — in ancient Egypt. She has also been described as the "first great woman in history". Hatshepsut was the wife and half sister of pharaoh Thutmose II. Following the premature death of her husband, she acted as regent for her stepson, the young Thutmose III. However, about seven years later, Hatshepsut ascended the throne and declared herself ruler of Egypt.

Why were her statues destroyed?

After her death, Hatshepsut's names and representations such as statues were systematically erased from her monuments. This event, often called the "proscription" of Hatshepsut, is currently part of my wider research. There's little doubt that this destruction began during the time of Thutmose III, since some of Hatshepsut's erased representations were found concealed by his new constructions. The statues that formed the subject of my recently published study were discovered in the 1920s. By this time, Thutmose III's proscription of Hatshepsut was already well known, so it was immediately (and rightly) assumed it was caused during his reign. Some of the broken statues were even found underneath a causeway built by Thutmose III, so there is little doubt that their destruction took place during his reign. Because the statues were found in fragments, early archaeologists assumed that they must have been broken up violently, perhaps due to Thutmose III's animosity towards Hatshepsut. For instance, Herbert Winlock, the archaeologist who led the excavations of 1922 to 1928, remarked that Thutmose III must have "decreed the destruction of every portrait of (Hatshepsut) in existence" and that

every conceivable indignity had been heaped on the likeness of the fallen Queen. The problem with such an interpretation is that some of Hatshepsut's statues have survived in relatively good condition, with their faces virtually intact. Why was there such a great variation in the treatment of the statues? That was essentially the main question of my research.

How did you find the answer?

It was clear that the damage to Hatshepsut's statues was not caused solely by Thutmose III. Many of them were left exposed and not buried, and many were reused as building material. Indeed, not far from where the statues were discovered, the archaeologists found a stone house that was partially built using fragments of her statues. Of course, the question is to what extent these reuse activities added to the damage of the statues. Fortunately, the archaeologists who excavated the statues left behind field notes that are quite detailed. Based on this archival material, it is possible to reconstruct the locations in which many of these statues were found. The results were quite intriguing: statues that are scattered over large areas, or have significant missing parts, tend to have sustained significant damage to their faces. In contrast, statues found in a relatively complete condition typically have their faces fully intact. In other words, statues that were subjected to heavy reuse activities are far more likely to have sustained facial damage. Therefore, it is likely that Thutmose III was not responsible for the facial damage sustained by the statues. Instead, the destruction that he was responsible for was far more specific, namely the breaking of these statues across their neck, waist and knees. This form of treatment is not unique to Hatshepsut's statues.

What does this mean?

The practice of breaking royal statues across their neck, waist and knees is common in ancient Egypt. It's often referred to as the "deactivation" of statues. For the ancient Egyptians, statues were more than just images. For example, newly made statues underwent a rite known as the opening of the mouth, where they were ritually brought to life. Since statues were regarded as living and powerful objects, their inherent power had to be neutralised before they could be discarded. Indeed, one of the most extraordinary discoveries in Egyptian archaeology is the Karnak Cachette, where hundreds of royal statues were found buried in a single deposit. The vast majority of the statues have been "deactivated",

From Gemini, Claude to Llama: How AI titans shaped the industry in 2025



Artificial Intelligence was seen as novelty in 2023 with the launch of ChatGPT just a month before the start of that year. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, after investing \$10 billion in OpenAI, threw down the gauntlet to Google, taunting the DeepMind owner to show what its AI could do. Google tottered with its half-baked Bard bot that spewed out inaccurate answers. In subsequent months, the Alphabet-owned company went through a baptism of fire and finally came out with a rechristened AI, Gemini, by the end of 2023. Building on that momentum, the search giant steadily rebuilt its reputation and began infusing Gemini capabilities in almost all of its products and services in 2024. Google's recent AI advances, including the second generation of Gemini, the Trillium AI accelerator chip, and breakthroughs in quantum computing with the Willow chip, have significantly boosted investor confidence, driving its stock price to a record high.

OpenAI did not give Google's Gemini an easy run. The competition between the two Silicon Valley giants was intense. Both the firms launched advanced AI models with improved reasoning capabilities. OpenAI's o3 model built on top of its predecessor, o1, by focusing on enhanced reasoning skills, outperforming previous models in complex coding and advanced mathematics. Similarly, Google's Gemini 2.0 Flash Thinking model answered complex questions by outlining its thought process, enhancing the model's reasoning capabilities. OpenAI's o3 model, with its advanced reasoning capabilities, garnered more attention from Microsoft as the tech giant relies on OpenAI models for its AI assistant, Microsoft 365 Copilot. While o3 promises better performance, its increased cost and computation time are significant considerations for business applications.

It wasn't just Google's turn-around this year. Product launches and updates from a clutch of other AI companies have, in some instances, stolen OpenAI's thunder this year. Amazon-backed Anthropic upgraded its AI model, Claude 3.5 Sonnet, with a "computer use" capability. That feature enables the AI to autonomously perform tasks such as moving the cursor, typing, and browsing the Internet, effectively automating complex computer interactions. This development aims to enhance productivity, particularly for software developers, by allowing the AI to execute multi-step actions with minimal human intervention. Another area Anthropic made strides this year was in how it implemented safety measures. During the U.S. presidential election, with its Clio tool, it analysed AI usage to ensure responsible AI deployment. In another instance, the AI company allowed the UK's AI Safety Institute to early-test its Claude 3.5 Sonnet model. French AI company Mistral for its part brought in a certain level of transparency in AI with its open-weight models, including Mistral 7B and Mixtral 8x7B, designed for customisation and deployment across various applications. These models were available under open licenses, promoting accessibility and innovation within the AI community. Mistral Large 2, the startup's flagship model, was integrated into IBM's Watsonx platform, offering enhanced capabilities in code generation, mathematics, and reasoning. In November, the France-based startup expanded into the US by establishing an office in Palo Alto, California, a strategic move aimed at attracting top AI talent and enhancing the company's sales operations. Such moves show how Silicon Valley continues to be the epicentre for top tech talent. Mistral AI also collaborated with Qualcomm to bring new generative AI models to devices powered by Snapdragon and Qualcomm platforms, indicating a focus on enhancing AI accessibility and performance in consumer electronics. Meta's LlamaMeta's large language models (LLMs), while quite late to the AI race, aren't far behind. In some ways, Facebook's parent company can be credited for modularizing AI models with its Llama models. In April, Meta released Llama 3, offering models with 8 billion (8B) and 70 billion (70B) parameters. These models were pre-

trained on approximately 15 trillion tokens from publicly available sources, with fine-tuning on over 10 million human-annotated examples. With performance in coding, reasoning, and multilingual support, Llama 3 was positioned by Meta as an open-source AI model.

In July, Llama 3.1 expanded the context windows for the 8B and 70B parameters models. Plus, it also launched a 405 billion (405B) parameter model. In September, Meta introduced Llama 3.2, featuring models with 1B, 3B, 11B, and 90B parameters. This version marked a significant milestone by incorporating multimodal capabilities, allowing the models to process both text and images. Additionally, Llama 3.2 was optimized for deployment on edge and mobile devices, broadening its applicability. Llama models were gradually integrated into Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, enhancing user experiences with AI-driven features like real-time translation and content generation. By the end of 2024, Llama has received a wider adoption with over 650 million downloads, per a company blog, citing downloads from Hugging Face. Meta's Llama and Mistral AI are giving open-source alternative to the OpenAI-style closed source AI models. Open-source models allow a broader audience to engage with AI technology, facilitating collaborative development and rapid innovation. This openness contrasts with the closed nature of proprietary models, which restrict access to underlying code and data. Developers can customise open-source LLMs to specific needs, enhancing versatility across diverse applications. This adaptability is often limited in closed-source models due to proprietary restrictions. While open-source models offer benefits, they may face challenges in matching the performance and specialised capabilities of proprietary systems. Proprietary models often have access to extensive resources and data, enabling them to achieve higher performance in certain tasks. And success in AI is dependent on the kind of data the models are trained in.

Apple intelligence and on-device experienceIn 2024, AI models were increasingly deployed across various devices to bring their capabilities closer to end-users, enhance functionality, and provide real-time experiences. For instance, in smartphones and tablets, Apple's Neural Engine, Qualcomm's Snapdragon AI Engine, and Google's Tensor chipsets were integrated with LLMs and vision models to power various tasks, including voice assistants like Siri and Google Assistant, real-time image processing for photo enhancements and augmented reality, and multimodal AI for speech, text, and image-based queries. Apple's incorporation of AI features into its latest iPhones, such as Visual Intelligence and Image Playground, has revitalised consumer interest, contributing to a significant increase in iPhone sales. This integration has positioned Apple on the brink of becoming the first company to surpass a \$4 trillion market capitalisation. PC manufacturers are fully embracing AI by integrating AI accelerators such as NVIDIA GeForce RTX series GPUs, AMD Radeon chips, and Apple's M-series chips. These accelerators enable generative models and advanced features like AI-powered transcription and video editing tools, enhanced productivity tools, gaming enhancements including real-time ray tracing and AI-driven non-playable characters (NPCs) to run on device. Talent is key

At the core of the current AI revolution lies a dual-engine system. One engine is responsible for training the data, while the other leverages the trained data to make inferences. To effectively operate these engines, hardware resources alone are insufficient. Human expertise plays a crucial role.

This has become a pain point for OpenAI in particular as it has been bleeding top talent this year. A notable departure from the AI giant is co-founder Ilya Sutskever. The company also lost its chief technology officer Mira Murati, and several other leading computer scientists. To make matters worse, some of the departing members are joining rivals. For instance, John Schulman, another OpenAI co-founder, moved to Anthropic. Schulman is a key leader in the creation of ChatGPT. Per a BCG analysis of top skilled labour, AI experts are the most mobile at nearly 11 out of 100 experts moving internationally every five years. So, where they go can make a big difference. Companies and countries that attract the best talent can gain a competitive edge in the tech world. Countries that are open to global talent tend to invent more and grow faster. As countries compete for leadership in AI, their ability to attract top talent is crucial for their success.

Bitcoin crosses \$100k: What are some crypto dangers you should be aware of?



Social media was aflame with euphoria and glee on December 5 as Bitcoin crossed \$100,000 for the very first time, buoyed by investors' hopes in a pro-crypto Trump administration. As Bitcoin's value spiked, other cryptocurrencies and tokens followed suit. During that week, Ripple's XRP surged by almost 50%, TRON's TRX shot up by more than 60%, and Hedera's HBAR rose by a formidable 90%. Meme coins and tokens were also riding high as Elon Musk's DOGE - Department of Government Efficiency - as well as the ticker for the Dogecoin currency, entered the common lingo. Several investors are now wondering whether to enter the buzzing crypto economy, while others are making their first crypto trades to capitalise on the spurt in price. Such a market environment is also filled with dangers. Here are some potential pitfalls and risk factors that every crypto investor should be aware of. Scams

There are countless ways to dupe aspiring crypto investors who want to make a quick buck without bothering to learn about the market. Malicious actors often try to lure in buyers with meme coins that are based on popular cultural references. These tokens can enjoy skyrocketing prices in a matter of hours or days, luring others to buy huge volumes of the token. Soon enough, many investors will realise that their tokens cannot be sold or returned as the makers of those cryptocurrencies will abscond, leaving no trace of their digital footprint. Alternatively, the tokens can be sold normally, but the creators may hold large amounts of the currency themselves; when the prices are high enough, they quickly sell their assets and cash out. This causes the overall market cap of the token to crash, leaving other investors with nearly worthless assets. Hacks While crypto hacks remain an ever-present risk all-year round, hackers and scammers are especially incentivised to try and dupe customers when crypto prices rise high. With Bitcoin crossing \$100k, hackers know that there will be a large pool of new and curious traders who are looking to invest their money. More advanced hackers, including those backed by enemy state regimes, may attack users' wallets or even the wallets maintained by crypto exchanges. On the other end of the spectrum, even amateur hackers may successfully target victims through the use of romantic manipulation (known as pig-butchering scams) on dating apps, fake "airdrops" online, offers of technical help/advice on social media, or phishing emails that contain malware. Many AI chatbots have also simplified the process of generating malicious code or fake messages that can be used to fool crypto investors into giving up their credentials.

Failed currencies Even cryptocurrencies/tokens that were started by trusted teams of technologists and expert traders can fail without reason, wiping off millions or even billions of dollars in value. Now consider that not all cryptocurrencies are helmed by professionals. Crypto tokens on major blockchains can be created by almost anyone, including those who create such assets as a joke or to benefit themselves alone. While non-malicious actors such as influencers or celebrities might promote crypto tokens or take part in ads featuring them, be aware that the person's fame does not necessarily guarantee the success of the cryptocurrency or the token. A case in point is Halley Welch's meme-token HAWK, which references an explicit catchphrase popularised by the internet personality this year. Despite her viral fame, the influencer's token crashed soon after its launch, with several investors planning to take legal action against her. There are also multiple crypto tokens in-

AI can help improve learning outcomes in Indian schools

There are particularly low levels of engagement in learning and education among the vast majority of students in India, according to multiple experts who spoke to The Hindu. Most children fail to do their homework or engage substantively with their course material. This atmosphere creates a unique opportunity for cutting-edge technologies like generative A.I. tools to improve learning outcomes and help students interact positively with their study material, said former Rajya Sabha MP and former BJD party IT and Tech cell head, Amar Patnaik. "A.I. in education is a boon in disguise because it will force and push students to have critical thinking skills and creativity which is sorely lacking in India," said Mr. Patnaik. "The OpenAI study says that A.I. in education could negatively affect students but I think instead that it will make more students interested in learning and therefore school curriculum will need to be changed significantly because of A.I. tools that everyone will and should use," Mr. Patnaik added. Furthermore, some educators say that the technology will force students to learn in a digital-friendly and evidence-based way in the near future.

"A.I. systems can be beneficial in education because the more you put into the prompt, the more you explain your understanding of a problem, the better your answer will be from A.I. tools. So we have to see this as an opportunity for educators to use the technology to get students to engage more on subjects that they're not always interested in," said Mr. Krishnan from IIT Madras. Another potential benefit of A.I. educational tools in India is that they could provide a better, more productive outlet for students to spend their free time, especially in comparison to social media platforms. "With kids spending so much time on their devices and computers, A.I. systems provide a far, far better alternative than social media or other things they do on their devices. It's far more fruitful for students to use fun educational A.I. tools like ours compared to spending an hour on TikTok or Instagram," said Mr. Sharma from Schoolnet. Nevertheless, educators, politicians, and tech executives say that some thoughtful, carefully considered guardrails and regulations will be needed to successfully implement and use the technology in the long run. "Guardrails for A.I. in education to ensure it's accurate, unbiased, and helpful have to be taken seriously because students are our future and we need to ensure that they learn the right way," said Mr. Krishnan. "If you don't expose students to thoughtfully designed generative A.I. educational tools that use a Socratic style and have other checks and balances they will be forced to learn from general A.I. tools and the internet at large which have many existing issues as we know," Mr. Krishnan added. Another challenge is en-

spired by the viral Thai pygmy hippo Moo Deng; many of these have more or less completely crashed shortly after being launched, according to the blockchain statistics on CoinMarketCap. For this reason, crypto investors must invest time in researching the assets they wish to obtain or trade, and study the relevant metrics to assess their health. With Bitcoin hitting \$100k, a number of investors are likely to be bitten by the FOMO (fear of missing out) bug. This means that in an effort to ride the wave of market euphoria while prices last, amateur traders are likely to make sudden or reckless trading decisions they would not have done so otherwise. These investors may buy more than they originally planned, hoping that prices will rise. This is a risky strategy as it could result in inexperienced investors diving into the market without being equipped with the information they need. Others might end up buying/selling crypto on the basis of their emotions, trending headlines, or peer pressure. Some may go far beyond their means and invest such huge sums of money that they can no longer support their or their family's daily expenses. More experienced traders would be able to invest their funds efficiently and carry out both short-term and long-term crypto trades with the help of a carefully calculated plan that aligns with their goals and financial position. As crypto adoption grows, many new investors who enter the market may be ignorant of essential facts such as the blockchain technology underpinning crypto, India's crypto tax regulations, and the legal status of existing crypto exchanges and lending platforms. This puts them in both financial and legal danger. Furthermore, many traders do not carry out their own research before buying assets, but uncritically follow self-styled analysts, finance influencers, or content creators who may be receiving payments to promote highly unstable or even scam-based cryptocurrencies.

New investors may also choose the services of a particular crypto exchange simply because it is popular and based in their own country, instead of choosing an institution that is right for their needs. Many crypto investors also lack basic market skills such as reading candlestick charts, using trading indicators to understand currency movements, analysing and estimating possible price movements, identifying potential scam coins, setting up automatic orders, etc. that are used to maximise profits and reduce losses. Non-technical traders who are new to crypto may also not understand fundamental categories, such as the difference between a coin and a token, the difference between Ether and Ethereum, the difference between Bitcoin and a meme-coin, etc.

Others who wrongly believe that crypto investments can be equated to traditional financial instruments - such as fixed deposits - invest their life savings or family members' pension funds without realising just how quickly these assets can be lost or frozen by their largely unregulated custodians. What crypto investors need to keep in mind India has a tax framework in place for digital/virtual assets that crypto investors must comply with, or risk facing legal action. Even centralised exchanges that declare they are in compliance with Indian laws can stop you from depositing or withdrawing your assets for a range of reasons. Due to the volatility of crypto asset prices, common inconveniences such as a slow internet connection, a frozen computer screen, power cuts, etc. can lead to investors losing huge sums of money if they do not have back-up measures in place. Even scam-based crypto coins and tokens may be listed on reputable price-tracking platforms, causing new investors to mistakenly believe that they are safe and vetted projects. Reporting crypto crimes or hacks is still a long and difficult process in India due to the lack of mainstream knowledge about blockchain technology and how it works. There is currently no official method to certify India-based "influencers" or crypto traders, so advice from such "experts" should be treated with extreme caution. The crypto market is best understood on the basis of its own merits and as a completely different field where science, mathematics, technology, and economics all intersect. It is not advisable to equate it to the traditional stock market



surings that the data collected in India to create and run A.I. tools within the educational sector as well as other fields are appropriately gathered and that students don't blindly follow the output of the technology. "A.I. biases baked into the current data sets are a big issue. So if you're making decisions based on flawed or biased data sets and their corresponding A.I. tools, there will be worse or problematic actions taken," said Mr. Patnaik, the former Rajya Sabha member. "In the Indian context, as a civil servant and public official, I have the experience to know that we cannot create A.I. systems that are built only upon data collected through formal official channels such as government records, consumer purchases, online behavior, etc. because a lot of insights and answers to problems in India come through informal data channels from entities like street vendors, labourers, unskilled workers, and others in informal sectors," Mr. Patnaik added. Although potential A.I. risks to education in India were highlighted in the OpenAI study, major concerns around other prominent use cases of the technology deserve just as much or more attention in the coming months, according to some tech-policy experts like Mr. Krishnan from IIT-Madras and Mr. Patnaik, the former Rajya Sabha member. Mr. Krishnan said he was surprised that the results of OpenAI's risk perception survey didn't highlight threats like the role of A.I. in the military and warfare while Patnaik said he would have expected the study to highlight how the technology could be used negatively or positively to impact climate change. EdTech executives like Mr. Sharma from Schoolnet say that the future of A.I. in education is full of excitement and innovation because of the potential to democratise and scale access to world-class educational tools across India including among the poorest schools and students. "Soon we will have an A.I. avatar or teacher trained on Einstein, Aristotle, Tagore, you know the best of the best, and every student then gets access to a genius teacher," said Mr. Sharma. "

Six essential tech tools and skills that Management students must know

Imagine stepping into a boardroom today, where executives make decisions based not just on instinct or mere experience but on data drawn from complex algorithms and visualised on sleek dashboards. This is no longer a futuristic scenario; it's the reality of the modern business world. While core competencies like leadership and strategy remain essential, proficiency in tech tools is now indispensable for staying competitive and innovative in the job market. Therefore, MBA students need to be well-versed in both traditional and modern tools. Here are six key tech tools and skills that every MBA student should master to thrive in a dynamic landscape. Portfolio Optimisation: In finance and consulting, optimising portfolios is a crucial skill. This goes beyond just theory. MBA students have to be proficient in tools like Tableau and Power BI to analyse and visualise historical market data into actionable insights and be able to identify trends, assess and forecast risks, and make data-informed decisions about asset allocation and create robust financial models. Digital Marketing: The digital economy has transformed how businesses engage with customers. MBA students need to understand digital marketing strategies to reach target audiences and manage brand presence effectively. Mastering tools like Google Analytics, which tracks customer behaviour and website performance, or SEMrush, which offers valuable insights into SEO and competitor tactics, or Hootsuite, which facilitates the efficient management of social media platforms, ensuring consistent brand communication, is essential.

Basic Programming and Data Science: In an era where data fuels business growth, MBA students must know the basics of programming and Data Science. Python helps automate processes, analyse data, and generate predictive models. Widely recognised for its versatility in business applications, it is the go-to programming language for data analysis, automation, and predictive modelling. SQL is indispensable for managing and querying databases. Tools like Jupyter Notebook make writing and sharing code alongside visualisations easier, facilitating collaboration with data science teams. Entrepreneurial Experience: Today, B-schools emphasise entrepreneurship, encouraging students to develop business ideas. With the rise of incubators and venture capital funding, MBA students increasingly gain



hands-on experience in launching start-ups. Platforms like Kickstarter and Y Combinator provide valuable ecosystems for students looking to pitch ideas, develop products, and gain hands-on experience developing revenue-generating businesses even while they study. This allows them to apply classroom knowledge in a real-world setting and equips them with practical skills in leadership, product development, and market strategy. Business Performance Optimisation: A successful business requires more than a great idea; it demands efficient operations and strategy alignment across all departments. Many MBA programmes incorporate real-world projects where students analyse a company's operations in areas like financial accounting, marketing, and operations management.

ERP systems — such as SAP and Oracle — are widely used to streamline processes and improve operational efficiency. Familiarity with such tools can help optimise performance, whether by improving workflows, managing resources, or driving profitability. Leveraging Tech and AI: As businesses increasingly turn to automation and AI, MBA students must learn how to leverage these technologies to enhance efficiency and streamline operations. Tools like Zapier allow users to automate routine tasks while AI-driven platforms, such as chatbots, transform customer service by providing fast, efficient solutions to customer inquiries. A PwC report stated that that AI can potentially increase business productivity by 40% by 2035.

No health without skin health: a global call to end skin bleaching and prioritise dermatological equity



World Skin Health Day asks the world to reconsider what we see and what we choose not to see. Skin, the body's largest organ, is also its most visible and most vulnerable. It is both a physical barrier and a mirror of health, dignity and social belonging. Yet, despite its profound role in our well-being, skin health is routinely side-lined in global health agendas. In 2025, the message of World Skin Health Day is clear and urgent: #NoHealthWithoutSkinHealth.

This year's campaign builds on a historic achievement: the 78th World Health Assembly passed a landmark resolution officially recognising skin diseases as a public health priority. "The resolution is the result of years of work by ministries of health and the dermatological community," says Esther Freeman, director of global health dermatology at Harvard Medical School. "Skin disease touches so many areas, infectious diseases, neglected tropical diseases, even cancer. Its inclusion signals long-overdue recognition." "What this means for patients is greater visibility, better funding, and stronger policy support," she adds. "It opens the door to cross-sectoral partnerships and the integration of dermatology into broader health systems." But recognition is just the beginning. One of the most urgent and visible challenges facing dermatologists today is the global crisis of skin bleaching and this year, International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) has taken a bold next step. The International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) represents over 200 dermatological societies across the globe. The World Skin Health Day is a joint initiative by the ILDS and the International Society of Dermatology (ISD). These societies collectively include more than 2,00,000 dermatologists, serving an estimated 4–5 billion people worldwide - particularly when accounting for both direct clinical care and public health outreach. Together, they work to elevate skin health on the international stage, advocate for underserved populations, and influence policy at institutions like the World Health Organization. The campaign is more than symbolic - it aims to unite clinicians, researchers, public health professionals, patients and policymakers in recognising that healthy skin is not a luxury, but a fundamental part of human health. Globally, more than 1.8 billion people live with at least one skin disease, making skin conditions one of the most common human health problems. Conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, acne, infections, leprosy, pigmentary disorders, and skin cancers cut across age, geography, and social status. But their visibility often brings stigma, especially when access to treatment is limited.

"Skin diseases are among the most visible and stigmatised conditions worldwide, yet they continue to be sidelined in the global health agenda," says Rashmi Sarkar, director and professor of dermatology, Lady Hardinge Medical College, Delhi and Regional Director of ILDS (Asia, Middle East and Africa). "You cannot speak of health equity while ignoring the skin. Skin health is not cosmetic- it is central to mental wellbeing, quality of life, and social inclusion." Building on the World Health Assembly resolution, the ILDS, in a new resolution, is calling for urgent global action against skin bleaching - a dangerous and deeply-rooted practice affecting communities across Africa, Asia, South America and

the Caribbean. The dangers of skin bleaching

Skin bleaching is not about beauty. It is a symptom of something much deeper," says Prof. Sarkar. "It stems from systemic colourism, colonial histories, and socio-cultural messaging that equate lighter skin with success, desirability, and access. These narratives are reinforced every day - on screens, in advertisements and even, at times, in clinical spaces." "People often use bleaching products in an attempt to lighten or 'brighten' their skin tone, unaware of the serious risks involved. Many of these products contain potent steroids, hydroquinone, mercury and other heavy metals. These substances can severely compromise the skin barrier, leading to conditions like exogenous ochronosis, steroid-induced acne, skin thinning, and even systemic toxicity. "The creams may seem harmless, even helpful at first glance," explains Prof. Sarkar, "but they can cause irreversible damage—both physically and psychologically. And because many are self-compounded or sold through informal channels, their safety is not regulated at all." "This isn't just a women's issue. "We are now seeing increasing numbers of young men using skin-lightening products," she adds. "Social media pressures, dating preferences, and workplace discrimination are pushing men toward the same harmful practices. Skin bleaching cuts across gender, age, geography, and economic background. It is a full-blown public health crisis." Prof. Sarkar has worked with partners across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to bring global attention to this issue. The Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL) has also played a pivotal role, making awareness about steroid misuse, skin bleaching and its consequences a national campaign priority. "This year's World Skin Health Day is not just about telling people to stop using creams. It's about re-writing the story," she says. "We must educate people that the skin they have is the skin they're meant to have. Darker skin is not a flaw - it is functional, protective and beautiful. We need to challenge the very idea that lighter is better."

The new ILDS resolution is a call for cross-sectoral action. Dermatologists cannot fight this alone. "We need public health leaders, media influencers, government regulators, educators, and people from all walks of life to join us," she urges. "Because it's not enough to just treat the damage - we must prevent it, by shifting both culture and policy." Prof. Sarkar emphasises that skin health is often a window into systemic health. "The skin is where we first see signs of malnutrition, HIV, diabetes, autoimmune disease - especially in low-resource settings. If we ignore the skin, we miss crucial opportunities for early diagnosis and care." In her work across countries, she has seen first-hand how lack of dermatological training and access creates wide inequalities in care. "We need dermatology included in national health programmes, greater investment in training, research and especially in regulation of harmful products. But more than anything, we need compassion," she says. "Every person deserves care, regardless of the colour of their skin."

More than a medical campaign As the world marks World Skin Health Day 2025, Prof. Sarkar reminds us that this is more than a medical campaign, it is a movement. Clinics around the world will host free skin health consultations, school programmes, and community awareness drives. Social media will share stories of real people who've lived with the stigma, damage and courage to reclaim their skin. Later this year, the ILDS will convene the 4th World Skin Summit in Cape Town, where leaders from over 80 countries will gather to discuss how to make skin care more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable. "Our message is clear," says Prof. Sarkar. "We cannot keep skin health at the margins. If we truly want universal health coverage, dignity in care and equity in public health - then skin must be part of the conversation." She concludes: "What is visible is not always seen. Until we see the skin and the people who live in it, there can be no health for all."

Punugulu, mirchi bajji, masala vada are the best snacks for a rainy day in Hyd



Hyderabad's chilly winds and sudden rain spells make the perfect backdrop for craving something deep-fried and local. Think crisp, golden snacks with just the right hit of chilli — flavourful enough to warm you up, but not so spicy that you skip your hot cuppa. If you love crunchy bites, you might end up frying some at home. But if cooking is not your thing, just order in or head to your go-to bajji joint.

Punugulu: These bite-sized dollops of idli-dosa batter are fried till golden brown and impossible to stop at just one. That slight tang from the fermented batter is your excuse for going in for seconds (or thirds). Let the gut-health benefits of fermentation ease your guilt as you bite into these crunchy, oily little devils.

Mirchi Bajji: In Hyderabad, this is not just a snack, it is practically a celebration. From wedding menus to desi-themed high teas, the mirchi bajji makes an appearance with pride. Street-side or served on silver trays, it remains a firm local favourite. Made using banana chilies, which are quite mild, the seeds are scooped out and the inside is filled with a salty, tangy mixture that balances the gentle heat. Then, it is dipped in a thick besan batter and fried till golden and crisp. Honourable mentions go to its bajji cousins: alu bajji (potato) and aratikaya bajji (raw banana), also deep-fried and delicious. **Masala Vada:** This holeless vada is hearty, humble, and hard to resist. Made by coarsely grinding soaked split chickpeas (Bengal gram) and sometimes a bit of toor dal with spices, the batter is shaped into flat discs and deep-fried. Sounds simple enough, but the secret to that perfect crunch lies in slow frying over a low flame, with constant stirring. The result is a golden shell that is crisp on the outside and soft, almost fluffy, within. **Patti Samosa:** This is a snack that needs no season, or reason. But when it rains, Hyderabad's tea stalls start filling up with samosa loyalists, especially those chasing the onion-filled kind. Unlike the samosas (or singaras) loved in the north and east, the Hyderabad patti samosa is its own thing. Its name comes from the thin dough strips — patti — used to wrap the caramelised onion filling into crisp, triangle-shaped



bites. Pro tip: The non-vegetarian version, packed with spiced minced meat, is a local favourite among seasoned snackers.

Innovators of TiHAN at IIT-Hyderabad develop heavy payload drone to use as air ambulance

Sangareddy: Getting ambulances stuck in traffic in Indian cities may soon become a thing of the past as innovators at Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) have developed an air ambulance that can carry road accident victims and seriously ill persons to hospitals in the least possible time. The Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation Foundation (TiHAN) at IIT-H, which has been working on developing driverless vehicles and advanced technology drones, has now developed a heavy payload drone that can be used as an ambulance. The ambulance will be an autonomous vehicle that can reach from one point to another without any operational help from humans. It can carry up to 200 kgs of payload. It can also be used as an air cargo vehicle and as an air taxi in metro cities. The drone can also be used in rescue operations during natural disasters like floods, fire accidents and even during wars. The innovators have named the drone Palyanka, a Sanskrit word synonymous with palanquin. Since the Palyanka was used to carry queens in ancient times, Hub Executive Officer Dr Santosh Reddy said they chose a name from Sanskrit that reflects ancient Indian culture. He said TiHAN's Technical Officer Dr Shyam Narayana suggested the name. Since the timely shifting of injured persons in road accidents or those who are seriously ill is crucial to saving lives,

The free fall of moral leadership



In an era of global conflicts and democratic decline, the question of political leadership in the democratic world has acquired a heightened significance. Intensified rivalries in several parts of the world represent a failure of leadership. The unconscionable ambivalence of world leaders in standing up for principle over expediency, and their abject surrender to hegemonic power, speaks for itself. The tragedies of Ukraine, Gaza, and the Israel-Iran conflict show the ravages of war caused by the insolence of power, untamed by humanitarian interdicts. Justice above raw power

Despite the fragile ceasefire brokered by U.S. President Donald Trump from a position of overarching military superiority, the footprints of these hostilities will remain visible symbols of an oppressive exercise of military power that has taken thousands of innocent lives. Those responsible for the catastrophe have clearly forgotten the abiding lesson of history that people carrying a festering wound in their souls find closure only when injustice is avenged. Lasting peace in West Asia will remain hostage to an indelible sense of injustice and moral outrage. It is, therefore, imperative to foster leadership that values justice above raw power. In the deeply distressing trans border conflicts that have driven the world perilously close to a global war, the moral and intellectual impoverishment of the principal actors has raised concerns about the failure of contemporary democracies to yield inspiring leadership, answerable to the 'injunctions of conscience'. The pretence of a functional rules-based international order helmed by the United Nations Charter stands demolished yet again, reconfirming the impotence of international law in outlawing the use of force in relations between nations. The illegal invasion of Iraq and parts of Ukraine are no more than footnotes of history. Lessons to learn

But there are lessons to be learned. The world needs leadership, driven by a search for global consensus and subject to the discipline of international law to address the defining challenges of our times, including the settlement of territorial disputes. This is a particularly important reminder for those who claim to lead the democratic world and pronounce the necessity of a credible international legal

On the Golden Dome: how Trump's missile shield tests space law

From golden citadels to divine shields, rulers across time have dreamt of impregnable security. But in every age, these ambitions have either collapsed under their own weight or have provoked greater instability. In 2025, this ancient dream went to orbit. In May, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled a bold new national defence initiative called the "Golden Dome", a \$175-billion space-based missile shield designed to fend off ballistic, hypersonic, and orbital threats. The plan involves deploying a constellation of satellite interceptors, potentially armed with kinetic or directed-energy weapons, to form a protective layer over the U.S. Framed as a defence move, the project has sparked concerns worldwide for its geopolitical ramifications as well as for its implications under international space law. In particular, the Golden Dome challenges the Outer Space Treaty's limits, raises constitutional concerns within the U.S., and puts pressure on key strategic partners such as India. Loophole or legal red line?

At the heart of the legal debate is Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty (OST), 1967. It prohibits placing "nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction" in orbit or stationing them "in outer space in any other manner". It further mandates that celestial bodies shall be used "exclusively for peaceful purposes". The language of Article IV, particularly its explicit focus on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), has created a loophole for conventional weapons in space. The term "peaceful purposes" has been subject to various interpretations, with some nations claiming that it permits all non-aggressive military use, while others insist it implies complete demilitarisation.

The treaty further states: "The establishment of military bases, installations and fortifications, the testing of any type of weapons and the conduct of military manoeuvres on celestial bodies shall be forbidden." The use of military personnel for scientific research or any other peaceful purposes isn't prohibited, however. The use



of any equipment or facility necessary to peacefully explore the moon and other celestial bodies is also not prohibited (Article IV). Because the Golden Dome's interceptors are not classified as WMDs, they don't violate the letter of Article IV per se. There are a few concerns nonetheless. In arms control, the practical outcome must always take precedence over the technical details or official classifications of a weapon. This means what a weapon is called matters far less than its actual strategic effect. For instance, if kinetic interceptors are used to disable or destroy missiles or satellites, their impact could fundamentally alter the balance of power in space. This capability could create a dangerous first-strike advantage for one nation, thereby eroding the principle of mutual deterrence, which relies on the threat of retaliation to prevent an attack. Such a development would undermine the core goal of arms control treaties, which is to foster stability through restraint, and could trigger a significant and destabilising shift in the dynamics of power in outer space. UN General Assembly resolutions under the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) Treaty, while lacking legal enforceability, have successfully established an interpretive norm against the militarisation of space. The deployment of space-based interceptors, therefore, directly threatens this norm and could trigger a cascade of similar actions by other nations.

These systems are plagued by dual-use ambiguity. A kinetic interceptor, ostensibly for missile defence, possesses the inherent capability to be instantly repurposed to neutralise an adversary's vital communication or surveillance satellites. This inherent uncertainty risks inflaming suspicion and driving miscalculation, especially during heightened crises involving major space powers like China and Russia, both of which have already explicitly condemned the proposed deployment. Partners in crossfire

order. Democratic leadership is about walking alone in defence of principle, where necessary. It is about holding on to the truth against all odds and empowering the weak. It is about uniting people in trying times and advancing human dignity by removing disparities. Inspirational leadership is about an unremitting endeavour to create favourable conditions of social and political existence that can optimise the realisation of human potential in an environment of peace and harmony. And as shown in the tortuous process of securing a fragile truce between Israel and Iran, deceit and two-facedness annual leadership. Leadership does not emerge out of a vacuum. As Karl Marx reminded us famously, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please... [they do so] under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.' The French statesman Chateaubriand proclaimed that 'the leader of the nation must be the leader of the times', so that his exertions mirror the aspirations of the people and invest politics with a moral purpose larger than himself. The current global conflicts present an opportunity for democracies to look inwards for correction and to reinforce their appeal.

In defence of justice Indian democracy, which has survived several vicissitudes and a 'thousand mutinies', has been enriched by the exertions and selflessness of several of its towering leaders. They were led by Mahatma Gandhi, who defined for us the meaning of transformative leadership. The Mahatma's promise of politics, impervious to the trappings of power and rooted instead in the moral imagination of the people yearning for freedom and dignity, enabled him to forge a sustainable non-violent struggle against injustice. He accomplished the 'will of his age', defined it for the people, and personified it. As a proud inheritor of the Gandhian legacy of morality-driven politics and drawing strength from its civilisational ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbham', India must stand out in defence of justice everywhere. It must flex its moral muscle for shaping a just world order. Its economic heft, nuclear capabilities, and regional power status should enable India to espouse international morality without compromising its strategic autonomy or without alienating key allies. In these defying times, we must summon our tallest leaders to collectively energise Indian democracy. They must establish the exceptionality of their leadership in the service of national goals and global peace. Our leaders must 'reinforce the tone of modesty', introduce dignity at the centre of political processes, revive the spirit of collegiality, be seen as symbols of hope in times of fracture and fear, and re-purpose their politics beyond the pursuit of raw power. At this juncture of the nation's history, when domestic and external challenges threaten the social accord and disruptive shifts in the power pendulum are testing the societal equilibrium, we need leadership that is strong and compassionate, resolute but conciliatory, and decisive while striving for democratic consensus on critical issues.

participation, and treaty compliance. The Golden Dome is thus more than a U.S. policy issue: it's a litmus test for India's own legal and diplomatic posture and could significantly influence the direction and content of the Space Activities Bill. Less than golden precedent

The broader concern is that the Golden Dome will normalise the weaponisation of outer space. If the U.S. crosses this threshold without facing legal repercussions, China, Russia, and other actors are likely to follow suit. This could trigger a destabilising cycle of orbital arms races, forcing smaller nations to resort to asymmetric capabilities, such as cyberattacks, jamming or even the deliberate generation of debris in orbit. Such developments would not only weaken the OST's authority but could also unravel the fragile consensus that has governed space for over half a century. In the absence of updated and enforceable treaties, outer space risks becoming a legal grey zone or, worse, a battlefield governed by force rather than law. Thus, the Golden Dome is more than a military gamble or a political spectacle. It's a legal inflection point for space governance in the 21st century. It exposes loopholes in a 58-year-old treaty, reveals structural weaknesses in domestic oversight, and underscores the urgent and immediate need for modern legal instruments that can keep pace with technological realities. Strategic partners, such as India, along with like-minded spacefaring nations, should notably push to clarify and modernise the OST,

Prolonged West Asia conflict to raise energy costs, hit trade and markets: RBI's State of the Economy article



If the West Asia conflict persists and supply chains are not restored soon, it could pose risks to the domestic economy through higher energy costs, rising input prices, disrupted trade flows, and spillovers to financial markets, a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin article said on Thursday. The intensity and the duration of the conflict and the resultant damage to the energy and other infrastructure add risk to the inflation and growth outlook, the article titled 'State of the economy' authored by RBI researchers said. Though inflation remains within the tolerance band, upside risks have risen due to supply-side disruptions, including weather-related uncertainties. "Possible second round effects with the supply shock transforming itself into demand shock also warrant careful and continuous assessment," the article published in the RBI monthly bulletin said. The temporary two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran has, however, provided some breather to the global economy. The strong macroeconomic fundamentals should support the Indian economy to maintain its resilience to withstand such shocks, it said.

The views expressed in the Bulletin article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the RBI, the central bank said. The RBI earlier this month projected that India's GDP growth will decline to 6.9% in FY27 from 7.6% in FY26. On the other hand, headline retail inflation is set to

average 4.6% in the current fiscal. "The conflict in West Asia has intensified pressures on the global supply chains in March with some easing observed in the first half of April. Domestic economic activity displayed resilience in many segments with slowdown in a few others. CPI inflation, driven by fuel and food, marginally edged up in March," it said. The money market and bond yields moderated after the temporary ceasefire in West Asia. A slowdown in imports and expansion in exports narrowed trade deficit to a nine-month low. Foreign portfolio investment flows remained volatile, although net foreign direct investment turned positive in February, the article said.

It said the resilience of the global economy, already inflicted with trade tensions, is being tested by the conflict in West Asia. The near halt in tanker movements through the Strait of Hormuz has intensified pressures in the global supply chains. "The durability and intensity of the conflict pose substantial uncertainty to the global growth prospects amid broader supply chain disruptions and elevated energy prices," it said. Global economic activity moderated to an 11-month low as momentum weakened across manufacturing and services sectors. Global commodity prices, barring precious metals, surged sharply with the upturn becoming broad-based. Crude oil prices touched multi-year high of US\$ 118.4 per barrel on March 31 and remain high, it said. "Early signs of deceleration are, however, evident in select indicators like port cargo, air passenger traffic and the outlook of purchasing managers. The manufacturing PMI, albeit in expansionary zone, declined to its lowest level in nearly four years," it said. Cost pressures and uncertainty took a toll on new orders and output, which grew at the slowest rates since mid-2022. The services PMI showed resilience, although, its pace of expansion slowed to a 14-month low, reflecting softening in new business. The index of eight core industries also declined, marking its 19-month low, driven by a decline in production of fertilisers, crude oil, coal, and electricity, the article said.

Overregulation masks weak enforcement, says former SBI chief Arundhati Bhattacharya

Explaining the divergence, she said SEBI operates through a quasi-judicial process based on existing regulations, whereas SAT follows a strictly judicial approach. Explaining the divergence, she said SEBI operates through a quasi-judicial process based on existing regulations, whereas SAT follows a strictly judicial approach. India's regulatory framework is increasingly weighed down by excessive detail, while falling short on effective enforcement, former SBI Chairperson Arundhati Bhattacharya said on Thursday.

Speaking on the tendency to bypass rules at a function here, Bhattacharya said that individuals and businesses often look for shortcuts, prompting regulators to respond with tighter controls. "Regulators try to ensure there are no shortcuts, but in doing so, regulations become highly micro in nature," she said, adding that such an approach ends up entangling both policymakers and businesses in complex compliance requirements.

"While we definitely seem to be over regulated, where we lack is in the execution of those regulations," she said while releasing the report on 'Regulatory governance' published by the Centre for Regulatory Governance of the OP Jindal Global University. Bhattacharya, now Chairperson and CEO of Salesforce, observed that while India appears over-regulated, the real gap lies in execution. She pointed to the number of orders issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and how many are later overturned by the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT). Explaining the divergence, she said SEBI operates through a quasi-judicial process based on existing regulations, whereas SAT follows a strictly judicial approach. "What SEBI does is a quasi-judicial process. They go as per regulations, and they get these orders," she said.

"What SAT does is a pure judicial process, and in the



judicial process, if it is not specifically mentioned in the regulation that this is not allowed, they will throw it out, meaning that they go by the letter of the law, not by the spirit of the law." "What should be done, as is done in many other countries, is that, whatever is the regulation, you try to make sure that the regulated entity has gone not only by the letter of the regulation, but also the spirit of the regulation," Bhattacharya said. She also flagged delays in resolving high-profile cases, citing the long-pending NSE co-location case. "If it had been in the US, they would have done it all in a matter of four or five months. But we have gone around, and it's almost 10 years, and they are still talking about settling it with a file initially," she said. Bhattacharya concluded that India's legislative framework is largely sound, but enforcement remains the weak link. "The fact of the matter is, what we lack is a proper ability to execute, not a proper ability to enact. The enactment of the regulation of the laws is all perfect. Where we fall down is in the execution... unless and until we improve there, it's going to be very difficult, because regulation invariably will then have to address a lot of micro issues," she said.

Reliance Retail crosses 20,000 stores, reports 12 pc revenue growth in FY26

New Delhi: Reliance Retail Venture Ltd (RRVL), the retail arm of billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries, reported 11.83 per cent growth in gross revenue to Rs 3.70 lakh crore in FY26, and crossed the mark of 20,000 stores in its 20th year of operations. Reliance Retail's Profit After Tax (PAT) for FY 2025-26 was also up 11.73 per cent to Rs 13,842 crore. This was "led by broad-based growth across consumption baskets and rapid scale-up of hyper-local commerce," said an earnings statement from parent entity Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL). For the March quarter, it reported a marginal increase of 0.5 per cent in profit after tax to Rs 3,563 crore in the March quarter, while its gross revenue for the period was up 10.84 per cent to Rs 98,232 crore. "Reliance Retail delivered steady growth through the year. I am confident that Reliance Retail's deep omnichannel presence and its strong understanding of the Indian consumer will continue to underpin sustained growth," RIL Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani said.

Reliance Retail tax expenses in the January-March period of FY26 were at Rs 1,252 crore, up 15.5 per cent, as against Rs 1,084 crore of the corresponding quarter. In the March quarter, Reliance Retail's revenue from operations was at Rs 87,344 crore, up 10.84 per cent from Rs 78,622 crore in the year-ago period. For the quarter, Reliance Retail's pre-tax profit (reported EBITDA) was at Rs 6,921 crore, which was up 3.1 per cent year-on-year.

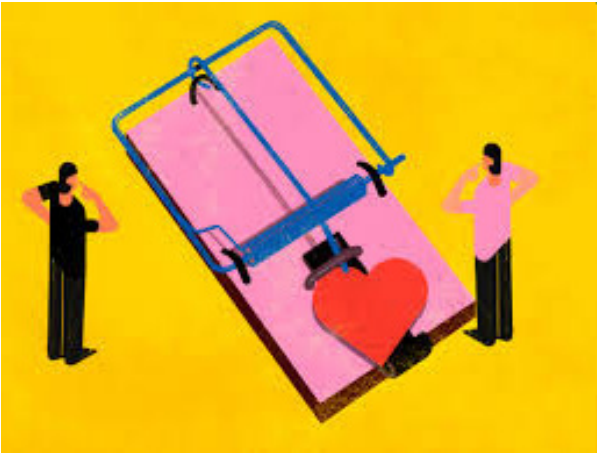
The country's largest retailer continued to focus on expansion of new store openings, adding 333 new stores in the March quarter and 1,564 stores in FY26, taking the total store count to 20,160 with a total area of 78.3 million sq. ft. "The consumer products vertical, now operating within an independent and focused organisational structure, is gaining meaningful traction with an expanding portfolio of FMCG brands. India's consumption story has many years of growth ahead of it, and our businesses are built to be at the centre of this opportunity," Ambani said. Reliance Retail's registered customer base stood at 387 million, a growth of 10.9 per cent Y-o-Y, in FY26, becoming one of the most preferred retailers in the country. Moreover, in FY26, "total transactions recorded were at 1.93 billion, up 38.8 per cent Y-o-Y," which was led by rapid acceleration in hyper-local



commerce, it added. During the quarter, Reliance Retail continued to amplify its play into the fast-growing hyperlocal delivery/quick-commerce, where it recorded a 29 per cent growth sequentially in daily orders and threefold on a year-on-year basis, establishing India's widest hyper-local delivery network. Its hyperlocal commerce arm JioMart "continues to expand its reach across 5,100+ pin codes and 1,200+ cities, serviced by a network of over 3,100+ stores". In the grocery segment, its "big box stores" are driven by festive demand and the continued expansion crossed the milestone of 1,000 Smart Bazaar stores.

The segment witnessed a "broad-based growth that was sustained across categories, led primarily by strong traction in Staples, HPC, and Processed Food", it said. Similarly, its Fashion and Lifestyle business delivered steady performance and broad-based growth across categories, "led by strong customer demand and outperformance in men's fashion". Its fashion and lifestyle e-commerce platform Ajo delivered a 23 per cent year-on-year increase in average bill value. In the Consumer Electronics segment, its stores maintained revenue momentum. Over the outlook, its Executive Director, Isha M Ambani, said: "As we enter FY27, our focus is on converting this unmatched reach into deeper customer value—through AI-embedded merchandising, sharper pricing architecture, and disciplined execution. The balance sheet is strong, and our leadership across categories is widening".

Why we keep looking for red flags in relationships even when nothing is wrong—and what it costs us



They had been talking for two weeks before they met. Not intense conversations; not in that all-consuming way people sometimes do, but they have been talking enough to establish a rhythm. A few messages through the day, some light teasing, some healthy flirting, the occasional longer exchange at night when neither had anything urgent to do. By the time they sat across each other at a café, there was already a sense of familiarity, the kind that makes the first ten minutes easier. The conversation moved effortlessly. They spoke about work, about where they grew up, about the predictable things that come up when two people are trying to understand who the other is. At one point, he mentioned he tends to get very focused on his work and sometimes forgets to respond to messages. He said it casually, only as a harmless disclaimer. No biggie, right?

But later that night, when she was back home, that line returned with more weight than it had in the moment. Not because it was alarming in itself, but because it now had context. She replayed the past few days of conversation. There was indeed a gap one evening. A delayed reply the next morning. Nothing significant, nothing that had stood out earlier. But now it began to align into a pattern. The next day, when his replies came a little later than usual, the label felt validated. Not confirmed, but reinforced enough to be taken seriously. In reality, nothing had actually changed. The interaction was still pleasant, still open, still moving forward. But something else entered it—a layer of interpretation that was now difficult to remove. This is how red flag spotting—the most interesting game in the market lately—begins. It starts not with clear warnings, but with small observations that gather meaning over time. The process is subtle enough to feel like awareness rather than judgment, and that distinction is important because it allows the habit of searching for red flags to grow without resistance. The mind prefers patterns over uncertainty.

There is a reason why red flag spotting feels reasonable. The human mind is built to recognise patterns. It prefers coherence over randomness, explanations over ambiguity. When something happens more than once, even in a limited sample, it begins to draw connections. These connections are not always accurate, but they create a sense of understanding, and that sense is comforting. In relationships, where outcomes are uncertain and stakes are personal, this tendency becomes more pronounced. People are not just trying to understand what is happening; they are trying to anticipate what might happen next. The present is rarely experienced in its entirety. It is treated as evidence. Language has changed the way we see people.

Like I tried to explain in my last column, what has drastically shifted is not the instinct, but the vocabulary. Words like "inconsistent," "avoidant," and "emotionally unavailable" have become part of everyday language. They offer a way to name behaviour quickly, to place it within a framework that feels familiar. Once a behaviour is named, it is no longer neutral. It belongs to a category, and categories carry expectations.

This has made people more articulate about their ex-

'10/10 recommend...': Alaya F, all for romanticising life, shares her morning routine

Alaya F, Bollywood's resident wellness enthusiast, has shared a reel that takes us along her morning wellness routine. "10/10 recommend romanticising your life every chance you get," she mentioned in the caption of her Instagram post, while the video quickly panned through snapshots of matcha latte, a journal and coffee tumbler, yoga mat, her detox tea and chocolate cake. According to Tanisha Bawa, certified nutrition coach and founder of TAN|365 Health & Wellness studio, matcha is a Japanese green tea made from 3-week-old green tea leaves grown in the shade, hand-picked, dried, and ground into a fine powder. Drinking matcha is a tradition in Japan, one that Alaya has inculcated in her daily routine. She likes to start the day with a matcha berry latte, which is packed with antioxidants and has the highest anti-inflammatory potential.

"It contains high amounts of healthy gut polyphenols that feed your good gut bacteria, reduce inflammation, and remove toxins from your body. It is also a source of theanine, an anti-jitter, anxiety-quelling component that is absent in coffee," said Bawa, adding how drinking matcha leads to fewer spike and crash cycles, more productivity, and satiety. According to the expert, journaling helps process thoughts and emotions, while exposure to sunlight regulates circadian rhythms, improving sleep quality, and, in moderation, caffeine can improve alertness and cognitive function.

Sumit Sharma, a certified yoga instructor and founder of StrongByYoga.com, said that practising yoga at any time of day brings numerous benefits, including improved mobility, flexibility, stamina, sleep quality, heart health, and immunity. However, yoga in the morning has some added advantages because of the calmness, clarity of thought, and fresh air it brings, added Sharma. Morning is also considered the best time to practice yoga by many practitioners because the human mind is far more active and receptive then. Morning yoga can instantly make you feel calmer and more at peace with yourself," he explained. Alaya likes to start her day with a detox concoction, that includes some warm water in a glass, a tablespoon of freshly squeezed lemon juice, 2 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar, 2 teaspoons of soaked chia seeds, and a teaspoon of honey.

Her three pointers? "Have it on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning, make sure the water is warm, not boiling, and being consistent for the best results," she pointed out. Chocolate mousse cake She likes to snack on gluten free and sugar free chocolate mousse cake which is under 200 calories and has 17 grams of protein, without any protein powder. Just paneer, milk, egg whites, cocoa powder and oat flour blended together and baked on high heat for 22 minutes. However, Dr Amreen Sheikh, chief dietitian, KIMS Hospitals, Thane pointed out that even a

periences. However, these experiences are often analysed, defined and judged in haste, and that has reduced the gap between noticing something and deciding what it means. There is less space for ambiguity, less patience for not knowing. Looking for red flags creates the impression that outcomes can be managed. That if you are observant enough, careful enough, you can avoid being hurt later. It feels like a rational approach to something inherently uncertain. But relationships do not follow predictable rules. You can identify every early sign correctly and still end up in something that does not last. Not because you missed anything, but because human connections evolve in ways that cannot be fully mapped in advance. The idea of control is comforting, but incomplete.

In the café, the conversation did not suffer. There were no awkward pauses, no visible tension. But the internal experience had already begun to change. What had been a straightforward interaction was now layered with evaluation. When part of the mind is occupied with interpretation, there is less room for direct experience. You are present, but also slightly removed, watching, assessing, and measuring. Once a potential red flag is identified, attention begins to organize itself around it. Instances that support the idea stand out more clearly. Instances that don't fit are often dismissed as exceptions. Over time, the initial observation gains strength, not necessarily because it is accurate, but because it has been consistently reinforced. This is not a failure of logic; it is how perception works. The mind is guided by what it expects to find. Instead of asking, "What is this?" people begin asking, "What could this become?" The question carries an underlying concern: if something goes wrong later, could it have been predicted earlier?

This creates a pressure to identify problems before they fully exist. It encourages a form of vigilance that feels responsible, even necessary. But vigilance changes the quality of attention. It makes people look at each other not just as they are, but as potential sources of difficulty. The cost of always preparing for what comes next if every moment is treated as evidence, the present becomes thinner. There is less space for something to unfold without being immediately defined. Interactions are no longer just experienced; they are assessed for future implications. The irony is that in trying to avoid future discomfort, people begin to limit present ease. This does not mean that red flags are irrelevant or that awareness is unnecessary. There are behaviours that signal genuine concern, patterns that should not be ignored.

In that initial story, the line about delayed replies could mean many things. It could indicate a pattern that becomes frustrating over time. It could also be a simple reflection of someone's working style, something that has little bearing on the overall connection. At that stage, both interpretations are possible. What determines which one takes hold is not just the behaviour itself, but the framework through which it is viewed. Having said all of that, it is not that I don't understand why we look for red flags. It often comes from having been hurt before, from a mind that has learned to stay alert to avoid a repeat of what went wrong last time you gave it a shot. It feels responsible to be careful, to read the signs early, to not walk into something "blindly" again. But being hurt is not separate from being in a relationship; it is part of it, just as much as the good parts are. There is no reward without risk, and no version of connection that comes without the possibility of discomfort. If you hold on too tightly to control, if you stay hyper-aware of every possible sign, if you never allow yourself to step in without guarantees, you end up experiencing only a fraction of what a connection can offer. It will include uncomfortable conversations, mistakes, moments of doubt, and yes, even pain. That is not failure; that is the process. And if you remove all of that in the name of safety, it is worth asking what you are really left with in the end.



healthier cake is dessert. Enjoy a small piece. Scan the ingredient list for added sugars or syrups. And balance it out, don't let a "guilt-free" dessert displace your fruits, veggies, proteins, and whole grains. Consider it as a special treat, not as a meal substitute," said Sheikh.

Google plans 40 billion dollar investment in Anthropic as AI race intensifies

New Delhi: US tech giant Google plans to invest up to \$40 billion in the artificial intelligence (AI) firm Anthropic, as global technology giants accelerate their push into advanced AI models and infrastructure. The proposed investment includes an initial \$10 billion infusion at Anthropic's latest valuation of \$380 billion, with the remaining \$30 billion tied to performance-based milestones, the companies confirmed, according to multiple reports.

The move has built on a multi-year partnership between the two firms, under which Google provides cloud infrastructure and access to Anthropic's AI models, including its Claude suite.

Moreover, Anthropic also leverages Google's custom tensor processing units (TPUs) as an alternative to widely used graphics processing units. The latest agreement between the tech firms came amid surging demand for generative AI tools across enterprises, developers and consumers, which has placed increasing pressure on computing infrastructure. Notably, Anthropic recently secured 5 gigawatts of compute capacity through collaborations involving Google and Broadcom, with additional expansion planned. However, despite their collaboration, the companies remain competitors in the AI space, with Google's Gemini models vying against Anthropic's offerings in the rapidly evolving market.

Vinesh Phogat reaches Brij Bhushan's home turf for National Open Ranking Tournament



Two days after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) issued a show-cause notice to wrestler Vinesh Phogat levelling charges of anti-doping rule violations and disciplinary breaches, barring her from competition till June 26, she reached Gonda for the National Open Ranking tournament, an event for which she had registered before the April-end deadline. Vinesh, making a comeback after giving birth to a son in July, was aiming to qualify for the Asian Games trials to be held on May 30 in Delhi, but winners at the tournament in Gonda are not eligible for selection, as per WFI's selection policy.

"Vinesh reached Gonda on Monday, a day before the women's freestyle competition. She has registered for

the tournament and is hoping the WFI allows her to participate," a source close to the wrestler told The Indian Express. Verification for women's freestyle will take place between 5 pm and 7 pm on Monday while the weigh-in is from 7 am on Tuesday. Gonda is the home turf of former BJP Member of Parliament Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexual harassment by six women wrestlers in 2023. On May 3, Vinesh had said that she was one of the complainants. On Saturday, in a 14-page show-cause notice issued to Vinesh, the WFI said that she had failed to fulfil the mandatory six-month notice period applicable to a wrestler who wants to make a return to competition after retirement. The WFI wrote in the notice that Vinesh, in a letter to United World Wrestling (UWW) in December 2024, had said that she would be on a sabbatical till August 2025. She missed a dope test on December 18, days after informing the WFI, UWW and the Sports Authority of India that she was resuming training, it added. Vinesh was also in violation of UWW competition rules after participating in two weight categories in the Asian and World Olympics Qualifier trials held by the ad-hoc committee in March 2024 when the WFI was suspended, the show-cause notice claimed. Vinesh not making the weight on the morning of the 50 kg final at the 2024 Paris Olympics, had 'resulted in the loss of an Olympic medal for India' and 'damage to the reputation of Indian wrestling', it went on.

Lakshmi Devi missed Olympics by barest of margins, now she powers Indian female rowers' rise

Competing in the Asian Continental Olympic qualification regatta in South Korea's Chungju, Lakshmi had finished fourth in the single sculls semi-final. Had she finished just one better, she would have been on the flight to the British capital, a historic first for an Indian female rower. Fourteen years from that near-miss, India has still not had a female rower making the cut for the Olympics. Lakshmi, now working as an assistant coach with the women's team under national coach Ratheesh DB, is trying her best to change that. As she stands at a vantage point overlooking the 18 girls testing their will and endurance against the serene blue waters of the RWP-3 water body at Bellary, she can see them going where she couldn't. "When our female rowers qualify for the 2028 or 2032 Olympics, only then will our goal be achieved," she says with a smile. The sport in India has forever been the preserve of male rowers, all of them polished at the Army Rowing Node. Female rowers, meanwhile, trained at centres like Aleppey or Hyderabad and came together only during national camps for a few months before dispersing to the training centres of their home states. That made finalising a team combination in boats and getting the camaraderie right tough. But a couple of months back, the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) joined hands with the Rowing Federation of India to train the national group at Bellary all year round with the goal of breaking into the Olympics.

Big things are already expected of the women's group at this year's Asian Games, especially after they won two medals last year at the Asian Rowing Championship after 12 years – a silver in the lightweight women's pair and a bronze in the women's eight. Currently, two women's boats have already made the cut for the Aichi-Nagoya Games, with the coach confident that one more will make it. Lakshmi, the daughter of a fisherman, sheepishly admits that when she started rowing in 2009, it was only to get a government job. But soon, she found herself breaking into the national camp. "I didn't have a coach back in Manipur even when I broke into the national set-up. Instead, I had a physical education teacher who taught me," she says. The early days in the national camp was a steep learning curve: she learnt about all the rookie errors she was making, including the fact that she was gripping her oars wrong. Soon after her near-miss at making it to the Olympics, Lakshmi pivoted to coaching, getting a diploma from the National Institute of Sports. She was determined that the next-gen's rookie mistakes should be fixed a lot earlier than hers were. At the Loktak Lake, a freshwater body in Moirang in Manipur, she



started shaping the next generation of female rowers in her home state with a tiny club. Those early days, when she would try to scout girls to get them into rowing, Lakshmi would face some hard practical questions from parents: 'What will you give them? Will they get hostels to stay in? Will they be given a stipend to train and compete?'

"I didn't have the courage after a while (to approach parents)! They would ask about facilities. We didn't have any," she recalls. Despite that, at the tiny club she ran on Loktak Lake, over 40 girls have trained under Lakshmi over the years. She also unearthed talents like Priya Devi, Tendenthoi and Bharati Oinam Devi, who are all national campers today. In fact, the trio is among the four Manipuri girls in the 18-strong female rowing programme at IIS's Bellary facility. Manipur isn't the first place that comes to mind when one thinks of rowing. But over the last few years, the tiny northeastern state is quietly becoming a force. The early indicator of this came at the National Games in Gujarat four years ago when rowers from Manipur ended with a surprise haul of a gold and a bronze. It was surprising because rowers from the state had just one boat available per category to train on, and those were at least 15 years old. Moreover, the state's rowers had just six pairs of oars available in total. Despite that, Priya and Tendenthoi won gold in the double sculls. Lakshmi and the other female rowers are now counting the days for the Asian Games. If medals come there, she is certain that the scenario for women's rowers will change. And maybe when she goes scouting for the next generation of rowers, the questions she gets from parents will change too. Instead of 'kya facilities hain?' they will probably ask 'Olympics ja sakti hain kya?'

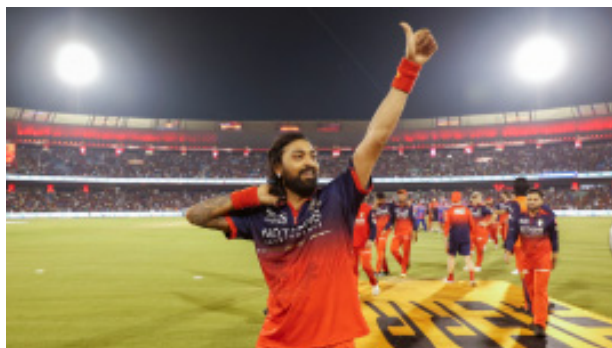
Krunal Pandya explains why he batted on despite cramps in RCB's run chase against MI

Krunal said the importance of the fixture at the business end of the season pushed him to continue despite physical discomfort. (CREIMAS) Krunal said the importance of the fixture at the business end of the season pushed him to continue despite physical discomfort. (CREIMAS) With both legs cramping, every run becoming a struggle, and Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) looking to end a two-game losing run, Krunal Pandya refused to walk off.

The all-rounder scored 73 off 46 balls, rescuing RCB from 39/3 and taking them to the doorstep of victory against Mumbai Indians before falling late in the 167-run chase in Raipur on Sunday. But after the match, Krunal revealed the physical toll the innings had taken as RCB edged closer to the IPL 2026 playoffs with a tense two-wicket win. "Obviously, later on, cramps were very, very painful. I mean, it started from calf, hamstring, glutes and both legs. I was cramping," Krunal said after the game. "But again, I was very clear that I'm not going to go out. I'll fight through that pain, and I'll make sure that whatever I can contribute for the team, I'll do it."

Krunal said the importance of the fixture at the business end of the season pushed him to continue despite physical discomfort. "Plus, this was a very, very crucial game for us. Especially at the fag end of the tournament, every game matters," he said. "So it was very clear that I'll fight through that pain and make sure that whatever and whichever way I can contribute, I'll contribute in that." Asked how he managed to continue despite severe cramps, Krunal said it came down to mentality and his comfort in pressure situations. "I mean, sheer willpower, I'll say," he said. "Again, if you see over a period of time how I've played my cricket, I've always played without giving up, and I always cherish those tough situations. It was sheer willpower and courage that I did not want to give up," he added. This is not the first time Krunal has rescued RCB from a precarious position. He had previously taken them to a win against Delhi Capitals from 25/3, but rated Sunday's innings higher.

I mean, yes, last year, a similar situation at 25/3, and I went batting. Both situations were the same. Obviously, it



"Obviously, later on, cramps were very, very painful. I mean, it started from calf, hamstring, glutes and both legs. I was cramping," Krunal said after the game.

becomes easier when Virat Kohli is at the other end, which always helps you. But that too was a tough wicket and situation. But this is a little more special because we were consistently losing wickets. And there was more pressure. And the timing, we were playing the 11th game, it was a crucial match to win, and if you contribute anything in a winning cause, it's special," he said. Krunal added that the surface in Raipur was far from straightforward. "Obviously, the wicket was slightly tricky. It was slightly two-paced," he said. "As you saw, for all 40 overs, it was slightly more challenging for batters." "RCB had lost three early wickets before Krunal rebuilt the innings through the middle overs. "But my plan was simple. If I built the innings from there and put us in a good position, we'd be able to get the result we wanted."

Mahela Jayawardene reacts to MI's elimination from IPL 2026 Playoffs race: 'Not good enough'



Mumbai Indians (MI) head coach Mahela Jayawardene admitted the five-time champions were "not good enough" this season after their playoff hopes ended with a narrow two-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in Raipur. It's disappointing, we've had our opportunities, we were not good enough, we were not consistent enough with the ball, with the bat and that showed the margins," Jayawardene said after the match. "I think, you know, we were probably 2-3 wins away from being in the same group of contenders to get into that playoff, but we didn't get those wins and today was another classic example that we were short," he added. The MI coach said injuries and niggles disrupted the side throughout the campaign and forced several changes to the playing XI. What probably you guys didn't know is we had a lot of injuries, a lot of niggles, guys getting injured, not available, some players were not there as well, so that was mostly forced changes," he said. "Tactically, we would have changed few, very few during the season. I would have loved to

have our main core guys consistently being out there, but there's no excuses," the Sri Lankan added. Jayawardene said the squad had enough quality but failed to execute consistently in crucial moments across the season.

"I think we had a quality squad, it's just that like I said, we had to put our hand up and say that we were not good enough overall," he said. The former Sri Lanka captain also defended MI's experienced core despite criticism over inconsistent performances from senior players. "The commitment, the effort that they're putting is unbelievable," he said.

"The core group is quite valuable for us, you know, you can't just keep changing. We went with the trust, the confidence that we have with them and then it is what it is." Jayawardene added that many of the players had entered the tournament after successful international campaigns, and there was little reason initially to doubt the group. "There was no reason for us to say them because they came from the World Cup, and they had a really good World Cup, winning a World Cup and all that, so I think it just, as a unit, we haven't been good enough." He also reserved special praise for Krunal Pandya, whose composed knock helped RCB complete the chase in difficult conditions. "Yeah, I think Krunal used to play similar roles for us as well while he was in MI, so we know the experience that he brings into an IPL game, and he showed that," Jayawardene said. "Like I said, for me that was the innings in a chase, especially for someone to bat like that through with a very good tempo." The MI coach also explained the decision to hand the final over to Raj Bawa despite the pressure situation. "All our bowlers were finished at that time; we didn't have anyone left, any experienced bowler," he said. "Raj is a good decent bowler, I know you haven't seen him much, but we know what he can do in practises, executing yorkers, the wide stuff and all that."

Conduct of IPL owners under scanner: 'Flouting rules, photos near dugout'

The Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise owners have been repeatedly breaching the playing-area protocol by venturing into restricted areas during games. The Indian board's anti-corruption unit (ACU) has flagged this as a major violation of the league's rules to BCCI office-bearers while listing a series of transgressions by players this season.

Not only have owners tried to send messages from their boxes to those sitting in the dugout, but there have also been instances of owners physically interacting with their teams while the game is on, the ACU has said. Based on these inputs, the BCCI has now issued an advisory to the teams asking the owners to stay in their corner, and they have also been made aware of the consequences of crossing the line. "One of the most worrying aspects has been the behaviour of the team owners. They have been flouting rules and haven't been cooperating. By way of evidence, there are photographs of them near the dugout. Some even carry their phones to the ground. They have been warned but it hasn't helped," an official aware of the league's policing process told The Indian Express.

These inputs have been reflected in the May 7 advisory issued by BCCI Secretary Devjit Sakia that reminds the owners to adhere to the IPL's Player and Match Official Access (PMOA) Protocol. "The BCCI has noted with concern that certain IPL franchise owners have not adhered to the Player and Match Official Access (PMOA) Protocol during the course of matches. Specifically, instances have been observed of IPL franchise owners attempting to communicate with, approach, hug, or otherwise physically interact with players and team members during live match situations. Such conduct, however well-intentioned, directly contravenes established protocol and may constitute interference with team dynamics and match proceedings," reads the seven-page document reviewed by The Indian Express.

Last week, speaking to Saikia had said, "All these norms and all these advisories are already part of the protocol. But people are becoming casual nowadays, so we are reminding them that we will not show any leniency if there's any violation." The BCCI advisory adds that "franchise owners and their representatives are strictly prohibited from communicating with or physically accessing players or team officials in the dugout, dressing room, or playing area during the course of a match, except through designated and ap-



proved channels."

The letter also puts on paper the repercussions for not following the set norms. "All IPL franchise owner-level access to restricted zones must strictly conform to the PMOA Protocol as communicated by the IPL Operations Division. Any deviation shall be treated as a serious violation. Franchise management is responsible for ensuring that IPL franchise owners and their associates are fully briefed on the applicable protocols prior to each match day." The advisory also mentions some other episodes of indiscipline. "It has been brought to notice that certain team members have demonstrated reluctance in presenting their accreditation cards for verification when requested by authorised security personnel. This behaviour is unacceptable and constitutes a breach of basic event security protocol." The board also informed the franchise about the risks in inviting unauthorised persons to team hotels. "The BCCI draws the attention of all franchises to the well-documented risks of targeted compromise and honey-trapping that pervade high-profile sporting environments. The possibility of incidents giving rise to serious legal allegations, including those under applicable laws on sexual misconduct, cannot be discounted. IPL franchise management must remain vigilant and proactive in mitigating such risks at all times." Following the advisory, the BCCI had a meeting with the CEOs of all franchises, where the inputs provided by the ACU were shared. The BCCI ACU is headed by Sharad Kumar, a former Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) who also served as Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

Rajat Patidar reacts to RCB's last-ball win over MI: 'We didn't deserve to win this match'

Rajat Patidar RCB Rajat Patidar (C) of Royal Challengers Bengaluru during Match 54 of the TATA Indian Premier League 2026 between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Mumbai Indians at Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium, Raipur, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) may have won a thrilling contest over the Mumbai Indians by two wickets, but captain Rajat Patidar was critical of his team's run chase of 167, admitting they did not deserve to be on the winning side. RCB eventually scraped home by two wickets in the last over thanks largely to Krunal Pandya's outstanding 73 off 46 balls, but Patidar felt the target should have been chased more comfortably. "Our bowlers did a tremendous job to restrict them. That was easily chaseable, but to be honest, we didn't deserve to win this match. We should have chased that target easily. We have a batting line-up capable enough," Patidar said after the match.

The RCB captain reserved special praise for Pandya, whose rescue act came after early dismissals of Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, and Patidar himself left the side in trouble inside the powerplay. He revealed that they had decided in the team meetings that the all-rounder would bat at number five. "It was a very tight match, a great game, KP is the man, who has done it for the team," Patidar said. "It was our decision, we had discussed in team meetings. We wanted to give him opportunity at number 5 and he done it pretty well. There's a lot of experience, and such players do it for the team under pressure, and in such situations," he added. Patidar also praised veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, whose spell in the powerplay reduced MI to 28/3 and eventually set up the win. "I think it's unbelievable, I would say. I think the way he (Bhuvneshwar) controlled over the ball, his control over the ball, I think is super. And it's been difficult on a wicket that was two paced and variable bounce. I think it's very difficult to play him," Patidar said. The win pushed RCB to the top of the IPL 2026 points table, though the skipper insisted the team was not focusing too much



on standings at this stage of the tournament. "Right now, we are not bothered about the table; we want to play good cricket, rather than looking at the table."

Andy Flower fined for breaching IPL code of conduct

Raipur: Royal Challengers Bengaluru head coach Andy Flower has been fined 15 per cent of his applicable match fee for breaching the IPL's code of conduct by getting involved in a dispute with the fourth umpire during their match against Mumbai Indians here, the tournament organiser said on Monday. "Andy Flower, Head Coach, Royal Challengers Bengaluru has been fined 15% of his applicable match fee for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct for Players and Team officials," the IPL said in a statement. "Andy was found to have breached article 2.3 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which relates to 'use of an audible obscenity during a match.'

Diljit Dosanjh says ‘won’t tolerate’ protesters harassing fans at concerts, asked security to throw them out



Last week, Diljit Dosanjh was seen addressing a group of protesters waving Khalistan flags at his Calgary concert during the ongoing Aura tour. Diljit claimed that irrespective of how much they wave the flags, he'd continue to make Punjab proud everywhere he goes, including his recent appearance on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. On Sunday, Diljit took to his Instagram Stories to clear the air that he's never objected to any peaceful protests by any individual or group waving any flag at his concerts. His only contention with the protesters is them harassing his fans inside the venue, irrespective of what the flag they're holding represents. He declared firmly that he wouldn't tolerate the nuisance anymore.

"Standing outside and protesting — anyone can do that. But if you try to come inside and harass my fans, that will not be tolerated. If someone brings a banner or a flag, it usually means they want to show where they've come from and that they support me. But if you're standing outside with

the same banner abusing my fans, and then try to come inside and do the same thing, that will not be tolerated," Diljit wrote in Punjabi. "This is not about any banner or flag — the real issue is your intention behind it. I told security that anyone trying to disrupt the program should be picked up and thrown out. I never said anything against any banner, so don't spread fake narratives. I've been avoiding this issue since last year — but not anymore). Thank you. Love & peace (peace sign emoji)," he added.

Diljit's clear stance comes a day after he declined the offer by a think tank of retired IAS officers, defence personnel, and professionals in Punjab to take over the state leadership after it's been "brought to its knees by successive dispensations". However, the actor-singer took to X and responded to the public appeal, "Kadey v Nhi (Never). Mera Kam Entertainment Karna (My job is to entertain.) Am Very Happy in My Field. Thank You So Much." A couple of weeks ago, Diljit addressed the audience at his Calgary concert and claimed that he gets abused from both sides — from sections in India who allege he's a "separatist" and from pro-Khalistan groups who claim he's a traitor for merely appearing on popular quiz show Kaun Banega Crorepati and touching host Amitabh Bachchan's feet. In the past, the megastar has been accused by hardline groups of inciting violence against the Sikh community during the 1984 Sikh Riots, although he's maintained that he wasn't involved in the tragedy in any capacity whatsoever. Diljit claimed that the only path he follows is in the middle. His only agenda wherever he goes across the globe is to make Punjab proud. On The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, he celebrated the fact that a couple of years ago, he pulled off the biggest Punjabi concert outside of India in Vancouver, Canada, miles away from where the 1914 Komgata Maru incident took place a century ago.

‘Kunal Kemmu fought the thief, I cried in a corner’: Soha Ali Khan recalls robbery at home

Before actor Saif Ali Khan's Bandra home was broken into in 2025, a burglary attempt also happened at his sister, actor Soha Ali Khan's former house. In 2011, an intruder had entered her bedroom at around 4 AM, leaving her terrified. Her husband, actor-director Kunal Kemmu, bravely confronted and fought the thief, despite having his hand in a cast. In a recent interview, Soha opened up about the incident, recalling how she got scared and stood in a corner crying.

During a conversation on Yuva, she shared, "When our house was broken into, and Kunal caught the thief many years ago, I stood in the corner and cried. It wasn't my finest moment. I want to be kind to myself by saying that it was in the middle of the night and I wasn't prepared, but I definitely could've been more useful. I'm probably not the bravest person. My system tends to shut down when there's something happening. I am working on it." The actor called herself a 'phattu (coward)' and said she was working on it. During the same podcast, when Soha was asked about who she goes to for styling advice, she revealed that her daughter, Inaaya, has been her fashion advisor lately. She further added that while she doesn't ask for it, but her husband Kunal also keeps giving her styling tips. While speaking about going to her brother Saif Ali Khan for relationship advice, she shared, "I go to bhai (Saif) for relationship advice because I don't have too many friends who are men anymore. So I feel like getting a male perspective, because he's always, not on Kunal's side, but speaks from that lens." The actor called him a calming influence during parenting breakdowns.



The Chhorii 2 actor also revealed that she goes to her sister-in-law Kareena for any gossip. "She doesn't gossip, but she has the most irrelevant information about the people that you would not think cross her mind. But she is incredibly observant and must be on some pretty special WhatsApp group that I would love to join." On the professional front, Soha Ali Khan was last seen in the 2025 film Chhorii 2, alongside Nushratt Bharuccha. The horror drama is available to stream on Amazon Prime Video. The actor hasn't announced her new project yet, but has been busy with her podcast 'All About Her'. Saif was attacked at his home and stabbed multiple times during a robbery attempt in January 2025. The actor was trying to protect his family when this happened. He had to undergo surgeries after the attack.

Sherlock Holmes to road rager: Inside Benedict Cumberbatch's 10-minute spat with cyclist



Benedict Cumberbatch has gotten himself involved in an embarrassing spat with a cyclist in London. As per a video captured by an onlooker, Cumberbatch got into a rather heated 10-minute row with the cyclist, who claimed the actor ran the red light thrice. The cyclist even labelled Cumberbatch "deluded" and claimed that he was lying, only for Cumberbatch to allege that he was "verbally abused".

Benedict Cumberbatch in a spat with a cyclist in London. Benedict Cumberbatch in a spat with a cyclist in London. Image credit: The Sun. Benedict Cumberbatch has gotten himself involved in an embarrassing spat with a cyclist in London. As per a video captured by an onlooker, Cumberbatch got into a rather heated 10-minute row with the cyclist, who claimed the actor ran the red light thrice. The cyclist even labelled Cumberbatch "deluded" and claimed that he was lying, only for Cumberbatch to allege that he was "verbally abused". What happened exactly?

The incident took place this past Tuesday at 5:30 pm in London. As per the onlooker who captured the video, Cumberbatch, riding a cargo bike, ran a red light in hot pursuit of a fellow cyclist. He then got down his bike and walked across the road to confront the masked cyclist.

They got into a furious exchange when the cyclist was heard shouting, "You're deluded. You're lying. I was behind you the entire time." Cumberbatch claimed that the cyclist "verbally abused" him while he was minding his own business. The cyclist, who thinks of himself as some sort of a traffic "vigilante" often records and reprimands Londoners on disobeying the traffic rules. "Oh no, I verbally abused the guy who completely repeatedly broke the law," said the cyclist, as per the video obtained by The Sun. "I did it once," clarified Cumberbatch, who ran the red light only to chase down the cyclist who abused him in the middle of the road. But the cyclist maintained that Cumberbatch ran three red lights instead of one and even sped fast the zebra crossing when he wasn't supposed to. However, Cumberbatch maintained he violated the traffic rules only once, all thanks to him.

"It was crazy. It was such a pompous road rage, it almost felt like it had been staged. He was calling Benedict 'deluded' and 'a liar,'" the onlooker told The Daily Mail, adding, "It was really busy, and they blocked the lane so no one else could get through. Everyone just stood there with jaws dropped." Benedict Cumberbatch erupts in blazing row with cyclist who slams him as 'deluded' pic.twitter.com/hHiu6ehyzc He even spotted a group of school kids asking for a picture with Doctor Strange in the middle of the altercation. Cumberbatch, who plays the beloved wizard in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, patiently asked the kids to wait. Once the spat got over and the other cyclist left, the actor stuck to his promise and posed for a selfie with a couple of young fans. Cumberbatch's previous road rage instances Cumberbatch was also involved in a 2019 road rage incident with another cyclist. The actor, while driving his car, allegedly caught the arm of a cyclist and knocked him off his bike in Freshwater, Isle of Wight. As a retaliation, the cyclist slapped Cumberbatch across the face. Despite the violent response, the actor offered clothing and bottled water to the cyclist and offered to drop him at the closest medical centre. Two years prior to that, Cumberbatch got embroiled in yet another violent altercation, but this time for a good cause. Back in 2017, when he saw four men trying to rob a cyclist in London, he got off his Uber, shouted at the men, and pulled them off the cyclist in order to prevent the mugging. The incident took place miles away from Baker Street, the residence of Sherlock Holmes, the popular detective character Cumberbatch played across four seasons and seven years in BBC's show adaptation.

Pooja Batra forced to do splits in front of camera to make insecure heroes look taller: ‘I lost films due to my height’



Sangeeta Bijlani, Pooja Batra, Sushmita Sen, Deepika Padukone — what's common between the three of them? Yes, they're all former models who became leading Hindi film actors. Another commonality is the height — they were all extremely tall women in an industry where most of their male co-stars were short, but with a rather tall ego that their leading ladies had to look shorter than them. "It was tough. I remember I was told by Sangeeta Bijlani, 'You don't have a chance in the movies because you're too tall,'" recalled Pooja Batra. Sangeeta, who made her Bollywood debut with Qatil (1988) opposite Aditya Pancholi, worked only for eight years as a leading lady, her last film being Nirbhay (1996) opposite Mithun Chakraborty.

Pooja admitted she was disappointed by Sangeeta's word of caution. "She's my idol She's beautiful, and she's a model too," she told Harper's Bazaar India. "I gave every role I got my best even though the heroes got intimidated because of my stature. It's true I didn't book a lot of movies because of my height. I lost out on a lot of good roles," she confessed. Pooja claimed that tall actors like her and Sangeeta paved the way for tall female actors like Sushmita and Deepika. "They should say, 'Thank you,'" said Pooja, laughing.

The actor, who made her Hindi film debut with Priyadarshan's 1997 hit action film Virasat, revealed she'd do "half-splits" in front of the camera in close-up shots to make her heroes look taller. In her debut movie, Pooja wore colour-coordinated outfits to look shorter. "Even in Hollywood, I respect all these tall actresses like Naomi Watts and Charlize Theron. I know how hard it's for a woman to make

it despite the height," she added. While she had to look shorter even while sharing screen space with relatively tall actors like Anil Kapoor, she recalled the only actor who never had an issue with her height was Sangeeta's ex-boyfriend, Salman Khan, with whom she was cast opposite in K Murali Mohana Rao's 2000 romantic comedy Kahin Pyaar Na Ho Jaaye. "Salman never had a problem. He was one guy who'd be like, 'Wear your heels, I don't have a problem'. He'd be confident in his own skin," said Pooja.

A couple of years ago, even Sushmita Sen claimed that Salman encouraged her to wear heels so she looked better on the sets of David Dhawan's 1998 hit rom-com Biwi No. 1. "When David would say on the sets of Biwi No. 'Sush, don't wear heels', I would come in flats like, 'Okay, no problem'. And Salman would say, 'That's a nice outfit, but why are you wearing those chappals?' I would say, 'Because you are short, I can't wear heels,' so he burst out laughing and said, 'Go and wear heels. I'll manage my height, you manage yours'. So, I thought that was very progressive. It is something about Salman I have always enjoyed and loved," she told Mashable in 2024. Salman Khan and Sushmita Sen in Biwi No. 1. Salman Khan and Sushmita Sen in Biwi No. 1.

But she believes Hindi cinema has come a long way from there, not just because of perception change, but also to technical reasons like an alteration in the cinemascope. "It's changed for the better because the cinemascope is more latitude than longitude, so no matter how tall you are, you'd get shortened. So, the short people are at a disadvantage because they could look plumper than what they are. Most of the world's most famous actors aren't very tall," she reasoned. In order to dress shorter, and also to bring her sense of fashion to her onscreen looks, Pooja would always wear her personal clothes in her films. "Let her wear what she's wearing," she'd recall the directors saying on sets when she showed up in her personal wardrobe. But they'd also ask her to remove makeup since they wanted a natural look. "I was like, at least sunblock toh lagane do (let me wear sunblock)," she said, laughing. Pooja shot to fame in 1993 when she was crowned Miss India International. After subsequently becoming one of the top models of India, Pooja transitioned into films. She appeared in Hindi films like Kuch Khatti Kuch Meethi Jodi No. 1, Nayak: The Real Hero (2001), and Talaash: The Hunt Begins (2003), along with a few Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam movies. Pooja went the Madhuri Dixit way in 2003 when she tied the knot with an orthopaedic surgeon and relocated to Los Angeles, California. But she moved back to India after filing a divorce in 2011. She then returned to movies with Hum Tum Shabana (2011), ABCD 2 (2015), and other Hollywood movies. She remarried in 2019, tying the knot with actor Nawab Shah.

Sunil Pal claims his jokes removed from Kapil Sharma's show; Samay Raina shown favouritism: ‘It was all planned’

Comedian Sunil Pal was recently seen on a special episode of The Great Indian Kapil Show. The episode, which streamed on 2nd May, featuring Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia, and also had Sunil Pal make a special appearance. However, the seasoned stand-up comedian revealed that he felt targeted while he was on the show. Sharing details in a conversation with content creator Suraj Kumar, Sunil added that he wasn't aware that Samay and Ranveer would also be there, nor was he allowed to perform a stand-up act that he was promised, and he also felt a bias from the audience, as well as Navjot Singh Sidhu. Sharing how Netflix wanted to highlight Samay and Ranveer, Sunil said, "Eventually it's a Netflix show, and they thought their stars (Samay and Ranveer) are going through a downfall, so Netflix wanted to highlight them. Now, how could they do that? By calling them on Kapil Sharma's show, to further put them in the limelight, they called me to boost TRPs. I was just standing there, didn't say anything."

Over the last few months, Sunil has expressed some strong views against Samay Raina. So when asked why he chose to go for the episode featuring them, Sunil said, "It was Kapil Sharma's show, not Samay or Ranveer's show. Even Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Aamir Khan go there, so what is so shocking if I went there? I was invited to Kapil Sharma's show. "I had no idea if Samay would be there. I was told that the episode will have stand-up comedians, and they might be there too. I was also told to come and do a stand-up segment there, not even an interview. I had even prepared a 15-minute-long sketch, and the director Anukul even finalized it. After I reached there, I got to know that these two were also there. I didn't get a chance to perform my stand-up act. They even cut out the few jokes I cracked." Revealing that not only his part, but Samay and Ranveer's abusive language and vulgar gestures were also edited out from the episode. Sunil further took a dig at Navjot Singh Sidhu and Archana Puran Singh and said, "It all became one-sided, I felt cornered and targeted at one point in time. A lot of people also noticed this; people were told purposely not to laugh at my jokes, and give extreme reactions



to the other person's smallest joke, too."

He felt Sidhu showed favouritism. "Navjot Singh Sidhu, who has been listening to comedians for 20 years, reacted to a small joke from Samay, saying Too good, you are the next Kapil". Even Archana was not laughing at that joke; she is someone who, if paid, will also laugh at the wind. But if she didn't laugh, then I felt there was some planning."

Last year, after India's Got Latent controversy, Sunil Pal had slammed Samay Raina and Ranveer Allahbadia for passing off abusive language as jokes. In one of his interviews, he also called Samay, 'a terrorist of the comedy genre.' Samay has also been taking digs at Sunil for reacting the way he did during India's Got Latent Controversy. During the Kapil Sharma show's special episode, Samay Raina was seen roasting Sunil Pal over his personal hygiene, and he also said he learned abusive words from watching Sunil's video. While Sunil and Samay Raina have collaborated for a few ads, Sunil also added that he has "no personal beef" against Samay. He even added that he was not mentally prepared for the roasting that happened on Kapil Sharma's show.

Urvashi Rautela says ‘Inspector Avinash’ taught her restraint over glamour

Mumbai: Actress Urvashi Rautela, who is all set to reprise her role as Poonam Mishra in the new season of "Inspector Avinash", has spoken about how "glamour" has often been attached to her public image, but the upcoming series demands restraint and realism. The actress told IANS: "Absolutely. I think every actor who genuinely wants to grow has to unlearn a certain level of performance vanity at some point. With glamour-oriented public perception, people often expect perfection in every frame, every expression, every moment." "But projects like Inspector Avinash demand emotional honesty more than visual perfection," she added. Urvashi shared that for this role, she consciously focused on "being present rather than trying to 'look performed.'" "Real people in intense situations are not thinking about how they appear they are reacting, surviving, processing emotions. That realism was very important for me to understand as an actor," said the

actress. She added: "I think restraint is actually far more difficult than dramatic performance. Silence, stillness, controlled emotions — they require a different kind of confidence. Sometimes doing less truthfully is much harder than doing more dramatically." Urvashi said that as an artist, it was "definitely liberating" for her "because it allowed me to explore vulnerability without the pressure of maintaining an image every second." Inspector Avinash, which first aired in 2023, is headlined by Randee Hooda.

The first installment featured names such as Amit Sial, Shalin Bhanot, Rahul Mittra, Zakir Hussain, Ayeesha S. Aiman, Zohaab Farooqui, Bidita Bag, Pravin Sisodia, Rajneesh Duggal, Ajay Chaudhary. The show was based on true events and the life of UP super-cop Avinash Mishra. The series revolves around the life of Avinash Mishra, who was brought in to stop the crimes in the state.