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Abortion autonomy

THE intervention by the Supreme Court in permitting the termination of a 30-plus-week pregnancy of a 15-year-old rape survivor is an assertion of constitutional morality over procedural rigidity. Importantly, the decision was backed by medical inputs, which flagged severe mental trauma, the psychological impact of continuing the pregnancy and elevated medical risks associated with advanced gestation. At the same time, the court made it clear that while medical opinion informs the decision, it does not determine it. The final threshold remained constitutional — centred on dignity, autonomy and the right to life. This distinction is crucial. Acting on medical assessments, the SC held that forcing continuation would violate the survivor's bodily autonomy and mental well-being. In doing so, it reaffirmed a principle often lost in legal and medical processes: reproductive choice rests with the individual, not institutions acting on her behalf. At issue is the framework of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, which prescribes gestational limits but allows exceptions where there is grave risk to physical or mental health. These exceptions are mediated through medical boards whose cautious interpretations can delay or deny access. The SC's observation that doctors cannot decide for patients is a necessary corrective, even as it raises concerns about late-stage procedural risks and foetal viability. For minor rape survivors, delayed reporting, stigma and administrative hurdles frequently push pregnancies into advanced stages. At that point, risks such as haemorrhage, complications during delivery and long-term health consequences rise sharply, especially for adolescents. Forcing continuation compounds both physical danger and psychological trauma, raising serious concerns under the right to life.

Grand May Day Celebrations Held Under the Aegis of BRTU

-The Four Labor Codes Must Be Repealed" – Former MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy



"Narsampet/Warangal, May 1 (Indian Chronicle) : Alleging that the four labor codes introduced by the Central Government are undermining the rights of workers, former MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy demanded their complete repeal. "On the occasion of International Workers' Day (May Day), grand celebrations were held on Friday at the Agricultural Market premises in Narsampet, organized under the aegis of the Bharat Rashtra Trade Union (BRTU). After hoisting the May Day flag, Peddi Sudarshan Reddy addressed the gathering and extended his greetings to the workers. He called upon the working class to strengthen their fighting spirit in alignment with the true spirit of May Day. "He strongly opposed attempts to abolish the 8-hour workday system in the state and replace it with the proposed 12-hour workday system. He stated that such measures would severely jeopardize the welfare of workers. He also criticized the State Government for making similar attempts. He vehemently opposed the implementation of these "anti-labor" laws. Emphasizing the need to strengthen the BRTU, he asserted that the implementation of these laws could be prevented—and workers' rights safeguarded—only through united struggles. "He noted that the BRTU would work in collaboration with the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), the main opposition party. He affirmed that both the BRS and the BRTU are prepared to launch further joint movements within the state to safeguard workers' rights. On the occasion of May Day, he once again extended his greetings to the workers of the constituency, the undivided Warangal district, and the state of Telangana. "A large number of municipal workers, rickshaw pullers, private school drivers, auto-rickshaw drivers, shop assistants, and medical contract and outsourcing staff participated in these celebrations and hoisted the May Day flag. "Among those who attended the event were District President Gon Yuvaraju; Anganwadi Union State President Nalla Bharathi; Hamali Union State Secretary Kolluri Lakshminarayana; Building Construction Workers Union State Secretary Paladugula Ramesh; Constituency Coordinator Takkalapalli Ravinder Rao; Town President Nagelli Venkatanarayana; leaders Namala Satyanarayana, Nalla Manohar Reddy, Lekkala Vidyasagar Reddy, Nadem Shanthi Kumar, and Sridhar Reddy; Hamali Division President Bollam Prasad; as well as cluster in-charges, councilors, former councilors, representatives of the women's wing, leaders and activists from constituency and district-level labor unions, and key town party functionaries.

Limit duty hours to 12 hour a shift and 48 hours a week, PG doctors in Telangana

Hyderabad: Senior residents from across Telangana under the umbrella of Healthcare Reforms Doctors Association (HRDA) on Friday urged the Director of Medical Education (DME), Telangana to implement a uniform policy ensuring that duty hours for resident postgraduate doctors in teaching hospital are limited to a maximum of 12 hours per shift and 48 hours per week, along with a mandatory weekly off. Resident postgraduate doctors, senior residents, and interns are frequently subjected to prolonged duty hours, often extending to 24 to 36 hours at a stretch, without proper weekly off. Resident postgraduate doctors, senior residents, and interns are frequently subjected to prolonged duty hours, often extending to 24 to 36 hours at a stretch, without proper weekly off in several institutions. Such excessive working hours lead to severe fatigue, mental stress, and burnout, and also have a direct impact on patient safety and quality of care, the members of HRDA said.

Congress leaders bat for pro-worker measures at May Day events in Karimnagar

Anjan Kumar, Padala Rahul highlight swift resolution of RTC issues; hail government decisions.



KARIMNAGAR May 1 (Correspondent) : Corporation Congress president and corporator Vaidyula Anjan Kumar and Regional Transport Authority (RTA) member Padala Rahul on Friday underlined the State government's pro-worker initiatives during May Day celebrations organised

at RTC depots in Karimnagar. Participating in flag hoisting ceremonies at Depot-1 and Depot-2, the leaders interacted with RTC employees and took part in the International Workers' Day observances. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Anjan Kumar said the government had resolved several long-pending demands of RTC workers within a short span. He pointed to decisions such as the merger of RTC with the government, a 11% fitment in salaries, and permission for labour union elections as indicative of a worker-centric approach.

Drawing a contrast with the previous regime, he said the earlier government had not responded to a prolonged strike by RTC employees, while the present dispensation acted within two days of the recent agitation. He described the decisions taken after detailed deliberations by the Cabinet as significant. Mr. Rahul, who attended the event as chief guest paid tributes to workers who lost their lives in the 1886 labour movement in the United States, which led to the eight-hour workday. He said their sacrifices continued to inspire labour movements. Highlighting the role of RTC workers, Mr. Rahul recalled their contribution to the Telangana statehood movement and welcomed the government's decision to address key demands, including pay revision, organisational integration, and conduct of union elections. He also appreciated RTC employees for ensuring the effective implementation of the free bus travel scheme for women, describing the corporation as a vital public service. The programme was attended by RTC staff, union representatives, and Congress leaders, with celebrations marked by distribution of sweets and participation of workers.

All arrangements have been completed for conducting NEET (UG)-2026 examination

Candidates must follow the guidelines: District Collector Prateek Jain

"Sangareddy, May 01: District Collector Prateek Jain said that all arrangements have been completed for conducting the NEET (UG)-2026 examination in the district on May 3, 2026 (Sunday) in a transparent and smooth manner. He revealed that a total of 2,772 candidates will appear for the examination in 8 examination centers within the district. "On this occasion, the Collector advised that the candidates appearing for the examination must follow the guidelines set out. "Mandatory things to be brought by candidates: "Admit card downloaded from NTA website" "Original photo identity card like Aadhar / PAN / Passport / Student ID" "Two passport size photographs, one postcard size photograph" "Transparent water bottle only" "Do's: "Reach the examination centre before the gate closing time (1:30 PM) mentioned in the admit card" "Wear light clothes" "Wear only slippers or low-heeled sandals" "Sign the OMR sheet and attendance sheet in the presence of the invigilator" "Only black ball point pen provided by NTA should be used at the examination centre" "Don'ts: "Do not wear heavy designs, big buttons, multi-layered clothes" "Do not wear shoes, boots, high heels" "Mobile Do not bring phones, smartwatches, Bluetooth devices, calculators" "Do not wear bags, purses, belts, or jewelry" "Do not bring your own pens,



pencils, or rubbers" "Do not make unnecessary marks on the OMR sheet"

The Collector advised candidates to confirm the address of their examination center the day before and make advance arrangements to reach the center on time. "He urged parents and candidates to cooperate in conducting the examination smoothly.

Speed up Indiramma housing works, officials told

Commissioner seeks time-bound completion; calls for field verification of beneficiaries.

KARIMNAGAR May 1 (Correspondent) : Municipal Commissioner Praful Desai on Friday directed officials to accelerate the construction of houses sanctioned under the Indiramma Housing Scheme and ensure that the benefits reach all eligible urban poor without delay.

Chairing a review meeting with Housing Department and municipal officials at the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation office, Mr. Desai assessed the implementation of the scheme and the progress of works taken up in the first phase. He sought detailed reports on the status of houses sanctioned across the city and instructed officials to fast-track the completion of units currently under construction. The Commissioner said that in cases where beneficiaries in the first phase were unable to commence construction and had formally conveyed their unwillingness to the corporation, eligible new beneficiaries should be identified and brought into the fold. He emphasised the need for rigorous, division-wise field verification of beneficiaries under the L1 category to ensure that only genuinely eligible persons are selected.

Mr. Desai also asked Housing officials to promptly address technical difficulties faced by beneficiaries during construction and to prevent delays in the release of bills. Stressing accountability, he directed officials to conduct regular field visits instead of remaining confined to offices, and to closely monitor the quality and pace of works. Underscoring the government's objective of providing housing to every eligible poor family, he called for better



coordination among departments. He further instructed officials to resolve category-related issues affecting beneficiaries, including those pertaining to L2 and L3 classifications. Deputy Commissioner Khadar Mohiuddin, along with Housing and municipal officials, attended the meeting.

Workers Must Unite to Safeguard Their Rights

— Former MLA Dasayam Vinay Bhaskar —



"Hanamkonda, May 1 (Indian Chronicle) : Alleging that both the Central and State governments are undermining workers' rights, former Chief Whip and ex-MLA Dasayam Vinay Bhaskar called upon workers to unite and collectively fight for the protection of their rights. "He participated in the May Day celebrations held on Friday at the Markazi School area in Hanamkonda and unfurled the flag. Speaking on the occasion, he said that workers had secured their rights through prolonged struggles, but those hard-won rights are now under threat. "He alleged that instead of implementing the labour rights achieved through struggles, attempts are being made to dilute them by introducing four new labour codes, which he said are detrimental to workers. He pointed

out that basic provisions guaranteed to workers under the Constitution—such as minimum working hours, Provident Fund (PF), and Employees' State Insurance (ESI)—are not being properly implemented. "Invoking the spirit of B. R. Ambedkar, he urged workers from both organized and un-organized sectors to unite in defence of their rights. He also announced that the Labour Wing of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi will observe the entire month of May as 'Workers' Awareness Month' with various programmes. "He also took part in another flag-hoisting ceremony held at Balasamudram as part of the May Day observances.

2762 students to appear for NEET-UG exam in Khammam

Khammam: As many as 2,762 students are expected to appear for the NEET-UG examination to be held on May 3 in Khammam, said Additional Collector P Srinivasa Reddy. He, along with ACP Samba Raju, held a meeting with concerned officials here on Friday to review the arrangements for the exam, for which seven exam centres have been set up.

Open Gym at Chinna Cheruvu Should Be Made Accessible to Public

Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq



"UPPAL, MAY 01 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): "Morning walkers have expressed deep concern over the damaged condition of the open gym equipment at Chinna Cheruvu in Ramanthapur, stating that it has become completely unusable. They brought the issue to the attention of Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq. "Responding immediately, Mohammed Rafiq visited the spot on Friday morning and personally inspected the condition of the open gym. He directed the concerned authorities to take urgent steps to repair the damaged equipment and make the facility accessible to the public again at the earliest. "Speaking on the occasion, he emphasized that public health is their responsibility. He stated that identifying problems promptly and ensuring quick solutions is the true essence of leadership. "The residents of Ramanthapur appreciated the leader for his continuous efforts for public welfare. Adinarayana Goud, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Dakshinamurthy, Satyanarayana, Shivareddy Mallesh Yadav, Srinivas Yadav, Upender Reddy, Ajay, Srinivas Goud, Chotu Boy and others participated in the program.

'Bala Bharosa' Program Held at Civil Hospital

Medical check-ups conducted for 25 children



"Narsampet/Warangal, May 1 (Indian Chronicle) : As part of the Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika initiative, the 'Bala Bharosa' program was conducted on Friday at the Civil Hospital under the supervision of ICDS Narsampet Project CDPO Madhurima. "During the program, Dr. Pratap, Head of the Paediatrics Department, conducted medical examinations for 25 children suffering from malnutrition and other health issues. Mothers were given health guidance, and necessary medicines were distributed to the children. "Speaking on the occasion, CDPO Madhurima said that although RBSK staff are conducting health screenings for children and referring them to MGM Hospital, many parents are showing negligence in taking their children there. She requested that a special unit be set up at the Narsampet District Hospital itself to provide essential medical services to children. "RMO Dr. Kalyani, PP Unit Nursing Officer Shobharani, ANMs Kavitha and Shobha, ICDS supervisors, Anganwadi teachers, and ASHA workers participated in the program.

Former Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Inaugurates Chalivendram in Uppal



UPPAL, MAY 01 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): "Former Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy inaugurated a chalivendram (summer water distribution point) set up by leaders of the Dudekula community at Nallacheruvu in Uppal. She attended the event as the chief guest. "Speaking on the occasion, she appreciated the initiative taken by the Dudekula community to quench the thirst of passersby during the summer season. She described the establishment of the chalivendram as a commendable effort and urged the public of Uppal to make good use of the facility. "She further stated that it is the responsibility of social organizations to come forward and set up such service points to help people cope with the intense summer heat. She expressed hope that the chalivendram at Nallacheruvu would benefit a large number of people. "On the first day, buttermilk was distributed to the public. Several community members and leaders, including Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Nagoor Basha, Pirambi, Fakirayya, Siddhaiah, Hussain, Pedda Pirayya, Chinna Pirayya, Kasim Valli, Siddamma, Ram Reddy, Raju, Penchulamma, Mallikarjun, Durgayya, and Nayab Rasool, participated in the program.

Grand May Day Celebrations in Uppal Circle



“UPPAL, MAY 01(INDIAN CHRONICAL):“On the occasion of May Day, celebrations were held on a grand scale across the Uppal Circle, with widespread flag hoisting ceremonies. CITU and CPM flags were unfurled in areas including Chilkanagar, Uppal, Ramanthapur, and Habsiguda. A bike rally was organized starting from the CITU office in Uppal, passing through Uppal Main Road and Uppal Ring Road, and concluding at the Beerappagadda office. Later, the CITU flag was hoisted at the Uppal office by CITU Uppal Circle Secretary J. Venkanna. “Speaking on

the occasion, he stated that, inspired by the spirit of May Day, they would continue their struggle against the BJP-led central government for abolishing 29 labor laws. He warned that governments undermining workers’ rights would be taught a lesson and demanded protection of labor rights. “CPM leaders M.D. Ghouse, Y. Venkateswarlu, Swami, Sheshu, Bhishma Chari, Kumar, along with CITU leaders Raju, Jangaiah, Venkatesh, Upender, Jilani, Narasimha, Siddulu, Krishna, Anjaneyulu, Shekhar, Shiva, Seenu, Madhu, and a large number of workers participated in the program.

New Office Inaugurated Near Marrichettu by Chilukanagar Division Congress President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj



UPPAL, MAY 01(INDIAN CHRONICAL):“Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj, President of the Congress Party for Chilukanagar Division, inaugurated a new office near Marrichettu on Friday. “Speaking on the occasion, Rajesh Mudiraj said that the office was established to remain accessible to the people of the division at all times. He stated that issues brought to his attention by residents are being taken to the notice of Uppal Constituency Congress in-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, and efforts are being made to resolve them. “He further ex-



plained that through the “Basti Bata” program, several local issues in the division have already been identified and addressed. He encouraged residents to bring their grievances to the office, assuring that he would personally review them and either escalate them to Parameshwar Reddy or to the concerned officials for resolution. “He emphasized that the primary purpose of opening the office is to ensure that Congress leaders remain accessible to the public. Congress party leaders, supporters, and local residents participated in the event.

Grand Installation of 54-Foot Sri Karyasiddhi Abhayanjaneya Swamy Idol in Kushaiguda

— Former Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Attend as Chief Guests”



“UPPAL, MAY 01(INDIAN CHRONICAL):“The installation ceremony of a 54-foot-tall idol of Sri Karyasiddhi Abhayanjaneya Swamy, set up in Kushaiguda, was conducted with great devotion and grandeur. Former Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, and Medchal MLA Mallareddy participated in the event as chief guests and performed special prayers to the deity. “Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma



Reddy expressed happiness over the establishment of such a magnificent spiritual center in the area. He prayed for peace, prosperity, and well-being for all devotees. The idol installation ceremony was carried out in a grand manner, with a large number of devotees attending and seeking the blessings of the Lord. The entire venue was filled with a vibrant spiritual atmosphere. Former corporators and leaders from various political parties also participated in the program.

We will ensure accreditation cards for all journalists..!

“ Second round of discussions with District Collector Deepak Tiwari. Accreditation cards to be issued from May 10. District Accreditation Committee member Shetti Ravishankar revealed.

“Indian Chronicle Vikarabad (May 1)““Accreditation Committee member Shetti Ravishankar stated that their goal is to ensure the government issues accreditation cards to all eligible working journalists in the district. He clarified that obtaining an accreditation card is the right of every journalist. ““Speaking in a statement on the occasion, he said that he has already met District Collector Deepak Tiwari twice regarding the issue of journalists’ cards. He explained that during these meetings, there was a comprehensive discussion on the list of reporters from all newspapers in the district and their eligibility. ““Committee members expressed confidence that the process of granting new cards will be officially started by May 10. Ravishankar said that special initiative is being taken this time to ensure accreditation cards are provided not only to working journalists at the field level but also to veteran journalists with long experience and freelance journalists. ““He said the government is positive regarding journalists’ welfare and urged all eligible persons to make use of this process.



Everyone Must Commit to Protecting Workers’ Rights: Additional Collector Dr. P. Srija

Skill Development Key to Employment Opportunities“Utilize TOMCOM and ATC Services“Additional Collector Participates in Grand May Day Celebrations at Collectorate* ““Khammam, May 1 Indian Chronicle:““Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Dr. P. Srija emphasized that everyone must remain committed to protecting workers’ rights. “She participated in the May Day celebrations held on Friday at the Collectorate meeting hall, organized to mark International Workers’ Day. “Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Srija said that Khammam district has been a stronghold of communist ideology and has produced many prominent leaders. She noted that fighting for rights is a fundamental objective of communist principles. Although women have a significant presence in the labor sector, their active participation in trade unions needs to increase, she added. “She stated that every worker is entitled to rights under labor laws. Over the past 80 years since independence, there have been significant improvements in workers’ living standards, and education has played a key role in reducing poverty. Many individuals have achieved higher positions through education, irrespective of caste, religion, or economic background. “Dr. Srija highlighted that several welfare schemes are currently being implemented for workers and noted that India offers better facilities compared to many other countries. She stressed the strict implementation of the eight-hour work system and said employees should not be disturbed beyond working hours or exploited in any way. “She observed that the value of human labor has been declining in recent times and stressed the need for change. She said that if people respect one another as human beings, the need for special labor laws would diminish. She encouraged everyone to uphold the principle that “work is divine. ““She directed officials to ensure proper implementation of labor welfare schemes, prevent ineligible



beneficiaries from availing benefits, and ensure efficient use of public funds. “She also mentioned that through TOMCOM, workers are being provided with language training, awareness of local regulations, and necessary skills for overseas employment, ensuring their safety. She advised unemployed youth in the district to take advantage of job fairs.

“Highlighting the growing demand for skilled workers, she said that an Advanced Training Center (ATC) has been established to provide training aligned with modern needs. She urged unemployed individuals from worker families to make use of TOMCOM, ATC, and DEET services. “She revealed that in the past year, the Labor Department provided assistance worth 35.38 crore to 7,498 workers through various programs. “Later, the Additional Collector released the Labor Department’s achievement report for the year 2025–26. “Deputy Labor Commissioner K. Vijayabhaskar Reddy, District Employment Officer N. Madhavi, other officials, representatives of labor unions, workers, students, and staff attended the event.

Workers Must Unite for Struggle to Repeal the Four Labour Codes

Pagadala Mallesh, CPI Khammam District Executive Member*

“Khammam, May 1 Indian Chronicle:““On the occasion of International Workers’ Day (May Day), celebrations were held on Friday across various areas in the 14th and 15th divisions of Khammam city under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (CPI). “At the CPI office, district executive member Pagadala Mallesh hoisted the party flag. Similar flag hoisting events were conducted at multiple locations, including Bodrai Center, SC Colony, Pagadala Basavayya Nagar, Ankamma Temple area, Auto Center, and other localities by various party leaders and activists. “Addressing the gathering, Mallesh called upon workers to remain committed to protecting labour rights. He stated that the historic struggle by workers in Chicago around 140 years ago led to the achievement of the 8-hour workday, and since then, May 1 has been observed globally as International Workers’ Day. “He alleged that exploitation of labour by industrialists, private companies, governments, and ruling classes has continued from the past to the present. He criticized the current central government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that the introduction of four labour codes has curtailed workers’ rights. According to him, these laws could restrict the formation of trade unions and weaken rights such as strikes, posing serious risks to the labour sector. “He further alleged that there are deliberate attempts to divide workers and that governments are acting in favor of corporate companies and investors, enabling continued exploitation of labour. He emphasized the need for workers to unite and safeguard the rights achieved through long struggles, assuring that CPI will stand firmly in support of the working class. “Several leaders and activists, including Jonnalagadda Venkateswarlu, Division Secretary Ravula Hanumantha Rao, Mudraboyina Apparao, Budige Venkanna, Sheikh Meera, Chaganti Venkata Narasayya, Makanaboyina Nageswara Rao, Jangala Raju, Vagadhani Valaraju, Pothuraju Venkateswarlu, Tupakula Srikanth,



Lingam Suri, Meda Chinni, Potta Prasad, Budige Upender, Sheikh Fakir Saab, Pagadala Venkateswarlu, Chintakayala Hanumantha Rao, Doppa Srinivas, Sheikh Rajab Ali, Lakka Veeraiah, Pagadala Srinu, Amarapu Upender, Ravula Sanjeeva Rao and others participated in the program. “

Chippa Venkateswarlu Receives ‘Shramashakti Award’

“Warangal, May 1 (Indian Chronicle) : During the May Day celebrations held on Friday at Ravindra Bharathi auditorium, Warangal district’s Chippa Venkateswarlu was honoured with the prestigious “Shramashakti Award.” The award was presented by Labour Minister Vivek Venkataswamy, Labour Department Principal Secretary Harichandana Dasari, and Labour Commissioner Pamela Satpathy. “On the occasion, Venkateswarlu thanked Minister Konda Surekha and Mekala Karunakar, President of the Pragathi Building Workers Association (United Warangal District), for their support in helping him receive the honour. “Belonging to the Padmashali community, Venkateswarlu rose step by step from being a handloom worker to earning a distinct place in society. For many years, he has been consistently striving for the rights of handloom workers as well as organised and unorganised (construction) labourers across the erstwhile Warangal district, working tirelessly for their welfare and entitlements. Through various forms of assistance, he has played a key role in supporting numerous worker families. “He established a free tailoring training centre for poor and middle-class women, creating livelihood opportunities for them. By staying closely connected with workers’ issues and offering timely guidance and assistance, he has emerged as a true supporter of the labour community. “In recognition of his services, he received the Jyotiba Phule National Award in 2017 and the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar National Award in 2024. As part of his



social service initiatives, he served as Warangal District Governor through the Alliance Club of International, organising several welfare programmes for the poor, elderly, and orphans. For these efforts, he was also honoured with the Best Governor Award by the International President in Chennai. “Recently, his selection for the prestigious “Shramashakti Award” conferred by the Government of Telangana has brought pride to Warangal district. Notably, he received the award in the presence of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy during the May Day event. Several dignitaries congratulated Chippa Venkateswarlu and wished him greater success in the future.

Grand Inauguration of New Congress Party Office at Marrichettu

— Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) Attends““UPPAL, MAY 01(INDIAN CHRONICAL):“A new Congress Party office set up near Marrichettu in Chilukanagar Division was inaugurated by Chilukanagar Division Congress Party President Rajesh Mudiraj. Irshad Khan (popularly known as Uppal Khan) attended the event and extended his heartfelt congratulations to Rajesh Mudiraj. “Speaking on the occasion, Irshad Khan stated that the new office would serve as a central hub for party workers, (inspiration) them to work with greater enthusiasm and dedication towards public service. He emphasized that every party worker should contribute to strengthening the Congress Party and that the new office would help in addressing public issues more effectively. “



Grand Idol Installation Ceremony of Abhaya Anjaneya Swamy in Kushaiguda



Parameshwar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest*****UPPAL, MAY 01 (INDIAN CHRONICAL):“The idol installation ceremony of a 54-foot Abhaya Anjaneya Swamy



statue was held grandly at Kushaiguda Bus Stand Center.“Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge, Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, attended the ceremony as the chief guest. He participated in special prayers along with the temple committee members.“On this occasion, he prayed that the people of Uppal constituency be blessed with good health, happiness, prosperity, and all forms of well-being.“Division President Singireddy Venkat Reddy, former corporator Dhanapal Reddy, Kasula Pochayya Goud, Medchal-Malkajgiri Agricultural Market Committee Vice Chairman Vittal Naik, Anji Reddy, Kapra Sai Goud, Neeraja Reddy, Vara Lakshmi, Aziz, Prakash Reddy, Kranthi Kumar, Raghu, Satish Goud, Tillu Mudiraj, Shyam, Charan, Rakesh, Srihari, Naveen, Shiva, Manoj, and others participated in the event.

Officials stress worker welfare, safety at May Day event in Karimnagar

Collector calls for universal registration, awareness on schemes; leaders underline skill development and labour rights.



KARIMNAGAR May 1 (Correspondent) : Emphasising the need to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of workers, District Collector Chitra Mishra on Friday said the administration would extend all support to labourers and ensure effective implementation of welfare measures.Addressing the May Day celebrations held at the Collectorate auditorium under the aegis of the Labour, Employment Training and Factories Department, Ms. Mishra directed officials to register all eligible construction workers under the Welfare Board and intensify awareness programmes on government schemes, skill development initiatives and financial assistance.

She asked officials of the Boilers and Factories Departments to carry out regular inspections of industries to prevent accidents and ensure compliance with safety norms. Unregistered industries should be identified and brought under the legal framework, she said.The Collector

also instructed authorities to ensure registration of unorganised workers, including street vendors, gig workers and those engaged in municipal services. Highlighting medical services available under the ESI scheme, she stressed the importance of maintaining cordial relations between workers and employers.Calling for enrolment of workers aged 18 to 40 under the PMSYM scheme, she said sustained efforts, beyond Operation Muskaan, were needed to make Karimnagar a child labour-free district. She also emphasised awareness on educational benefits for workers' children and services available at Anganwadi centres, and urged workers to utilise skill training programmes to secure better livelihoods. Skilled workers, she noted, were being provided overseas employment opportunities through TOMCOM.Manakondur MLA Kavvampalli Satyanarayana said the government accords priority to workers' health and family security. He highlighted the role of Advanced Technology Centres (ATC) in imparting skills and facilitating employment opportunities in countries such as Japan, Germany and Australia, and said steps were being taken to replace manual labour in hazardous operations like manhole cleaning with mechanisation.

Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Ashwini Tanaji Wakade said Labour Day underscores the need to provide basic facilities and protect the rights of workers across all sectors.Mayor Kolagani Srinivas said the progress of the nation, State and city is driven by workers, particularly sanitation workers who ensure public health. He said measures were being taken to improve their safety, insurance and welfare, and announced that wage revisions would be undertaken.Deputy Mayor Sunil Rao called for coordinated efforts to strengthen labour welfare.Earlier, a brochure prepared by the State Labour Department was released. Awards including Best Employment, Best Management and Special Category honours were presented. Cultural performances marked the celebrations.Among those present were Additional Collector (Revenue) Srinivas Reddy, Deputy Labour Commissioner Kola Prasad, District Employment Officer Tirupathi Rao, Factory Inspector Gangadhar Reddy, ITI College Principal Ashok, and officials from various departments.

MSP Assured for Maize, Bonus Announced for Paddy Farmers: Collector Launches Procurement Centre in Koutala



“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, May 1: District Collector K. Haritha has urged farmers to sell their maize produce to Markfed in order to avail the Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the government.“On Friday, the Collector inaugurated a maize procurement centre at the agricultural godown premises in Koutala mandal headquarters. The centre has been set up by Telangana State Markfed under the supervision of the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society, Gurudupet. The inauguration was attended by Adilabad MLC Dande Vittal, Sirpur MLA Palvai Harish Babu, Additional Collector (Revenue) M. David, and other officials.“Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stated that a large number of farmers in the district have cultivated maize during the Yasangi season. She advised farmers to sell their produce at the Markfed procurement centres to ensure they receive the MSP.“MLC Dande Vittal said that the government is procuring maize through Markfed and appealed to farmers not to sell their produce to middlemen,



but instead utilize the government-established procurement centres.“Sirpur MLA Palvai Harish Babu stated that the establishment of a procurement centre in Koutala mandal would greatly benefit local farmers. He noted that a significant number of farmers in the region have cultivated maize and encouraged them to take advantage of the facility.“Later, the Collector, along with public representatives and officials, inaugurated a Yasangi paddy procurement centre set up under SERP in Sandgaon village of the mandal.“

The Collector urged farmers to sell their paddy produce at the procurement centres and avail MSP benefits. She also announced that a bonus of ₹500 per quintal will be provided for fine variety paddy.“Kagaznagar Market Committee Chairman Suddala Devayya, District Agriculture Officer Venkat, sarpanches, farmers, and others participated in the programme.“Issued by the District Public Relations Officer.

Power Safety Week Launched to Prevent Electrical Accidents

“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, Asifabad, May 1: Electricity Safety Week is being observed from May 1 to May 7 across the TSDPDCL Asifabad Circle to raise awareness on safe power usage.“On the occasion, District Collector K. Haritha, along with DRO Lokeshwar Rao and SE (Operations Circle) Uttam Jade, released wall posters and pamphlets highlighting electrical safety measures.“Speaking at the event, the Collector directed electricity department officials to create widespread awareness among consumers and farmers on power safety. She instructed all staff to actively participate in meetings and outreach programmes to educate the public on precautionary measures.“The Collector emphasized that the primary objective of the initiative is to bring down electrical accidents to zero. She noted that many accidents occur due to negligence and carelessness, and stressed the need to strictly follow safety norms to prevent such incidents.“Key Activities and Safety Measures“• Awareness on prevention of electrical accidents through training, planning, and use of modern technology, including emergency response measures.“• Strict advisory not to touch live electrical wires under any circumstances and to immediately inform authorities.“• Surveys to be conducted in villages and agricultural fields.“• Inspection of meters, service wires, and switchboards.“• Measures to rescue and assist victims of electrical accidents.“• Farmers advised to ensure proper insulation at motor starters and avoid operating switches while standing on wet ground.“• Caution urged while using wa-



ter pipes and metal equipment near power lines.“Officials said awareness programmes are being organized in both rural and urban areas. People are advised to follow safety precautions while using water pumps and electrically operated equipment. Basic first-aid measures in case of electric shock are also being promoted.“Authorities are identifying damaged electric poles and worn-out wires and taking up immediate repairs. The public has been urged to remain alert and report any signs of electrical hazards to the department without delay.“For assistance, consumers can contact the 24/7 toll-free helpline 1912 to resolve electricity-related issues.

Collector Inspects Pranahita Barrage Site with Officials Pranahita Barrage Gains Momentum After High-Level Review



“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, May 1: The District Collector on Friday inspected the proposed barrage construction site across the Pranahita River near Tummidihatti village in Koutala mandal, along with senior officials and public representatives.“The inspection was carried out in the presence of District Superintendent of Police Nitika Panth, Adilabad Local Bodies MLC Dande Vittal, Additional Collector (Revenue) M. David, Kagaznagar Sub-Collector Shradha Shukla, and officials from the Irrigation Department.“During the visit, the Collector reviewed key aspects of the project with irrigation officials, including the



expected water availability in TMCs, the extent of land that could be brought under irrigation, and the total area likely to be submerged due to the proposed barrage.“Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stated that the Chief Minister, the Minister for Irrigation, other ministers, senior officials of the irrigation department, and experts are expected to visit the site soon. She directed the officials to make necessary arrangements for the upcoming visit.“Kagaznagar DSP Waheeduddin, Market Committee Chairman Suddala Devayya, Tahsildar Pramod, MPDO Prasad, irrigation department officials, local residents, and farmers participated in the programme.

Labour Welfare Is the Government’s Core Objective -- Minister Konda Surekha

““Warangal, May 1 (Indian Chronicle) : State Forest, Environment and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha said the Congress government is giving the highest priority to labour welfare and that protecting workers' rights is a central goal of the people's government.“On the occasion of International Workers' Day (May Day), the Minister, along with Warangal District Collector Satya Sharada, participated in celebrations organised by the Warangal Vegetable Market Hamali Union on Friday. They hoisted the flag and extended May Day greetings to the workers.“Addressing the gathering, the Minister stated that the State government is undertaking special measures to support workers in both the organised and unorganised sectors and to improve their living standards. Recognising the value of the sweat and toil of workers—the backbone of the nation's economy—the government is continuously striving to ensure their welfare and safety, she said.“She further noted that the Gig Workers Act is expected to benefit over four lakh workers by safeguarding their rights. The Minister explained that steps are also being taken to ensure that workers in the unorganised sector are not neglected and that government welfare schemes effectively reach them.“Reiterating that



labour welfare is the core objective of the Congress people's government, Minister Konda Surekha conveyed heartfelt May Day wishes to every worker who contributes to society through hard work. District officials, public representatives, leaders, activists, traders and workers were present at the event.

Anjaneyulu Sagar Participates in May Day Celebrations

“Serilingampalli May 1: Grand Labor Day celebrations were organized on May 1st in Anjanyya Nagar Colony, within the limits of the Anjanyya Nagar Division, under the aegis of the ‘Spurthi Building Construction Workers' Union.““Anjaneyulu Sagar, a senior leader of the Anjanyya Nagar Division, attended the event as the chief guest and delivered a speech in which he lauded the invaluable services rendered by the workers.““Speaking on the occasion, he remarked that it is a truly commendable gesture to dedicate a specific day to workers—individuals who, through their daily toil, drive society forward.““He stated that the hard work of laborers lies behind every commemorative day we celebrate, and emphasized that development would be impossible



without their efforts.““He further noted that such events serve to instill inspiration in workers and motivate them to perform even better in their respective fields.““He exhorted every worker to approach their work with dignity and diligence, assuring them that by doing so, they could reach great heights in life.““Further more ,

Anjaneyulu Sagar highlighted the pivotal role workers play in the construction of society and underscored the necessity for everyone to work collectively towards their welfare. He expressed his hope that this event would instill renewed enthusiasm and self-confidence among the workers.““The event was attended by several dignitar-

ies, including Sura Krishna Sagar (President, Spurthi Building Construction Workers' Union), Sudhakar (President, Ranga Reddy District Praja Natya Mandal), Suresh Sagar, Veladri Ramakrishna, G. Tirupathiah, S. Raju, S. Balaswamy, Chinna Sagar, Mahender Sagar, Srinu, Balakrishna, and others.

Not all paneer is real: Scientist reveals what’s hiding in your food



GNS News Agency, May 1

Once again the word ‘analogue paneer’ is under the spotlight after restaurants, caterers, hotels and fast food vendors across the state of Maharashtra were instructed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to disclose its usage in their food preparation, giving them a deadline of April 30 to comply. The press note signed by Shridhar Dube-Patil, Food Safety Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration, Maharashtra State, states that all establishments using cheese analogue or paneer analogue must disclose it on their ‘bills, menus and display boards at the establishment.’ It also added that licensed manufacturers and suppliers of these products need to ensure that “packaging and labelling do not mislead consumers and clearly indicate the true nature of the product”. This is not the first time that ‘analogue paneer’ is a subject of discussion, it has been a part of social media debate and even on the radar of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for sometime now.

What is paneer?

Explaining it, Dr Surendra Nath Battula, retired principal scientist, National Dairy Research Institute, Bangalore, said that paneer is clearly defined in FSSAI regulation. “Paneer is a product obtained from any variant of milk — with or without added milk solids — by precipitation with permitted acidulants and heating. In practice, you boil the milk, add a permitted acidulant such as citric acid, lactic acid or glucono delta-lactone, coagulate it, press it into blocks and that is paneer. The regulation specifies exactly which acidulants are permitted — it is not open to any acidulant of your choice,” he said, adding that certain products that imitate it have been in the market for some time, and FSSAI has created a category to accommodate them called Dairy Analogs. The definition, as it appears in the regulation, is: a product in which constituents not derived from milk take the place — in part or in whole — of any milk constituent, and the final product resembles milk or a milk product organoleptically and functionally,” added Dr Battula, who is also a member of Scientific Panel on Milk and Milk Products, FSSAI. In simple terms, milk constituents like protein or fat are partially or wholly replaced in these dairy analogs, and a common person cannot tell the difference between what they are eating and the genuine dairy product, he explained. Paneer analogues are look-alike products that resemble paneer in appearance and texture, but are not made entirely from milk. “Analogue paneer, which has been in news in the recent months, is made by blending vegetable oils (palm oil), vegetable fats (palm stearin), starches, and milk solids (SMP), plant proteins (soy, pea) along with stabilizers, emulsifiers and artificial flavours, and curdling the blend using the common acidulants. This process creates a cheaper substitute that mimics the look and texture of real paneer but has a different nutritional profile,” he said, adding that it is not paneer as per the regulation and because it does not use milk fat and milk protein; it is considerably cheaper to produce. “Genuine branded paneer sells for around Rs 400 – 500 per kilo. Analogue paneer, I believe, is available in the unorganised market at around Rs 150 per kilo; often it is marketed as paneer.”

Why it cannot legally be called paneer

FSSAI regulation, says Dr Battula, is very clear on this point. Dairy terminology, including the word paneer, cannot be used for a product that does not comply with the standards defined in the regulation. “The same principle applies elsewhere: plant extracts, say soy milk, cannot be called milk because milk is defined as the lacteal secretion obtained from milch animals — cow, buffalo, goat, sheep and camel, the five species specified by FSSAI. Similarly, plant based fats such as vanaspathi cannot be called vegetable ghee. And a product that does not meet paneer standards cannot be called paneer.” The same logic applies to frozen desserts versus ice cream. Ice cream must contain a minimum of 10 percent milk fat and 3.5 percent milk pro-

tein. When manufacturers began replacing milk fat and milk protein with vegetable fat and plant protein, the term frozen dessert was introduced. These products look and taste like ice cream but cannot legally be called ice cream. The same framework is now being applied to paneer, he explained.

How big is the problem?

When asked how big the problem is, Dr Battula said that it is a serious matter of concern. “Most of what comes to our attention through media reports and FSSAI surveillance is that analog paneer is predominantly made in the unorganised sector — loose, unbranded, sold without packaging. A consumer who believes they are getting paneer at an unusually low price has no way of knowing it is not paneer at all. The quality and safety of such products can be highly compromised because it is not clear on what types of ingredients are used, which oils replace the milk fat, or what standards the final product must meet,” he said, adding that the bulk of analogue paneer consumption is not household — it is in hotels, restaurants and catering. “As a consumer buying from a shop, you can choose a reliable organised brand. But when you eat at a restaurant, you have no visibility into what kind of paneer has gone into your dish.”

What is being done about it

Three measures are currently in place or in consideration, said Battula, “First, the word paneer cannot legally be used for a product that does not comply with the paneer standard — this is already established in regulation. Second, FSSAI has a milk logo — the drop-of-milk symbol you see on packets from organised dairy brands like Gokul and Nandini. A product that does not comply with the regulation as a dairy product is not permitted to use this logo. This gives consumers a visual clue without requiring them to read labels closely. Third, when samples are collected by FSSAI authorities and tested, and if the product does not comply with paneer standards, action can be taken against the manufacturer.” Being cheaper alternatives to dairy products, dairy analogues are often used to mimic the popular dairy products, especially paneer. “This is a serious issue since such analogues are (mis)-used as the corresponding dairy product especially in the Hotel, Restaurants and Cafes/Catering (HoReCa) Sector. While provisions do exist in the Regulations, as detailed above, there is a need to introduce suitable standards to differentiate the dairy products and their analogues. Distinct nomenclature, labelling and standards can help distinguish paneer from its analogue. Restricting the marketing of dairy analogues, especially paneer analogues, only in the pre-packaged form of small quantities (say up to maximum 500 g per package) may also help avoid their misuse in HoReCa sector,” he added. Calling Maharashtra FDA’s decision mandating restaurants to declare on their menu and billing if they are using analog paneer, a welcome move, he added that the HORECA sector — hotels, restaurants and catering — is where the impact is greatest. “A national policy of this nature is both foreseeable and necessary,” he shared.

Are there health concerns?

On the health side, the concern is real, he says. Genuine paneer, made from milk with permitted acidulants, has defined compositional standards for fat and moisture; it also requires adding standard for milk protein as paneer is a key protein source for India’s vegetarian population. With analogue paneer made mostly in the unorganised sector, there is no clarity on what oils are used, what other ingredients go in, or what quality and safety measures are applied. That uncertainty is itself a safety concern,” he said. The fundamental objective of FSSAI is to ensure that safe and wholesome food reaches the consumer. “Therefore, it is certain that the food authority is considering this issue seriously and is actively addressing so that consumers should be able to know, without ambiguity, whether what they are eating is paneer or paneer analogue.”

How can consumers identify Paneer on labels?

“Paneer will clearly be labelled as: “Paneer”, “Low Fat Paneer”, “Medium Fat Paneer”,” he said, adding that low fat paneer and medium fat paneer shall be sold in sealed package only and shall bear the label declaration. “For medium-fat paneer, the label must also mention: ‘Contains . . . % Milk Fat’,” he said. He also added, “Further, as per the draft notification F.No. SS-T017/1/2023-Standard-FSSAI, 17 February 2025 of FSSAI, all milk and milk products, including composite milk products, as per Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011 shall carry the milk drop logo on the label of the products.”

PMC double-lanes Rajaram Bridge to end Sinhagad Road’s gridlock nightmare

GNS News Agency, May 1

The Sinhagad Road area has been undergoing extensive development in recent years, resulting in traffic chaos since it is the only road connecting this area to the heart of the city. The Sinhagad Road area has been undergoing extensive development in recent years, resulting in traffic chaos since it is the only road connecting this area to the heart of the city. In a significant move to alleviate traffic congestion on Sinhagad Road near the bridge connecting Sinhagad Road to Karvenagar DP Road, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has announced plans to widen the Rajaram Bridge over the Mutha River. This project aims to improve connectivity on both sides of the river.



Bridge to 30 meters,” said Dinkar Gojare, in charge of the civic traffic planning department. The Sinhagad Road area has been undergoing extensive development in recent years, resulting in traffic chaos since it is the only road connecting this area to the heart of the city. The PMC previously constructed the Rajaram Bridge to connect Sinhagad Road to Karvenagar and diverted traffic from Sinhagad Road heading toward Swargate.

However, traffic issues have resurfaced due to increasing population density in the area. While the civic body built the city’s longest flyover on Sinhagad Road from Vadgaon Budhruk to Vithalwadi, which eased some congestion, significant

bottlenecks persisted at the Rajaram Bridge, often resulting in vehicle queues of over one kilometer on either side during peak hours. “We want to reduce the congestion on the Rajaram Bridge. So we will be increasing the number of lanes from four to six, with three lanes in each direction,” Gojare stated.

He added that traffic on Sinhagad Road will further improve with the upcoming opening of a new river bridge at Suncity and Karvenagar within the next two months, which will help reduce the load on the Rajaram Bridge. “The PMC has secured the necessary land for the development of a road connecting the new river bridge in Karvenagar to the Rajaram Bridge. This

development will help eliminate the bottleneck in front of Matoshree Ashram in Karvenagar by creating an island,” Gojare explained. These three developments associated with the Rajaram Bridge are expected to enhance the traffic situation and ensure a smooth flow of vehicles on both sides of the river, connecting Karvenagar and Sinhagad Road. As part of the road widening project, the PMC has decided to conduct a traffic survey at the Rajaram Bridge over seven days. This survey will include collecting origin and destination details, turning movement counts, speed delay studies, traffic impact assessments, and traffic modeling.

‘You will meet Pansare’: Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad threatens publisher over 38-year-old book on Shivaji Maharaj



GNS News Agency, May 1

Sanjay Gaikwad, an MLA of the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, has allegedly abused and threatened a publisher over a book about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. An audio clip in which he purportedly abuses Kolhapur-based publisher Prashant Ambi has gone viral on social media. Ambi alleged that Gaikwad called him earlier this week and spoke for around nine minutes, objecting to the book’s title, Shivaji Kon Hota?, and using abusive language.

The book, written by CPI leader and rationalist Govind Pansare and first published in 1988, has been in circulation for decades and earlier faced objections over its title. Ambi alleged that Gaikwad threatened to “cut his tongue” and “enter his house and assault him” and also told him, “You too will meet Pansare.” Pansare was shot dead while he was on a morning walk in Kolhapur in 2015. Ambi said he clarified during the call that he was not the book’s author but

only its publisher, and urged the MLA to read it before forming an opinion. “I kept telling him to read the book first and understand its context, but he was not interested,” Ambi said, adding that he would file a complaint on Thursday at the Rajarampuri police station in Kolhapur. The police said they have received no complaint yet. The audio clip has been widely shared on social media but could not be independently verified. Gaikwad confirmed that he had called the publisher but said the clip had been “edited and distorted”. He said he had read the book and believed it distorted history. He also objected to what he described as an informal or disrespectful reference to Shivaji Maharaj. “I have done nothing wrong... such people deserve to be abused,” he said, adding that he reacted after being provoked during the conversation.

Sources said Gaikwad had called Ambi under the impression that he was the book’s author and that the exchange turned heated after the publisher clarified otherwise. Reacting to the incident, Medha Pansare, daughter of the late Pansare, said threats cannot counter ideas. “You cannot kill an idea. Read the book first, then comment,” she said in Kolhapur, adding that legal options were being explored. Lakhs of copies of the book have been printed and read across Maharashtra, Medha said, adding that similar objections had been raised earlier but Pansare had refused to change the title despite receiving threats. Gaikwad has been embroiled in controversies in the past, including over a video that showed him assaulting a MLA canteen staffer in Mumbai and for making provocative remarks

Maharashtra to launch first stargazing fest at Lonar Crater, Harihareshwar to promote astrotourism

GNS News Agency, May 1

Pune-based Shweta Kulkarni, 30, would always wonder why there were very few stars in the sky. This cosmic curiosity that began through the lens of a telescope at the age of six soon led Kulkarni to host stargazing events and later set up AstronEra in 2018. AstronEra, which focuses on protecting Maharashtra’s night skies through research, policy, and community outreach, has partnered with the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) to host a stargazing festival for the first time in the state. The festival will be held at Lonar, known for its unique meteor-impact crater lake, and Harihareshwar, a tourist destination in the Konkan region, from April 24 to 26. As it marks its golden jubilee year, MTDC is set to host stargazing sessions, conceptualised by Kulkarni, offering an immersive and knowledge-rich experience for astronomy enthusiasts, students, and tourists.

According to Nilesh Gatne, Managing Director, MTDC, the initiative aims at promoting environment friendly and experience-based tourism. Chandrashekhar Jaiswal, General Manager, MTDC, told The Indian Express that this was a unique concept and they were expecting a good turnout. Kulkarni, who is passionate about combating light pollution, says, “I refuse to accept a world where we lose not just the night sky but also the curiosity, culture, and sense of wonder that connects us with the universe.” She believes the night sky interlinks science, culture, and the future of life on Earth. “Our mission at AstronEra is to protect the night, not by resisting progress, but by designing it wisely. When natural darkness is lost, we lose more than stars; we lose our curiosity,” says the 30-year-old founder.

AstronEra is an endorsed partner of Dark Sky International, an organisation that certifies and assists in the conservation of starry sky parks, communities, and other locations worldwide. The Dark Sky movement focuses on protecting areas with minimal light pollution, which allows for clear views of the stars and the cosmos. This benefits ecosystems, human health, and energy conservation by



reducing artificial light. This initiative coincides with the International Dark Sky Week (from April 13 to 20) that is being observed for the first time in the state. It encourages citizens worldwide to ‘Go Dark’ by reducing light pollution. This effort is supported by Minister for Tourism Shambhuraj Desai, Minister of State for Tourism Indranil Naik, and Principal Secretary Sanjay Khandare. According to MTDC officers, Harihareshwar, located in the Raigad district and approximately four hours from Mumbai, is famous for its beaches, green hills, and the revered Harihareshwar Temple; while Lonar is considered an ideal location for dark sky conservation. Officials aim to encourage the development of innovative tourism concepts such as astrotourism while supporting local tourism businesses and raising awareness among citizens about science outreach and environmental conservation. As part of the stargazing (sky observation) sessions, there will be interactive astronomy presentations led by experts, informative activities addressing light pollution and dark sky conservation, and environmental awareness programmes. These activities will provide detailed information on the harmful effects of light pollution, the importance of natural darkness, and measures individuals and communities can take. By integrating science outreach and nature conservation, this initiative is expected to accelerate the growth of astrotourism as a sustainable sector, according to MTDC officers.

Karnataka SSLC results: overall pass percentage rises to 88.73%; 94.1% of freshers pass



GNS News Agency, May 1

The Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board announced SSLC results on Thursday, reporting an overall pass percentage of 88.73 per cent and 94.1 per cent among first-time candidates. School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa stated that 8,56,516 students appeared for the Class 10 examinations and 7,60,002 of them passed. Among regular first-time candidates, 7,70,209 students appeared, and 7,24,794 of them cleared the exam, resulting in a pass percentage of approximately 94.1 per cent, a sharp increase from last year’s 80.04 per cent (considering all three exams, including two supplementary exams). The overall pass percentage increased from 74.74 per cent to 88.73 per cent. Among the freshers, seven students secured 100 per cent marks. Government schools’ pass percentage increased to 93.97 per cent from 77.15 per cent. Among districts, Dakshina Kannada recorded the highest pass percentage of 98.4 per cent, followed by Udupi (98.18 per cent) and Uttara Kannada (98.09 per cent). Three days before the third-language examinations, the Government announced that only grades, not marks, would be awarded in these examinations, but the Karnataka High Court later quashed the decision. Most students have chosen Hindi as their third language. And 98.55 per cent of the students have passed in the third-language papers. The exams were conducted from March 18 to April 2 across 2,870 centres statewide. The evaluation of answer scripts took place between April 8 and April 16 at 237 centres cov-

ering 35 educational districts. Girls outperformed boys once again, continuing the trend of higher pass percentages among female students. The boys’ pass percentage stands at 91.94 per cent, while the girls’ percentage is 96.18 per cent.

Garbage on Godavari embankment cleared, Green Zone developed with eucalyptus plantation

Bhadrachalam: Addressing the decades-old problem of the dumping yard on the banks of the Godavari river at Bhadrachalam, the garbage at the site has been cleared. Clearing the garbage dump site paved the way for developing a ‘Prakruthi Vanam’ along the Godavari river embankment as part of a comprehensive ‘Green and Clean’ initiative by the Bhadrachalam sub-divisional administration. Sub-Collector Mrunal Shrestha informed that the initiative has been taken up with the support of ITDA Project Officer B Rahul over the past one year. Between October 2025 and February 2026, approximately 100 kilograms of plastic waste was removed from the site. The land was reclaimed and, with the cooperation of the Bhadrachalam gram panchayat, as many as 10,000 eucalyptus saplings have been planted across five acres, with the gram panchayat taking responsibility for their maintenance. The transformation is visible at the dumping yard, which has now been reclaimed as a ‘Green Zone’, and it is expected to significantly enhance the environmental health of the riverfront area over the next two to three years as part of restoration efforts.

Maharashtra to launch India’s first AI-powered apprenticeship assistant



GNS News Agency, May 1

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will launch MahaChatur AI, where signing of a number of MoUs will be done with knowledge and industry partners.Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will launch MahaChatur AI, where signing of a number of MoUs will be done with knowledge and industry partners.Maharashtra government is set to launch MahaChatur AI, a conversational artificial intelligence platform designed to simplify access to apprenticeship opportunities for youth across the state on Monday.

Operating through a simple mobile interface on WhatsApp, MahaChatur AI guides users through the entire apprenticeship lifecycle. Young people can use the platform to check their eligibility, understand available opportunities in companies , complete registration and profile creation, and receive step-by-step guidance through training and placement stages.Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will launch MahaChatur AI, where signing of a number of MoUs

will be done with knowledge and industry partners.

“Maharashtra is leading among states in apprenticeship engagement under National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and has a top up scheme called Maharashtra Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (MAPS). The state has a vibrant eco system and policy framework to provide industry aligned trainings and AI Mahachatur will help to scale further,” said Manisha Verma, additional chief secretary, skill, employment, entrepreneurship and innovation department.The officer said that despite strong policy frameworks, young people have continued to face practical barriers, including complex registration procedures, lack of guidance, and information gaps, that limit their access to available opportunities. MahaChatur AI is the state government’s direct response to provide a guided access as per the Chief Minister’s directives to work towards “ease of living” and “ease of doing business” for citizens.The system, developed in collaboration with Rightwalk Foundation, is built on open-source AI models hosted within government-controlled infrastructure, ensuring data security and sovereignty. All interactions are consent-based, meaning actions are taken only after user approval through official government systems.Officials say the platform reduces the time required to navigate apprenticeship processes. Tasks that previously took two to three days can now be completed in approximately 15 minutes with guided support — a change expected to boost registrations and reduce drop-offs from the scheme.The platform also promotes inclusive access, with particular attention to rural communities, disadvantaged youth, and first-generation learners. Real-time data generated through the system will also support policy monitoring and program improvement.

Karnataka hiding health details of ailing minister Sudhakar to misuse his thumb impression, alleges Kumaraswamy

GNS News Agency, May 1

Union minister H D Kumaraswamy dropped a bombshell on Sunday alleging that the Karnataka Government was hiding details about the condition of hospitalised minister D Sudhakar and could misuse it to commit fraud.Sudhakar, the minister for planning and statistics, has suffered from a lung infection since the end of March. His condition deteriorated last week, and he is under intensive care at the Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital in Bengaluru’s Electronics City.

Speaking to reporters in Chitradurga, the Union minister for heavy industries and steel said that though he did not want to raise the issue as Sudhakar was fighting for his life, “we should see what is happening inside. I don’t know how much the person is suffering.”Accusing the Government of hiding information about Sudhakar’s health, the Union minister sought to know the reason for it.“Maybe to take his thumb impression (on documents), they have hidden the facts,” Kumaraswamy alleged, demanding the Government come clean on the minister’s health.Asking why there was a delay in revealing Sudhakar’s true condition, he said, “Some people are experts in misusing such moments”. He



added that there had been instances in the past where people’s last moments were misused.On Sunday, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar visited the hospital and enquired about Sudhakar’s health.Responding to a question on the Ahinda (acronym for minorities, Dalits and backward castes) convention planned at Hubballi by the Congress, the JD(S) leader linked it to the ongoing power tussle in the state and said the convention was meant to protect Chief Minister Siddaramaiah’s chair.

From Pune to Puri, Kamakhya, Hampi, and beyond: IRCTC’s new Bharat Gaurav train options this summer

GNS News Agency, May 1

The Indian Railways tourism arm last week announced all-inclusive packages to several spiritual destinations in North, East, and South India, with boarding options across Maharashtra.Pune residents planning a pilgrimage this summer have two new options from IRCTC’s Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train series – one heading to eastern and northern sacred sites, and another covering the spiritual circuit of South India.The first tour, called the Puri-Kamakhya-Baidyanath Dham Yatra, starts from Pune on June 25 and spans 11 nights and 12 days. The itinerary takes travellers to the Jagannath Temple in Puri, the Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati, Baidyanath Dham in Jharkhand’s Jasidih, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, and the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya.Boarding is available at several stations along the Pune-Nagpur corridor, including Lonavala, Karjat, Panvel, Kalyan, Nashik, Manmad, Chalisgaon, Bhusawal, Akola, Badnera, Wardha, and Nagpur, making it accessible to a wide range of travellers from across Maharashtra.

The second tour, the Divya Dakshin Yatra, originates from Nagpur and covers prominent destinations in South India, including Hampi, Mysore, Coimbatore, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, Tirupati, and the Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga. It is also an 11-night, 12-day package.Boarding and deboarding are available at multiple stations across Maharashtra, including Nagpur, Wardha, Badnera, Akola, Bhusawal, Jalgaon, Chalisgaon, Manmad, Nasik, Igatpuri, Kalyan, and Pune, making it equally accessible to travellers from across the state.Both trains offer three travel classes – Economy Sleeper, Standard 3AC, and Comfort 2AC – and can accommodate approximately 750 passen-



gers each. Packages are all-inclusive, covering accommodation in hotels on a double, triple, or quad-sharing basis, all vegetarian meals, AC/Non-AC transfers, sightseeing, travel insurance, and the services of IRCTC tour managers.

For the Puri-Kamakhya-Baidyanath Dham Yatra, fares are priced at Rs 22,770 per person for the Economy (Sleeper) class, Rs 39,620 for Standard (3AC), and Rs 52,860 for Comfort (2AC). The Divya Dakshin Yatra is slightly more affordable, with fares at Rs 21,690, Rs 36,740, and Rs 48,730 for the respective classes.Bookings for both tours are open on the IRCTC Tourism Portal. Those seeking further information can call 8287931886 or write to bgtmumbai@irctc.com.Dr A K Singh, Spokesperson, IRCTC West Zone, said that passenger safety and health remain the top priority, and all necessary arrangements have been made to ensure a safe and comfortable journey.

Anna Hazare calls for law to stop leaders from switching parties

Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra): In light of politicians changing parties after election victories, veteran social activist Anna Hazare on Sunday called for the introduction and implementation of legislation that would prohibit leaders elected under the banner of a specific political party from defecting. He also urged the public to deliberate thoughtfully before voting for a particular leader.His response came in the wake of a significant political upheaval triggered by the defection of seven Rajya Sabha members from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which includes the recently removed Deputy Leader of the Upper House, Raghav Chadha.Speaking to IANS, Hazare emphasised that nowhere in the Constitution is there any mention of parties or factions.“The Constitution always focuses on the welfare of society and the nation. It does not mention any political party. Today, disputes and conflicts in society are increasing because of such factions and political parties,” he said.The social activist said, “People switch from one party to another, thinking about their own inter-

ests, moving to wherever they find benefits for themselves.”Calling for the implementation of the law, he said: “A strict law should be enacted that would prevent elected leaders from switching into other parties. The country functions on the basis of laws. If such a law is implemented, mistakes like these will not occur.”“With such a law in place, people will not be able to switch parties,” he reiterated.Hazare mentioned that society and the people should think about those leaders who recently switched from the AAP to the BJP.He urged voters to be careful while casting their votes.“That is why voters are supreme, and it is up to them to decide whom to vote for, the right person or the wrong one. If voters make a thoughtful decision, the irregularities plaguing all parties and factions can be rectified,” Hazare asserted.Moreover, he alleged that certain politicians don’t think about the country and society and rather focus on gaining money and power.“A vicious cycle of power leading to money, and money leading back to power, continues, and this is the root cause of these transgressions,” he stressed.

Andheri subway may continue to get inundated this monsoon, BMC mulls construction of holding pond by next year



GNS News Agency, May 1

With the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) being unable to solve the flooding woes of the Andheri subway till now, waterlogging is expected to persist in the area in the upcoming monsoon season as well. Civic officials, though, maintained that a measure will be adopted soon, leading to the mitigation of the crisis from next year.Located 1 km from the Andheri railway station, the Andheri subway is a key east-west link in the western suburbs. However, during the monsoon, the subway is kept shut due to waterlogging. During 2025, the subway was shut 33 times between June and October. Before that, in 2024, the subway was shut 35 times during this period, and in 2023, it was shut 21 times.Speaking to The Indian Express, Abhijit Bangar, Additional Municipal Commissioner (Projects), said the authorities are looking at two probable options – diversion of the existing drainage network and construction of a holding pond.

“However, the process of diverting the drains is going to be challenging since the drains have sharp turns, which cause disruption to the flow of wastewater, leading to clogs and reduced lifespan of pipelines,” Bangar added.Therefore, sources said that a holding pond is likely to be the probable solution to counter flooding in Andheri.A holding pond is like a detention basin that temporarily stores water during times of heavy rainfall. The water from a flood-prone area is routed to a nearby pond through pumps and pipelines, where the water is either kept in storage temporarily or channeled to nearby outfalls by using dewatering pumps. Besides tackling waterlogging during rains, holding ponds also act as a buffer between an area and its nearby water body.In Mumbai, a holding pond was constructed in Hindmata Junction, which was a key flood-prone area. Following this, the issue of waterlogging in that area decreased by a large

margin.The BMC has roped in IIT Bombay to chalk out the solution for Andheri. Bangar said that the BMC has set a June 15 target to finalise the plan of implementation, following which tenders will be floated, with the construction work set to begin by October this year.

In 2024, the BMC had proposed a Rs 200 crore proposal to counter the flooding issue at Andheri Subway. The civic body’s objective was to augment the existing drainage system to ensure that the water-carrying capacity increases. In addition to this, the civic authorities had also planned to create an additional drainage line that would divert the flow of water in a separate direction towards the western side, eventually discharging the water to the nearby creek.The two-phase project was supposed to begin in October last year and be completed by May 2026. However, the project didn’t take off.“During our feasibility study and estimation for the project, we found out that the carrying capacity of the drains could be increased to tackle an average rainfall of 55 mm. At present, the carrying capacity is just 20 mm, and after the implementation of the proposed works, we would get only an additional cover of 35 mm of rainfall, which is not a wide range. Therefore, spending Rs 200 crore just to tackle 35 mm of rainfall will not be worth it, and we had to cancel this project to chalk out a more feasible project with a good cost-benefit ratio,” an official said.

The location of the subway is saucer-shaped in nature, which means the entry and exit points of the subway are elevated and have a slope-like curvature, due to which water from the adjoining areas travels downstream inside the subway. Besides this, the Mogra Nullah, which originates 2 km away from the subway, passes downstream, abutting the subway, and whenever the water in the nullah overflows, it enters the subway and stays accumulated there.“One of the major challenges that we (BMC) are facing in keeping this particular point flood-free is the topography of this subway. This area is called the watershed area, and the gradient over there is very steep. Therefore, during the rain, water gushes inside the subway at a very high speed. Unless any large-scale structural intervention is carried out, it will continue to be a challenge to keep the subway entirely flood-free,” an official said.“Often we see materials like suitcases, furniture, plastic items, bicycles, being disposed of in the drain when they are no longer of use. These items obstruct the water flow, which, in turn, leads to overflow of the drains, causing flooding in the subway. We have been holding dialogues with local residents as well; however, no concrete result has happened yet,” the official added.

As Opp grills govt over Shivaji Maharaj comments, Mahyuti looks bereft of reply

GNS News Agency, May 1

The controversy on a book published 38 years ago on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj followed by a statement made on him by preacher Dharendra Shastri has left the ruling mahayuti in search of explanation as the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) launched a united attack on the government.In the first instance, Shiv Sena MLA from Buldhana Sanjay Gaikwad was accused of abusing and threatening a publisher over a book first published in 1988, authored by veteran communist leader Govind Pansare, titled Shivaji Kon hota? (Who was Shivaji?). Gaikwad called Kolhapur-based publisher Prashant Ambi, objecting to the title of the book using abusive language and threatening assault.

A day later, preacher Dharendra Shastri’s comments during the Bharat Durga Shaktisthal and Dharma Sabha at Jamtha in Nagpur which was attended by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, created yet another controversy.“Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj grew very tired of fighting wars; he felt exhausted. One day, he went to Ramdas Swami. He took off his crown and placed it down, saying, ‘I do not want to fight wars anymore. You look after this crown; you handle this kingdom. We shall follow your orders. We can no longer fight; we are very tired and need rest. We wish to do nothing for a few days’,” said Shastri. “After Shivaji Maharaj spoke his mind, Ramdas Swami said, ‘Who are you to us?’ Shivaji Maharaj replied, ‘I am your disciple.’ ‘Then who am I?’ asked Swami. To that, Shivaji Maharaj said, ‘You are my Guru’. Ramdas Swami then asked, ‘Then what is the duty of a disciple?’ To this, the Maharaj replied that it is the disciple’s duty to obey whatever the Guru commands. Ramdas Swami then picked up the crown and placed it on the Maharaj’s head. ‘From today, the kingdom is mine. I shall run the state. You are to conduct the administration’,” Shastri said.

Initiated by Maharashtra Congress chief Harshvardhan Sapkal who demanded arrest of Gaikwad and apology from CM Devendra Fadnavis, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and union minister Nitin Gadkari for sharing stage with Shastri, he was echoed by leaders of Nationalist Congress Party (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT). It forced CM Fadnavis to issue clarifications on both the controversies.“Fadnavis, Bhagwat and Gadkari were present at the Shastri’s program. None of them objected to the insult of Shivaji Maharaj. It seems that disrespecting Shivaji Maharaj is a national policy of BJP and RSS. All three of them should apologise for not speaking up,” said Sapkal. Last month, it was CM Fadnavis who



had targeted Sapkal over his statement regarding Shivaji Maharaj and Tipu Sultan. Sapkal maintained that no-action against individuals like Shastri was sending the wrong message to society.Sapkal’s aggressive stand has brought other party leaders and allies to launch an attack on the ruling BJP too. NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar targeted the Home department led by CM Fadnavis for not registering an FIR against Gaikwad, despite the audio proof. “This government should remember that the more they protect the likes of Gaikwad, the more it will go down,” he said. Pawar also questioned the silence of ruling party leaders who were on stage when Shastri made his remarks. “This fraud should not be seen in Maharashtra henceforth,” said Pawar, issuing a warning to Shastri.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said that the CM or RSS chief should have stopped Shastri. “At a time when these people come to Maharashtra and state unhistorical things, the CM or RSS chief should have stopped them and informed them the sentiments of people of Maharashtra,” said Raut.In Nashik, when Fadnavis was asked about the comments, he distanced himself from it. In the statement of Shastri, he said: “In the historical records or books available to us, there are no such examples. Stories about great personalities often evolve differently over time. Like in the case of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, various folk versions exist in different regions”.With regards to Sanjay Gaikwad’s remarks, Fadnavis said, “For one, things must be understood first. When we create an uproar without understanding them, it is not right. Everyone has respect for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in their hearts. Now, it has been 40 years since this book was printed. One must consider how appropriate it is to create an issue like this after 40 years. Specifically, I do not think using such foul language is right. I am certain that Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will give him a proper understanding (reprimand) on this.”

TMC’s Yusuf Pathan says BJP set to rule Gujarat for decades

Vadodara: Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Yusuf Pathan, along with his family, cast his vote in the Gujarat local body elections on Sunday, while making remarks asserting that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is likely to remain in power in the state for decades, citing public preference and governance as key factors.Speaking after casting his vote, Pathan said, “I will say that the BJP cannot be removed from power in Gujarat for the next 40–50 years. Whatever it is, facts are facts. The reality is that the party which is strong, works for the people, and is liked by them continues to stay in power. Across India, in different states, the parties that people support and feel are working for them are the ones they prefer and vote for.”He further added, “My response is that people here like the BJP and vote for it based on development, so the BJP will continue to remain in power in Gujarat. Similarly, in West Bengal, the TMC party is preferred by the people because it raises their voices

and works among the public.”Referring to voter turnout patterns in West Bengal, Pathan said, “If these 92 lakh voters are included, the turnout would still remain around 80–81 per cent. There is no special ‘magic’ in the numbers; it is simply a matter of calculation and percentage adjustment.”His remarks come as Gujarat is witnessing widespread local body elections across municipal corporations, municipalities and panchayat raj institutions.According to official arrangements, polling is being conducted using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. across the state, with counting scheduled for April 28.The exercise covers nearly 10,000 seats and involves over 4 crore registered voters.Voting is underway in key urban centres, including Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot and other districts, with thousands of polling stations operational under multi-tier security arrangements.Election authorities have also deployed large police contingents, quick response teams

What appeals to tribunals say: ‘Lack of notice, hearing’, ‘documents not considered’



Among the grounds cited by voters deleted after adjudication, in their appeals to tribunals in Bengal, are the lack of notice or hearing before being struck off the rolls; an apprehension that the documents submitted by them were not taken into account by judicial officers adjudicating on their eligibility; and being served notices for “logical discrepancies” that did not apply to them at all. Thirty-four lakh applications are pending before the tribunals, as per data shared by the Election Commission of India (ECI), including appeals for both inclusion and exclusion. Till Wednesday, the ECI had considered only around 650 cases, and put back 139 names into the electoral rolls for the first phase of polling today.

The Indian Express accessed appeals filed by the applicants through their lawyers across districts, which show that many of them had submitted documents establishing their eligibility, including citizenship. They suspect that these were not presented to the Supreme Court-appointed judicial officers by the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)/Assistant EROs, who are the statutory authority for maintaining electoral rolls. Documents submitted but names deleted Imran Zaki, a Kolkata-based businessman and educationist, said in his appeal that, as advised by a Booth Level Officer (BLO), he submitted his passport as proof, but his name was sent for adjudication without notice to him and then deleted in the supplementary list published on April 6. He, too, suspects his documents were not placed before the judicial officer concerned. “I was called by the BLO and asked to submit additional documents. I gave my passport, which has been issued by the Ministry of External Affairs. In the past I have flown from Europe to be able to vote, but this time I won’t be able to,” he said.

Another deleted elector, Durri Bhalla, a cookbook author, has also filed an appeal mentioning her apprehension that her documents were not placed before the JO. She says she was called, along with her husband and daughter, to submit additional documents during a hearing. While she says she carried all documents, passport included, the officials present said they only needed one. Her name was struck off the rolls, while her husband’s and daughter’s were not. Yasmeen Rahman, a Kolkata resident who voted in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, got a notice under category of mismatch in name of father in current and previous rolls. But, interestingly, she says she gave her own serial number in the 2002 electoral roll, not her father’s. In the 2002 roll, Yasmeen was enrolled as Jharna Biswas, which was her name before she converted and got married over two decades ago. Her husband, Abdur Rahman, says they submitted all the documents possible – her conversion certificate, nikahnama and old Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) with her old name and photograph.

He adds that all her documents, including the EPIC, were duly changed to her new name after marriage. She says her name was still deleted in the supplementary list released on March 29, even after she appeared for a hearing and provided documents on January 27. Another Kolkata resident who has been deleted from the rolls, Rafiq Khatoon, 83, submitted a copy of her passport. Her appeal says she, too, got a notice for mismatch in father’s name in

the current and previous roll. She had appeared for a hearing on February 1 and submitted documents, including proof of her own name in the 2002 roll. “My father died in 1973, so the question of mismatch can’t arise,” she wrote in her appeal. Her son, Tanweeruddin Anwar, says: “We don’t understand why this has happened when the name was in the 2002 rolls and we submitted the passport and her pension order too as my father was a government employee,” he said. In another case, the deleted elector, a woman who moved to Kolkata from Jharkhand two decades ago, had submitted her name in the 2003 Jharkhand electoral roll, as the EC had allowed electors to use the electoral roll of any state from the respective last intensive revision as proof. Since her husband is a Central government employee, she requested not to be named.

She received a notice for mismatch in her father’s name. Apart from one document, her father’s name was written as Mohammad, followed by his given name, in all. In one, it was spelled as “Md”, a commonly used abbreviation for Mohammad. Despite submitting documents during the hearing, she found her name deleted in the list on April 1. In her appeal, she has argued that “Md” is a prefix and that there is no mismatch. Tarique Quasimuddin, an advocate at the Calcutta High Court whose chambers have helped around 300 disenfranchised electors file their appeals, said many of the appellants had passports. “What we have experienced is that in some of the cases, the Booth Level Officers did not advise the electors properly. They told them that only one document is enough. This did not give them an opportunity to establish their claim,” he said. The Election Commission of India did not respond to a request for comment sent on Monday. Sabir Ahamed, whose Kolkata-based Sabar Institute has helped electors file appeals and conducted legal aid camps for those affected, said the tribunals, which were notified by the EC on March 20, are yet to start working.

The inefficiency of the ECI is a serious blow to the democratic rights of citizens. West Bengal is heading into elections with nearly 27 lakh voters still awaiting the restoration of their voting rights. The tribunals are yet to begin functioning, and it appears that people will have to undergo the ordeal of attending tribunal proceedings for years to come. The judiciary should take cognisance of such a failure of the system,” Ahamed said. The process followed On orders of the Supreme Court, around 700 judicial officers from West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha were appointed in February to decide on the eligibility of 60.06 lakh electors or 8% of the electorate, in an unprecedented move that saw the court invoke its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution. These electors were among those flagged by the EC’s centralised algorithm as having “logical discrepancies” in the documents submitted by them during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls started last year. After adjudication, 27.10 lakh of these electors were found ineligible and deleted from the rolls as on April 7, just weeks ahead of the Assembly polls on April 23 and April 29. The Supreme Court, while hearing a batch of petitions challenging the SIR, on March 10 had ordered the setting up of appellate tribunals of former High Court Chief Justices/judges so as to give those affected a chance to appeal the decision of the Judicial Officers. Nineteen former judges were then appointed by the EC on March 20 as single-member appellate tribunals. While the EC is yet to release any data on the number of appeals and their status, the court noted in its order on April 13 that a total of 34 lakh appeals against exclusions as well as inclusions in the rolls had been filed. The court again invoked Article 142, ordering that anyone cleared by the tribunals till April 21 for the first phase and April 27 for the second, would be allowed to vote and the EC would publish supplementary lists for the same. As of Monday, a day before the deadline for phase one, no names cleared by the tribunals had been published.

US seizes Iranian-linked oil tanker amid rising maritime tensions



Dubai: The US military on Thursday seized another tanker associated with the smuggling of Iranian oil, ratcheting up a standoff with Iran a day after its paramilitary Revolutionary Guards took control of two vessels in the crucial Strait of Hormuz. The Defence Department released video footage of US forces on the deck of the oil tanker Majestic X, which was seized in the Indian Ocean. “We will continue global maritime enforcement to disrupt illicit networks and interdict vessels providing material support to Iran, wherever they operate,” a Pentagon statement said.

Ship-tracking data showed the Majestic X in the Indian Ocean between Sri Lanka and Indonesia, roughly the same location as the oil tanker Tifani, earlier seized by

American forces. It had been bound for Zhoushan, China. There was no immediate response from Iran on the news of the seizure. The seizure comes a day after Iran attacked three cargo ships in the strait, capturing two of them, in a move that intensified its assault on shipping in the key waterway through which 20 per cent of the world’s traded oil passes in peacetime. The Majestic X is a Guyana-flagged oil tanker. It previously had been named Phonix and had been sanctioned by the US Treasury Department in 2024 for smuggling Iranian crude oil in contravention of US sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

On Tuesday, US President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire while maintaining an American blockade of Iranian ports. The standoff between the US and Iran has effectively choked off nearly all exports through the strait with no end in sight. The conflict has already sent gas prices skyrocketing far beyond the region and raised the cost of food and a wide array of other products.

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, nosed over USD 100 per barrel, marking a 35 per cent increase from prewar levels, but stock markets still appear to be shrugging it off. The European Union energy commissioner, Dan Jørgensen warned Wednesday of lasting impact for consumers and businesses, likening it to other major energy crises over the last half-century. He said the disruption is costing Europe around 500 million euros (USD 600 million) each day.

UK man rapes Sikh woman thinking she was a Muslim, says ‘he wanted to have fun

A UK-based man has admitted carrying out a violent rape and robbery of a Sikh woman in her home, alongside subjecting her to religiously aggravated abuse, during a trial at Birmingham Crown Court. John Ashby, 32, who has no fixed address, changed his plea to guilty on the second day of proceedings after initially denying the charges. The offences relate to an attack that took place in Walsall in October 2025, reports BBC. He has now admitted rape, robbery, intentional strangulation and religiously aggravated assault. The court heard that the victim did not know Ashby prior to the incident. On the day of the attack, she had returned home after getting off a bus, unaware that he had followed her. Prosecutors said Ashby later entered her property armed with a stick he had picked up from the ground. After hearing a noise inside her home, the woman attempted to protect herself by locking herself in the bathroom. However, Ashby forced entry and carried out the attack. Prosecutor Phil Bradley KC told the court that once inside, Ashby turned off the light and told the woman he was “here to have fun.”

During the assault, the victim was struck with the stick and strangled. She was forced into a bathtub, where Ashby turned on hot water and continued the attack. The court heard that throughout the ordeal, he subjected her to a stream of Islamophobic abuse, apparently believing she was Muslim, despite her being Sikh. Prosecutors said Ashby also forced the woman to repeat phrases and referred to himself as “the master.” After raping her, he made her go into the bedroom and lie on the bed while continuing to make abusive and degrading comments. He also stole jewellery and a mobile phone before leaving the property. The attack ended when Ashby appeared to be disturbed by a noise outside and fled. The victim quickly raised the alarm, and police arrived within minutes. She later identified Ashby during an identity parade. Ashby was arrested two days later in the Perry Barr area of Birmingham. During police interviews, he made comments about the victim’s appearance, including questioning why she was not wearing a hijab. The court also heard that while in custody, he made remarks expressing hostility about the local community.

14 Indian ships exit Strait of Hormuz safely: MEA



New Delhi: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said that 14 Indian ships have exited the Strait of Hormuz safely in the past few weeks, while 14 remain in the Persian Gulf. “We have 10 Indian ships that have exited the Strait of Hormuz safely in the last few weeks. We have 14 Indian ships which are still in the Persian Gulf,” said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal while addressing a weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Thursday.

Tensions continue in and around the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway through which about one-fifth of global oil trade passes, ever since the conflict erupted in West Asia. On Wednesday, Iran attacked a ship in the Strait of Hormuz that was on its way to Mundra Port in India. The attack came hours after US President Donald Trump had announced an indefinite ceasefire. It was one of the two ships that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGC-N) announced it had attacked and taken over, according to the Iranian government-run Press TV. IRGC-N identified the ships it attacked as the MSC-Francesca and the Epaminodas.

India extends airspace closure for Pakistan aircraft till May 24

New Delhi: India has extended the ban on Pakistan planes from using its airspace till May 24. With the latest extension, the closure of the Indian airspace for Pakistan aircraft will now be in place for more than a year — a move that first came days after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025. Since April last year, both countries have been extending the closure of their airspaces for each other’s planes. On Tuesday, Pakistan extended the airspace closure till May 24. A Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) on Wednesday said the Indian airspace will not be available for Pakistan-registered aircraft and aircraft operated/ owned or leased by Pakistan airlines/ operators, including military flights. The ban will be effective till 2359 hours (UTC) on May 23, which means 0530 hours (IST) on May 24. Following the terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, on April 22, 2025, that killed 26 people, India and Pakistan closed their respective airspaces for each other’s planes. India’s airspace ban has been in place since April 30 last year, while Pakistan has closed its airspace for Indian aircraft from April 24, 2025. The ban, part of various measures taken by the Indian government against Pakistan in the wake of the terror attack, was initially till May 24, 2025 and has been subse-



quently extended every month. Generally, a NOTAM is a notice containing information that is essential for personnel involved in flight operations. Indian airlines are now taking longer routes to various international destinations due to the Pakistan airspace closure.

India-Africa partnership will be message of stability in turbulent world: Jaishankar



New Delhi: As the world navigates through complex geopolitical challenges, the India-Africa partnership assumes particular significance, and it will be a message of “stability” and “reliability” in a turbulent and uncertain world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday. Addressing a gathering at the unveiling of the logo, theme and website for the upcoming India-Africa Forum Summit-IV, Jaishankar also asserted that together, India and Africa are not just development partners, but also “partners in shaping a better world”. His comments come in the backdrop of multiple conflicts in various parts of the world, including the one in West Asia that has stretched for more than 50 days with global ramifications. The logo for the upcoming summit features a lion, superimposed on an image depicting interlocked maps of India and Africa. It carries the theme ‘Enduring Partnership Shared Vision’ and the date of the summit, May 28-31.

Jaishankar said the upcoming summit presents a “unique opportunity” to further “deepen our engagement”. It will offer a platform to shape the next phase of the partnership, “one that is more ambitious, more inclusive and more future-oriented”. “As the world navigates through complex geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges, our partnership assumes particular significance. “It will be a message of stability in a turbulent world, of reliability in an uncertain one, and of solidarity in difficult times,” Jaishankar said. “Together, India and Africa are not just development partners, but also

partners in shaping a better world,” he asserted. The event was attended by several ambassadors and diplomats from various African countries. Jaishankar also underlined that India has expanded its diplomatic footprint in Africa in recent years by opening 17 new missions across the continent, taking the number of Indian missions in Africa to 46. He emphasised that Africa occupies a “central place” in India’s foreign policy today, and New Delhi’s engagement with it is guided by a clear vision, rooted in the principle of equality, and of mutual respect and shared progress.

“We gather here to mark the next chapter in the enduring partnership between India and Africa through the India-Africa Forum Summit framework,” he said. The India-Africa relationship is rooted in “our civilisational linkages”, nurtured over centuries through cultural exchanges and human interactions, the external affairs minister said. “Our bonds were further strengthened as India stood in solidarity with the African nations in their struggle against colonialism,” he added. Underlining that the story of India’s freedom struggle is also closely linked with Africa, he said, “Our shared history of struggle, solidarity, resilience and aspirations continues to shape our partnership.” The minister underscored that the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision and Africa’s Agenda 2063 are complementary roadmaps towards prosperity and progress through sustainable growth and inclusive development. Jaishankar also said that the engagement between India and Africa has grown across key pillars with numerous high-level political interactions, with India consistently supporting Africa’s rightful place in global governance. A “seminal step” in that direction was the inclusion of the African Union in G20 during India’s presidency of the grouping in 2023, the minister said. “It reflected our firm belief that the voices of the Global South must shape global governance in times to come,” he added. Jaishankar also asserted that India has placed development cooperation and capacity building programmes at the “core of our partnership”. Defence, security and maritime cooperation play an important role in the engagement between the two sides, driven by the vision of MAHASAGAR to ensure stability in the Indian Ocean Region and safer sea lanes.

India storm into Thomas Cup semifinals

Horsens (Denmark): Lakshya Sen saved two match points to beat world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty added a gritty doubles win, before Ayush Shetty delivered the final blow as India registered a commanding 3-0 victory over Chinese Taipei to storm into the semifinals of the Thomas Cup Finals on Friday. Lakshya, who trailed for the better part of the contest, showed remarkable resilience to script an 18-21, 22-20, 21-17 victory in a marathon clash lasting one hour and 28 minutes.

World No. 4 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the Asian Games champions, then defeated Chiu Hsiang Chieh and Wang Chi-Lin 23-21, 19-21, 21-12 in one hour and 15 minutes to put India in a commanding position. The onus then shifted to Ayush Shetty, and the youngster delivered. The 20-year-old, who recently reached the final of the Badminton Asia Championships, produced

a breathtaking display, blending disciplined defence with attacking flair to notch up a 21-16, 21-17 win over world No. 8 and reigning All England Open Badminton Championships champion Lin Chun-Yi in the second singles to seal the contest. “This is not just a win to celebrate – it is a performance to remember. One that reflects belief, preparation, and the growing strength of Indian badminton,” former India coach Vimal Kumar said. India, the 2022 champions, will face either France or Japan in the semifinals. The victory also assured India a medal in the prestigious Thomas Cup Finals, regarded as the World Men’s Team Championships. India had won the Thomas Cup in 2022, besides winning bronze medals in 1952, 1955, and 1979. “The team has every reason to be proud. And perhaps more importantly, this is the kind of victory that builds belief for what lies ahead,”

Antibiotics can leave a long-term footprint on our gut microbiome: study



We have always known that antibiotics, life-saving drugs in serious infections, affect the composition of our gut microbiome (community of bacteria living in the gut). Now, scientists have found that certain types of antibiotics can be linked to changes that persist in the gut microbiome – and lower its diversity – for as long as up to four to eight years after treatment.A lower diversity of gut microbiome species has been associated with a range of health conditions, such as obesity, diabetes and Inflammatory Bowel Disease, wrote scientists from Sweden in the journal Nature Medicine.

Clindamycin, fluoroquinolones and flucloxacillin had the strongest associations, Tove Fall, professor of molecular epidemiology at Uppsala University and principal investigator of the study, told The Hindu. “We saw large and long-lasting effects on the overall composition of these types

including lower diversity and impact on individual bacteria types where some were reduced and others increased,” she added. The most commonly prescribed antibiotic to treat infections outside hospitals in Sweden – penicillin V – was linked to more short-lasting microbiome changes.

For the study, researchers pored through Sweden’s National Prescribed Drug Register, while parallelly mapping the gut microbiome of 14,979 adults living in Sweden. Then they compared the microbiome of those who had had several types of antibiotics and those who had not received any at all for the study period.While the reasons remain somewhat evasive, the antibiotic-catalysed changes indeed appear to leave a long-term footprint on the gut microbiome. “We can see that antibiotic use as far back as four to eight years ago is linked to the composition of a person’s gut microbiome today. Even a single course of treatment with certain types of antibiotics leaves traces,” the first author of the study, Gabriel Baldanzi, said in a press note. The scientists believe these discoveries “may help inform future recommendations on antibiotic use, especially when choosing between two equally effective antibiotics, one of which has a weaker impact on the gut microbiome,” said Dr. Fall. “This will enable us to gain an even better understanding of the recovery time and identify which gut microbiomes are more susceptible to disruption following antibiotic treatment,” she added.

The researchers are now collecting a second sample from almost half of the participants to get a clearer understanding of the recovery time and identify “which gut microbiomes are more susceptible to disruption following antibiotic treatment,” said the paper.

Why is ORS not used enough in India, and why it should be

For decades, this mixture of salts and glucose dissolved in water has been a familiar remedy in many Indian households, the first line of response when a child develops diarrhoea or vomiting. In recent months, ORS has also entered public discourse after the campaign by Hyderabad-based paediatrician, Sivaranjani Santosh drew attention to sugary drinks marketed as “ORS-like” beverages that do not follow medical standards. It prompted the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India to prohibit the use of the term ‘ORS’ on food and beverage products that do not meet the approved formulation, highlighting concerns that misleading products could worsen dehydration in children instead of treating it.

Despite the long familiarity with ORS and its affordability and effectiveness, its use in managing childhood diarrhoea and dehydration remains far from optimal. Experts explain what to know about ORS especially during the summer.A life-saving yet underused solution

ORS has played a critical role in reducing deaths from diarrhoeal diseases worldwide. According to M.S. Viswanathan, senior consultant paediatric gastroenterologist at Apollo Children’s Hospitals, Chennai, ORS has saved millions of children globally by correcting dehydration caused by diarrhoeal diseases.However, its use is still not universal. Data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) shows only about 62% of parents in India use ORS when their child has diarrhoea. This gap persists despite campaigns by governments and health organisations.Harish K, consultant in paediatrics and neonatology at SRM Prime Hospital, Chennai, notes that mild dehydration in children can be managed at home with ORS, to prevent progression to moderate or severe dehydration. Yet, many families turn first to antibiotics or anti-diarrhoeal medicines instead of this intervention.

Doctors say lack of counselling and insufficient information on how to prepare and administer ORS are main the barriers. Aparna G., consultant paediatrician at Rainbow Children’s Hospital, Chennai, points out that simply prescribing ORS without explaining the method of preparation, the required volume and the duration of use can limit its effectiveness. Incorrect preparation, she says, can even lead to complications.Another factor is also the palatability. Proper ORS solutions do not taste appealing, which discourages children from drinking them regularly.Early use matters during summerPaediatricians say the need for timely ORS becomes important during summer months. Rising temperatures and high humidity levels can increase loss of fluids through sweating, especially as children play outdoors.Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluid than it can replace. According to doctors, common causes in children include diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, poor intake of food and fluids, and excessive sweating. Research also suggests that for every degree Celsius rise in body temperature above 38°C, the body may require roughly 10% more fluids to maintain balance.

Children usually become dehydrated faster than adults. Early signs include sunken eyes, dryness of the mouth or tongue, increased thirst, irritability, and reduced urination and a sunken fontanelle (soft spot on the head) in infants. Dr. Harish explains that parents can begin giving ORS at home as soon as a child experiences loose stools or vomiting, especially if these signs appear.Dr. Viswanathan adds that children who develop diarrhoea or vomiting during hot weather should receive ORS in small and frequent amounts to help restore fluid and electrolyte balance. And they need to seek medical care if the child cannot retain fluids, shows persistent vomiting or diarrhoea, becomes unusually



drowsy, or shows signs of severe dehydration.Doctors stress that parents must encourage children to drink fluids regularly rather than waiting until they feel thirsty, and to also include water-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables in their diet during hot weather.Myths and mistakes around ORS

One of the misconceptions among parents is that ORS should be used only when diarrhoea becomes severe. Doctors emphasise that ORS works best when started early, even at the onset of diarrhoea, as it helps prevent dehydration from developing in the first place.Another belief is that plain water, juices or sweet drinks can adequately replace lost fluids. While water helps maintain hydration, it does not contain the necessary salts and sugars lost during diarrhoea and vomiting. ORS contains a balanced mixture of glucose and electrolytes that makes the intestine absorb fluids effectively.Commercial beverages and fruit juices are also not suitable substitutes. Many contain high levels of sugar that can worsen diarrhoea and increase fluid loss.Correct preparation of ORS is equally important. ORS sachets typically come in two sizes: one meant to be mixed with 200 ml of water and another with 1 litre. If it is not mixed correctly, the solution may become either too diluted or too concentrated, which can be harmful because of excess salt content.Doctors also advise to not add milk, fruit juice, soft drinks or soups while preparing ORS, as this can change and affect the balance of salts and sugars. Once prepared, the solution should be kept covered and used within 24 hours to avoid contamination.Home remedies, need for awarenessMany families depend on home remedies when a child develops diarrhoea. Doctors say some household fluids can help maintain hydration until ORS becomes available. Rice kanji, buttermilk with a pinch of salt, vegetable soup, tender coconut water and lightly salted lemon water can provide fluids and some nutrients.Use within 24 hours, then discard

Note: This is a temporary solution. Use standard ORS packets when available, as they contain the exact balance of salts and glucose. Empty the entire sachet into the exact amount of clean drinking water specified on the packet (usually 200 ml or 1 litre), stir well until fully dissolved, and do not add anything else.However, paediatricians stress that these should support, not replace, ORS. Standard ORS formulations recommended by the World Health Organization contain the precise balance of glucose and electrolytes required for optimal absorption in the intestine.Doctors stress awareness efforts should extend beyond health facilities. Demonstrations on preparing ORS, educational sessions in schools, community programmes, and information campaigns through television, radio and social media can help parents recognise early signs of dehydration and respond promptly.Ensuring when and how to use ORS, doctors add, can make a big difference in protecting one from dehydration and its complications.

Supreme Court appoints ex-CJI UU Lalit as mediator in Rs 500 crore RAKIA dispute

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday appointed former Chief Justice of India U U Lalit as the sole mediator to amicably resolve the dispute over the execution of a money decree of Rs 500 crore passed by a UAE court in favour of Ras Al Khaimah Investment Authority (RAKIA) and against Hyderabad-based industrialist Nimmagadda Prasad.RAKIA is seeking to enforce a UAE civil judgment for AED 267,941,374 (approximately Rs 543 crore principal and Rs 643 crore with interest).

The case stems from the “Vanpic Project”, a failed 2008 joint venture to develop ports and an airport in Andhra Pradesh.RAKIA alleges that Prasad, in collusion with former RAKIA CEO Khater Massaad, misappropriated USD 120 million intended for the project.On Monday, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi was informed by senior advocate Gopal Subramaniam, appearing for Prasad, that the industrialist has deposited Rs 125 crore as cash security as directed earlier.The senior lawyer also said that the original title deeds of a 37-acre land parcel in Telangana have been submitted

in the court. He also added that the land parcel is free from encumbrances.Subramaniam said his client was willing to undergo mediation for an amicable settlement of the case.Senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the foreign firm, said they were agreeable to time-bound mediation to resolve the dispute with a condition that the status quo with regard to the assets of Prasad be maintained and no third party rights be created till the conclusion of mediation.Taking note of the consent of both parties, the CJI appointed Justice Lalit as the sole mediator and requested him to undertake the mediation for expeditious disposal of the case.The bench asked Justice Lalit to undertake the mediation exercise in hybrid mode to enable the representatives of RAKIA to appear through video conferencing, keeping in mind the security situation in the Gulf region.Clarifying its earlier order, the CJI said the Hyderabad-based businessman can use the funds for running “day-to-day affairs” of his firms, including payment of salaries, and will not alienate immovable properties without prior nod of the court.

Beyond the city clinic: why rural India’s mental health is a development issue



On paper, mental healthcare in India often looks like a story of expanding services, new helplines, more awareness campaigns, and a growing vocabulary around stress, depression, and addiction. On the ground in rural India, however, it can look very different: a woman with persistent insomnia and body aches who has visited three doctors but never been asked about anxiety; a young man whose drinking escalates after crop loss and debt; an older farmer who quietly stops leaving the house after a failed monsoon, because “what’s the point?” The distress is real, but it rarely arrives in neat diagnostic boxes and even more rarely reaches a trained professional on time.

India’s National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) reported that 10.6% of adults live with a mental disorder, and the lifetime prevalence is 13.7%. This survey also reports lower measured prevalence in rural areas (6.9% rural vs 13.5% urban), a pattern that likely reflects under-detection and under-reporting in rural settings rather than an absence of distress.Even if we debate exact prevalence estimates, one number is difficult to argue with: the treatment gap. NMHS estimates suggest that 70%–92% of people with mental disorders do not receive appropriate treatment, depending on the condition. In other words, the problem is not only how many people are affected - it is that most people do not get care.

India’s mental health numbers at a glanceWorkforce: The government has states India has approximately 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people; benchmark often cited as 3 per 100,000

A rural mental health strategy collapses if it is built on specialists alone. India’s psychiatrist density is routinely cited as well below recommended benchmarks. But the headline shortage hides an equally consequential reality: distribution. Specialists cluster in metros and large cities; rural districts rely on a thin layer of general physicians, overburdened public facilities, and a mix of informal or faith-based care.When a psychiatrist is available only at a district hospital - hours away - “follow-up” becomes a luxury. The predictable result is late presentation, episodic contact, premature discontinuation of medicines, and families cycling between debt, crisis, and resignation.Livelihood insecurity and indebtedness: Agricultural income volatility, informal credit, and debt stress are chronic triggers for anxiety, depression, and harmful alcohol use.Climate shocks: Heat waves, unseasonal rain, droughts, and crop failure push stress into the household - often as conflict, substance use, and hopelessness.Social hierarchy and exclusion: Caste-based discrimination, landlessness, and precarious work contribute to long-term psychological stress and reduced help-seeking.Gendered burden: Women frequently present with somatic complaints, sleep disturbance, and chronic fatigue - symptoms that may mask depression or anxiety - while also facing domestic violence, restricted mobility, and limited financial autonomy.Migration and “left-behind” families: Young adults moving for work can reduce social support for elders and increase stress for spouses managing

households alone. These are not abstract forces - they translate into daily suffering. And sometimes, into death.Suicide is a tragic development indicator. In 2023, India recorded 171,418 suicides. Suicide is multi-causal and cannot be simplistically attributed to “mental illness” alone. But as a public signal, it tells us something important: when distress becomes chronic, support is absent, and help-seeking is stigmatized, risk rises and preventable deaths follow.It’s not just about awareness; mental healthcare services depend on access, trust, and continuity. A number of factors hinder access to care in rural areas.One important factor is that symptoms often do not present as “mental health”: distress may manifest as pain, weakness, sleep issues, or “tension,” so it’s missed without routine screening. Another factor is one that both urban and rural India struggle with: stigma. But stigma often has a higher social cost rurally: being seen seeking psychiatric help can affect marriage prospects, reputation, and family standing. Time and travel pose significant barriers as well: reaching district-level care can mean losing a day’s wage (or more). For women, this is even more of a barrier due to limited mobility and finances. Breaks in care also contribute to less than optimal care being delivered: when medicines, counselling, and follow-up care are inconsistent, people tend to drop out. Substance use is under-addressed: early, structured help for alcohol-related harm is rare and care often begins after damage is done, contributing to added distress and financial burdens.Rural India’s mental health burden is not a niche concern - it is a cross-cutting constraint on nearly every development outcome we care about:Economic participation: Untreated depression and anxiety reduce productivity, increase absenteeism, and intensify household financial strain.Maternal and child outcomes: Maternal depression affects nutrition, early childhood development, and health-seeking.Education: Adolescent distress and substance use shape school dropout, risk-taking, and long-term prospects.Gender equity: Mental health is both a consequence and amplifier of violence and disempowerment.Social cohesion: Untreated illness can increase conflict, stigma, neglect, and in extreme cases, suicide.India has made several policy commitments: the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) is described as covering 767 districts, mental health services have been added to the package at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, and the national tele-mental health programme Tele-MANAS is reported to have handled over 1.81 million calls. These are important steps. But coverage is not the same as care. The binding constraints are last-mile: trained primary-care teams, reliable supplies, supervision, and a referral pathway that actually functions.Make primary care the default platform: Train PHC teams to screen routinely for depression/anxiety/substance use, start basic treatment, and follow up - supported by DMHP specialists.

Task-share psychological care: Brief, evidence-based interventions (problem-solving, behavioural activation, motivational approaches for alcohol use) can be delivered by trained non-specialists with supervision. Medicines should not be the only form of care provided.Treat suicide prevention as a local systems goal: Follow-up after self-harm. Community identification of high-risk individuals, and rapid linkage to care can go a long way. Using district data to target hotspots can help.Use digital tools as a bridge, not a replacement: Tele-MANAS can support early contact and anonymity but works best when it connects people to local follow-up.A rural mental health strategy, is not simply “more psychiatrists” (though the workforce must grow). It is a re-design of care delivery: primary-care anchored, community trusted, culturally fluent, and logistically realistic.If India is serious about rural development, mental health cannot remain a side chapter because rural resilience is as psychological as it is economic.

House panel flags vacancies in UGC, AICTE, says situation ‘critical’



A House panel on Wednesday (March 18, 2026) flagged the “critical vacancy situation” at higher education regulators such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). The Union Education Ministry is planning to dismantle both the bodies under its proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill, 2025.The Department-related Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports – headed by Congress Rajya Sabha MP Divijaya Singh – tabled its report on the Department of Higher Education’s Demands for Grants for FY 2026-27. It expressed concern about the absence of centralised data on the number of vacancies in Central universities and cautioned the Department against racking up expenditure in the last months of the fiscal year.

It noted the situation at the UGC, saying that “516 out of 763 sanctioned non-teaching positions are vacant”, which amounted to a vacancy rate of 67.6%. “This severely impacts UGC’s capacity to discharge its statutory functions, including monitoring thousands of universities, processing grant proposals, and implementing NEP 2020,” it said.In AICTE, “only 20 posts have been filled up on regular/ permanent basis in the last six years”, adding that 63.6% of sanctioned posts in the middle and senior administrative levels were vacant, which “may hamper the AICTE’s operations and the broader technical landscape as it regulates over 10,000 technical institutions”.

The committee highlighted that India’s expenditure on education from both the Centre and the States stood at 4.06% of the GDP as of 2022-23, falling short of the NEP 2020 target of 6% of the GDP.The committee called for a “robust quarterly expenditure monitoring mechanism”, noting that in FY 2024-25, the department’s actual expenditure fell short of the Budget Estimates by about ₹4,500 crore. The panel noted the “alarming 73.9% fall” in the Capital Head (from ₹10.27 crore in BE 2025-26 to ₹2.68 crore in BE 2026-27), recommending that the government prepare a five-year Capital Investment Plan with direct capital allocation from 2027-28 onwards.The government has introduced the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill last December proposing to subsume the functions of the UGC, AICTE, and the National Council for Teacher Education in a new higher education regulatory structure. This will be headed by a 12-

member umbrella commission, under which three separate regulatory, standards, and accreditation councils will operate. The Ministry has justified this reform as necessary to reduce conflicts of interest and reduce the multiplicity of regulations and compliance for higher education institutes.The Bill was introduced to objections from Opposition parties, arguing that it represented “executive overreach”, subjected higher educational institutes to “pervasive executive control, graded autonomy, intrusive compliance requirements, severe penalties, and closure powers”, and went against the principles of federalism. A Joint Committee of Parliament, headed by BJP MP D. Purandeshwari, is currently examining the Bill.On Central universities, the House panel said that these institutes were found to have “efficiently and judiciously” used the resources allocated to them. However, on faculty recruitments and vacancies, the committee noted that despite over 16,000 faculty posts and over 11,000 non-faculty posts being filled from 2022-2025, “significant faculty vacancies persist across Centrally Funded Institutions (CFIs)”.It recommended that the government prepare a “consolidated, annually updated vacancy register of all CFIs” that can be used to track vacancies. The committee also noted that there was an issue of “significant increase in fees” in some Central universities, including the University of Delhi, and sought a detailed justification for this.The committee welcomed the Prime Minister’s One Nation, One Subscription as a “landmark initiative”, which provided equitable access to over 13,000 international academic journals for over 6,500 higher education institutes, but also noted that the government did not have a financial plan in place for when the current three-year subscription ends in 2027. It recommended that the Department “negotiate long-term agreements with publishers to secure predictable subscription costs.

‘BJP diluting rural job scheme’: Chhattisgarh Cong. stages protest

Accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government of weakening the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) by replacing it with Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB G-RAM-G), the Opposition Congress staged a gherao of the Chhattisgarh Assembly on Tuesday (March.Senior party leaders were present at the protest over changes in the employment guarantee scheme and local issues such as “electricity tariff hikes, betrayal of farmers, failure to fulfil promises regarding paddy procurement, rising gas cylinder prices, deteriorating law and order, and the cultivation and trade of narcotics within the State”.

Along a shiny new expressway, a sole house and its lone caretaker are the face of an old fight



Jaipal Singh, 46, holds an unusual job. There is always a fear of animals, of people attempting to jump inside the premises for theft, not to mention the noise of vehicles passing by at speeds of up to 100 kmph on the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 14. And yet, there is the weight of lingering loneliness. For the last four years, Jaipal has been guarding a two-storey house spread across almost 1,600 sq m in Mandola near Loni in Ghaziabad. In a sense, it is a no-man's land, as it falls in the middle of a service road for the 213-km expressway.

Along the roadside, large concrete barriers pronounce details about the house and a High Court stay on the matter. On the other side of these barriers, a terracotta-coloured pillar of the house's entry gate holds a plaque that reads: "Swabhiman (self-respect)". It takes a loud shout from outside to make Jaipal come to the gate, a black scarf wrapped around his head. "This gate opens only when the owners come," he explains. "Nobody can come inside, whether police or NHAI. The court has granted protection. Iss desh mein abhi bhi kanoon hai (There is still law in this country)," says the 46-year-old. The Sarohas have refused to give up their 1,600 sq m house and area around it along the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway. The Sarohas have refused to give up their 1,600 sq m house and area around it along the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway.

A resident of Kanpur Dehat, Jaipal has been working at the house since 2022, after the death of its owner Dr Veersen Saroha, employed through a Gurgaon-based security company. Saroha's grandson Lakshyaveer Saroha, who lives in Noida, now owns the house. The two-storey structure is almost empty, says Jaipal, adding that he cleans it daily and leaves the premises briefly just for food, to a market about 1.5 km away. For company, he calls up his family, or listens to the radio on his phone. "My son came once, but he got very afraid and went back. Sabke bas ki baat nahin hai yahan kaam kar paana (Not everybody can work here)," says Jaipal. Back in 1998, when the express-

way was just a small state highway and many houses stood around 'Swabhiman', the Uttar Pradesh Housing Board issued a notification to acquire 2,614 acres of land from six villages in the region for its Mandola housing scheme. It offered Rs 1,100 per sq m. There were protests, but gradually almost all the farmers gave up their land. However, Veersen did not budge and approached the Allahabad High Court in 2007, seeking higher compensation for his house — Khasra No. 2558/2. Including the 1,600 sq m covered area, the Saroha property spans 8 bighas, with nearly 500 trees of various types growing on it. The court stayed the acquisition.

While the housing scheme could not be completed, around 2020, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) planned a 213-km expressway from Akshardham in Delhi to Dehradun in Uttarakhand, and the Saroha house fell in its path. The agency needed the land to construct a service road for vehicles coming from Dehradun to exit at Mandola and head towards Panchlok near Loni. With the matter in the High Court pending, Lakshyaveer approached the Supreme Court in 2024, citing that there was imminent threat of demolition of his house. On September 2, 2024, the Court ordered that the status quo be maintained, with no demolition or any further construction. The Supreme Court also asked the High Court to expedite the hearing of the case. The latest order in the matter was passed by the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court on January 28, 2026, which fixed another date for further hearing. On the service road where the house now stands, many commuters, especially bikers, try to cross the concrete barricades 500 metres before it, only to turn back realising there is no shortcut. What exists is a detour of over 1 km, which bypasses the house and reconnects with the expressway further ahead near Panchlok. A family member who did not wish to be named says: "This house is the last of his (Veersen's) memories. How can we give it away for Rs 1,100 per sq m, when the current market rate is over Rs 50,000 per sq m? The problem was created by the UP Housing and Development Board. Now the NHAI is saying they will give us just the cost of the demolition of the house, and the land cost to the housing board." On some dubbing the house a "hindrance" to a project of national importance, she says: "As an Indian citizen, we have no such intention. But we cannot accept this injustice." A senior NHAI official points out that the house as it stands "causes no obstruction to the main carriageway of the expressway". Adding that compensation has been awarded to stakeholders as per the law, the official says: "In this case, further action can be taken only after the court order." "The 213-km expressway, seen as an economic corridor, was built in four phases, at a cost of Rs 12,000 crore, and has reduced the travel time between Delhi and Dehradun from 6 hours to 2.5 hours.

Women's quota battle outside, gender gap inside: BJP confronts its numbers

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP vociferously targeting the Opposition for defeating the Constitution amendment Bill proposing the Lok Sabha's expansion in order to implement women's quota, there appears to be some pressure in the ruling party itself to ensure one-third representation for women in its organisational bodies. This comes at a time when newly elected BJP president Nitin Nabin is expected to constitute his team, which will set in motion an organisational revamp in the BJP. BJP leaders claim no other party provides representation to women as it does. "Apart from the Mahila Morcha, which has its units at the national level and at every state level, one-third of the office bearers at the centre and in every state are women. Even if there are vacancies in some places, those will be filled by women only," BJP general secretary Arun Singh told The Indian Express.

In his first stint as BJP president, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh constituted a seven-member committee headed by late party leader Sushma Swaraj to explore how women's representation in the BJP's organisational set-up could be enhanced. In his presidential address to the national executive meeting in New Delhi in June 2007, Singh said: "The party enjoys a vast support base among women. We are of the opinion that their proper representation in the legislation should be enhanced. For this, the proper representation of women in the party needs to be enhanced. I believe that women deserve 33% reservation in the party organisation." Besides Swaraj, the committee had Sumitra Mahajan, Najma Heptullah, Kiran Maheshwar, Bal Apte, Kiren Rijiju, and Kishan Reddy as its members. Later, the panel submitted a report suggesting a substantive increase in women's representation in the party's bodies. Pointing out that the constitution of the BJP makes one-third representation of women compulsory in each unit, from the local level to the national, without which the unit will not be lawful, the committee said, "Similarly, the nomination of 12 women out of 80 National Executive Members is compulsory under section 20. But this quantum of reservation at different levels comes to 12% to 15% in all. The National President has desired to escalate it up to 33%. The Committee feels that this escalation in reservation is not only desirable but also essential." "Most of our local units, from the booth level, we have 33% women," claimed a BJP leader tasked with organisational duties.

However, the BJP's official website states that of the 396 national executive members, only 37, or 9%, are women. In the 12-member parliamentary board, the apex decision-making body, Sudha Yadav is the only woman,



while among the 12 national vice presidents, five are women. The BJP has no woman general secretaries — there are seven in total — and among the 11 national secretaries, two are women. The Swaraj committee, however, noted: "The provision of women reservation cannot be made in cases of State Presidents/Districts Presidents and Mandal Presidents because then the States/Districts/Mandals themselves would have to be reserved to effect the reservation which is impracticable."

With PM Modi accusing the Opposition of being "mahila virodhi" for voting against the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, there are fresh demands from within the party to increase women's representation. "Since we are campaigning so intensely, party leadership will be under pressure to ensure that the organisation increases the number of women, including in the top bodies. We have to also see that the BJP provides more than one-third seats to women," said a senior Rajya Sabha MP. "We still have not given women adequate representation in the organisation, neither decision-making ones nor in Parliament and Assemblies," said another MP. Both leaders pointed out that "it would be a point that would draw attention" when Nabin announces his new team. In contrast, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) has six women among its 37 members, including Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Of the 34 permanent invitees to the CWC, only four are women and there are four women in the 15-member special invitee category, too. In the current Lok Sabha, the TMC tops the list of women MPs with 39% of their total strength in the House. Both the BJP and the Congress have a similar share of women MPs at 13% and 13.4%, respectively. The BJP, however, had a higher proportion of women candidates (16%) than the Congress (13%). Another big regional party, the DMK, is led by a woman in the Lok Sabha, K Kanimozhi, but only three of its 22 are women (13.6%).

Update" option in settings and not via links received through browsers or messages. Users have also been cautioned against responding to threatening messages claiming that their phone will be blocked if the update is not installed. As a precaution, the police recommended keeping the "Install from Unknown Sources" option disabled and using only trusted antivirus software on mobile devices. In case a user has accidentally clicked on such a link, they should immediately disconnect the internet, scan the device using security applications, and remove any suspicious apps. Passwords for banking and social media accounts should be changed immediately using a secure device, it said. Victims of financial fraud have been advised to report incidents promptly by calling the cyber helpline number 1930 or by lodging a complaint on the National Cyber Crime Portal, police added in the statement.

How electricity trading happens in India, and why a restructuring is on the cards



In a step toward restructuring electricity trading in the country, India's top electricity regulator has issued draft regulations for market coupling — a process that matches bids from all power exchanges to discover a uniform market-clearing price. Generally, electricity generators or gencos have used long-term pacts called power purchase agreements or PPAs to sell electricity to distribution companies (DISCOMs) and large power consumers in India. But, power exchanges facilitate short-term electricity trades to meet demand fluctuations, where gencos can sell their surplus power independently of PPAs at market price.

Power markets are hosted on power exchanges, and currently, each of the three major power exchanges in India sets its price based on supply and demand to purchase electricity, resulting in price variations across exchanges. The new framework aims to change this decentralised system. It proposes the Grid Controller of India (Grid India) as the central operator for price discovery. It has also proposed to entrust Grid India with implementing the market coupling process. Comments from stakeholders on the draft amendments are to be sought by May 16. In the draft regulation, named the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Power Market) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2026, the regulator proposed various amendments to the CERC (Power Market) Regulations, 2021, in which the concept of market coupling was first introduced.

Generally, market coupling can also help act as a reliable reference price for policymakers. It can lead to more efficient price discovery, reduced price disparities across regions, and increased market stability. The move is seen as a continuation of the regulator's order issued in July last year, which directed the phased implementation of market coupling across power exchanges in the Day-Ahead Market (DAM) segment from January 2026. However, CERC's July order was marred by an insider trading controversy, with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issuing an interim order to impound Rs 173.14 crore from eight individuals and barring them from the markets until further notice. SEBI also named a senior CERC official for allegedly leaking confidential information to them. Separately, the order was also challenged by the power exchange India Energy Exchange (IEX) — which dominates more than 90% of market share in the DAM segment — at the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL). IEX has been opposing market coupling on multiple grounds, as a uniform price discovery mechanism is feared to reduce its competitive advantage. In terms of market share, IEX is followed by Power Exchange India Limited (PXIL) and Hindustan Power Ex-

change Ltd (HPX). But APTEL dismissed IEX's plea in February, stating that the petition was not maintainable at that stage as CERC was yet to formulate any regulation.

Electricity generators usually enter into long-term pacts called PPAs that typically span 25 years to sell electricity, while power exchanges facilitate short-term electricity trades. This market-driven approach enables generators to optimise their output and revenue, while helping utilities meet variable power demands more efficiently through bids and offers. The market-clearing price — the price at which electricity is traded — is determined by the equilibrium of demand bids and supply offers. Power markets are categorised based on the electricity delivery timing and the duration of contract. The spot market includes the real-time market (RTM) for near-immediate delivery and the intraday market for same-day trades, hours before delivery. The day-ahead market (DAM) deals with closed auctions for 15-minute time blocks for the following day, while the term-ahead market (TAM) handles trades from 3 hours to 11 days in advance. In India, the short-term power market is expanding gradually, with the total volume of short-term transactions of electricity increasing from 65.90 Billion Units (BU) in 2009-10 to 238.35 BU in 2024-25. During this period, the volume of short-term transactions of electricity increased at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 8.9%, whereas total electricity generation increased at a CAGR of 5.8%. The volume of short-term transactions of electricity as a percentage of total electricity generation stood at 13.03% in 2024-25, compared to 9.6% in 2009-10.

What could the new process be?

In its draft regulation, CERC proposed that Grid India would function as the market coupling operator (MCO) and would be responsible for the operation and management of market coupling. "For this, Grid India shall form a separate cell for discharging the functions of MCO," it said. "Price Discovery shall be done by the Market Coupling Operator from such date as may be notified by the Commission separately: Provided that until such notification, the price discovery shall be done by the Power Exchanges," it added. Grid India has also been entrusted to formulate a detailed procedure for the implementation of market coupling, to be called the Power Market Coupling Procedure (PMCP). With the CERC approval, Grid India is mandated to formulate these procedures within six months of the notification of these amendments. These procedures would include the role and responsibility of MCO, a standardised format for bid submission by power exchanges, and features of the price discovery algorithm, among others. As per the draft regulation, all power exchanges would collect bids in a uniform bid format from market participants in accordance with the procedure and format stipulated in the PMCP. This would then be transmitted to MCO by power exchanges through secured channels as per the timelines stipulated in the PMCP. Subsequently, the MCO would aggregate bids for each market segment received across all power exchanges and ensure an efficient price discovery, it read. "Price discovery mechanism shall adopt the principle of maximisation of economic surplus (sum of buyer surplus and seller surplus), taking into account all bid types," it added. The draft notification also indicated a gradual expansion of market coupling to other segments. "Market Coupling shall apply to the Day-Ahead Market (DAM), Real-Time Market (RTM) and other market segments from such date(s) as may be notified by the Commission," it added.

In Trump's ceasefire extension, there could be off-ramps for both sides

US President Donald Trump has once again stepped back from his earlier rhetoric of destroying Iran's power plants and bridges, unilaterally extending the two-week ceasefire that was due to expire on April 22. He stated that the decision was taken at the request of Islamabad, claiming that Iran's government was "seriously fractured". Trump has consistently asserted that he is winning the war. This is true to the extent that the United States and Israel have conducted a vast number of air strikes on thousands of Iranian strategic and tactical targets, significantly degrading its naval capabilities and missile-launching assets, and inflicting direct economic damage estimated to be between \$145 billion and \$300 billion. But he has not succeeded in compelling Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or accept his demands over uranium enrichment.

Trump has been seeking an honourable way out of the war since March 21, when he issued a 48-hour ultimatum to Tehran, threatening to destroy its civilian infrastructure. Since then, he has extended that ultimatum by 10 days, and followed it up with a two-week ceasefire, and now an indefinite ceasefire. However, Iran continues to be defiant. Washington has made several concessions to keep talks with Tehran alive, including pressuring Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire in Lebanon, and, most notably, moving away from his insistence on zero uranium enrichment to a 20-year suspension of enrichment.

Notwithstanding the continuous barrage of threatening rhetoric, he is aware of the damage the war would have on his presidency if it were to continue. A majority of the American people oppose the war, making this a politically fragile conflict for the US leadership. The two principal pillars on which Trump won his second term were his commitment to avoid further wars and his promise to bring down inflation. The continuation of the war and the rising price of gasoline mean that Trump is being forced to look for an off-ramp. Current indications suggest that the Republicans risk losing their majority in Congress — and possibly even in the Senate — if there is no resolution soon. Trump has stated that the ceasefire will continue to give Tehran time until "discussions are concluded". While Iran is currently playing hardball, insisting that the United States lift the blockade on the movement of its ships as a precondition for a second round of talks, Trump is unlikely to do so as it represents the most effective strategy to curtail Iran's oil revenues without needing to occupy Kharg Island. After Trump secured a ceasefire in Lebanon, Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, stated that the Strait of Hormuz was open for free movement. However, when Trump insisted on maintaining the blockade, the hardline factions within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps prevailed and linked any subsequent discussions with the United States to its lifting. Thus, while direct talks may not resume immediately, mediation is expected to continue in an effort to reach some common ground.

Is there a solution to this impasse?

It would also be in Iran's interest to end the war, provided its basic demands are met — namely, a guarantee that the United States and/or Israel will not attack it again, relief from sanctions, and control over the Strait of Hormuz, including the ability to generate revenue by charging a transit fee. While Trump has previously indicated that he might



Washington has made several concessions to keep talks with Tehran alive, including pressuring Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire in Lebanon and moving away from the insistence on zero uranium enrichment to a 20-year suspension

consider sharing revenue from the strait, such a proposal would face opposition not only from the Gulf states but also from most other countries that use it for trade purposes.

What Iran seeks, however, is a mechanism for revenue generation to support its post-war reconstruction. This could be achieved through innovative arrangements, such as allowing it to levy a transit fee for a fixed period of time or establishing a reconstruction fund in which Gulf countries could participate, provided peace and security are restored in the region.

From Iran's perspective, it is crucial that its right to enrich uranium is recognised even if this is operationalised through a temporary suspension for a stipulated period. Iran is seeking to limit this to five years. It may also be willing to down-blend its 60 per cent enriched uranium, as it did with its 20 per cent enriched uranium after signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 with the Obama administration. Unlike the JCPOA, which had a duration of 15 years, Iran may be willing to agree to a framework but without a fixed timeframe. It may also be prepared to commit to not developing very long-range missiles. Trump, on the other hand, could claim success by saying that Hezbollah has been decimated in Lebanon. These could be the off-ramps both seek. It is hoped that a framework agreement can be reached between the two sides, with the details to be worked out by technical teams. It is worth remembering that the JCPOA took more than two years to be finalised. While any such agreement may be opposed by Israel, it would enable Trump to claim victory and focus on the visit of King Charles III at the end of this month and his own visit to China in mid-May. The writer is former governor of India to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna, former ambassador to Egypt and former permanent representative to Arab League

Simplify KYC processes, make common norms: FM Sitharaman to SEBI



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to help drive the adoption of standardised know your customer (KYC) norms and the simplification and digitalisation of its processes across the Indian securities market. "It is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that no citizen has to repeat the same verification journey across multiple financial products and platforms. We must all work collectively towards it with a sense of urgency," she said while speaking at the Sebi Foundation Day. Sitharaman said that the market regulator has the scale of investor participation, the depth of digital infrastructure, and the institutional credibility among peer regulators to take the lead in this domain.

"We must also work towards improving our citizens' experience of financial services. We need a seamless, secure, and portable KYC experience across the financial sector," Sitharaman said, adding, "This has been discussed with the regulators at the FSDC (Financial Stability and Development Council)." The finance minister also spoke about deepening the corporate bond market which requires structural reforms across several dimensions simultaneously. "SEBI must be the convening and coordinating force," she said. She said SEBI must continue to drive standardisation in issuance documentation, strengthen frameworks for secondary market liquidity, and work in close coordination with the government and other regulators on mutual issues.

"At the same time, equal attention must be given to building a more effective credit enhancement architecture, so that access to bond markets is not confined only to the highest-rated issuers, but can gradually extend to a wider set of fundamentally viable enterprises," Sitharaman said. "A deeper bond market must also include a serious push for Municipal Bonds. India's cities are central to growth, but urban infrastructure cannot be financed sustainably through

budgetary resources alone," the FM said. SEBI may therefore consider working with urban local bodies, state governments and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to further improve the municipal bond framework, she said. Sitharaman said SEBI must also be ready to meet emerging challenges — and the most pressing of these is cybersecurity. "A single successful cyberattack on a major exchange, depository, clearing corporation, or large broker could disrupt markets at national scale, erase wealth, and shake public confidence in ways that take years to rebuild," she said. "AI-led tools are making cyberattacks faster, more adaptive, scalable, and in some cases more autonomous in execution. These risks can take many forms — automated discovery of system vulnerabilities, malicious source-code interference, attacks aimed at software supply chains and coordinated intrusions that can evolve in real time to evade detection," FM said. Therefore, not just SEBI but all regulated entities will have to remain exceptionally vigilant. "The tools of attack are evolving at high speed, and the tools of defence must evolve even faster," she said. She said SEBI has done commendably well and good work with the Cybersecurity and Cyber Resilience Framework that came into effect in April 2025. "This is a solid foundation on which more work can be undertaken. It is praiseworthy that SEBI's Data Analytics and Digital Forensics Laboratory is using advanced analytics, AI/ML models to detect complex market manipulation patterns and network-based frauds," she said. With the increasing use of technology, there is an explosion of fake investment videos and apps circulating on social media, many of them using deepfake AI to impersonate leaders, FM said. "We want better markets, not merely bigger markets. The finance minister also spoke about creating better markets. 'Above all, we want better markets, not merely bigger markets. Size without integrity is fragility. Volume without investor protection is exploitation. Growth without governance is unsustainable. And ensuring that is definitely a shared national priority and responsibility,'" she said. "With scale comes complexity, and with ambition comes accountability. Indian markets still face a set of structural and emerging challenges that must be confronted with intellectual honesty," she said. "I believe it is the mark of a mature regulatory system that it learns from past episodes without being paralysed by them," she said. Sitharaman said the invisible infrastructure of markets is trust and integrity. "So, markets grow on trust. And, trust rests on fairness, transparency, enforcement and predictability. But, trust must be continuously renewed, because new risks are emerging. Investor trust and market integrity are not merely market variables. They are public goods," she said.

India's inflation, external debt well within target levels despite global shocks: RBI Governor

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra said on Thursday that India's inflation and external debt remain well within target levels despite global shocks, reflecting the resilience of India's economic management. "India's strong fundamentals, resilient financial sector, and forward-looking reforms continue to reinforce global investor confidence in the India growth story," Malhotra said in an interaction arranged by the Consulate General of India in New York.

Malhotra highlighted India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, robust policy frameworks, and the steady rise of its financial markets, noting foreign exchange reserves of around US\$ 700 billion. He also underscored India's expanding global economic engagement, including the conclusion of eight free trade agreements covering 37 countries, and the growing depth of government and corporate bond markets. The governor further highlighted India's continued commitment to regulatory reforms and enhanced ease of access and operations for foreign investors. The interaction was attended by investors, senior banking officials and industry leaders. Earlier, in the minutes of the MPC meeting held on April 8, Malhotra has warned that rising global energy prices, higher input costs, potential El Niño conditions, and escalating geopolitical conflicts in West Asia expanding over the past month all pose increasing risks to inflation. According to him, as a result, supply chain disruptions, that may take longer to subside fully and restore the logistics network, pose downside risks to growth and upside risks to inflation. "Nevertheless, the Indian economy is on a much stronger footing at the current juncture than at



any time before to withstand these shocks," he said as per the minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting. "As for monetary policy, this represents a supply shock," he said. The underlying inflation pressures, minus the shock, are contained. If the conflict remains unresolved for a long duration, it can make the task of central banks arduous in their endeavour to rein in inflation expectations while minimising growth sacrifice, Malhotra said. The MPC meeting on April 8 kept the policy Repo rate unchanged at 5.25%. However, the central bank 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. MPC statement said the outbreak of the conflict in West Asia has led to severe disruption of global supply chains. This poses an unprecedented challenge for the global economy — higher prices and lower global growth.

India's peak power demand hits record 256 GW amid rising heat



New Delhi: India's peak power demand hit an all-time high of 256.11 GW on Saturday due to an intensifying heat wave, which increased the use of cooling devices such as air conditioners and desert coolers, according to the latest power ministry data. The peak power demand on Saturday eclipsed the previous record of 252.07 GW, hit just a day earlier on Friday, April 25, at 1548 hrs.

According to the power ministry data, peak power demand set a new high of 256.11 GW at 1538 hrs on Saturday, and it was fully met. Experts stated that peak power demand is inching towards the power ministry's estimate of 270 GW for this summer season, as mercury levels have begun to rise. Temperatures in several regions have been significantly above normal, by 5 degrees Celsius or more, indicating a developing heat stress scenario across parts of the country, according to the India Meteorological Department. On Saturday, Delhi recorded its highest maximum temperature of the year so far at 42.8 degrees Celsius, marking the highest maximum since 2022, when it reached 43.5 degrees Celsius on April 28. Saturday was the third consecutive day of a heatwave, according to the IMD. The country's peak power demand has risen with temperatures in April. The highest electricity supply on April 22 was 239.70 GW, which rose to 240.12 GW on April 23, 2026. In the first fortnight of this month, the peak power demand met, or the highest supply of electricity in a day, remained

'You can't shout at a girl': Munawar Faruqui opens up about raising his son and daughter with different approaches, an expert weighs in



Bigg Boss 17 winner Munawar Faruqui — who has caught the Internet's eye several times over his marriage and former relationships — recently opened up about raising his children, a son and a daughter. In a candid interview with Nikhil Taneja, Munawar shared how he instils values differently in his son and daughter, further highlighting how he is especially strict with his son whenever he is in front of his female cousins or his sister. "I teach both of them when they are together because siblings often fight while playing. But whenever he (his son) is with his female cousins or sister, I try to be strict with him," Munawar said. "He (his son) realises that he cannot talk to a girl like that," the comedian shared. "You can't shout at a girl. He understands that he needs to be gentle with girls. If I teach him about equality at this age, he will be corrupt," he added. Munawar went on to explain that, for him, the lesson is not just about equality, but about teaching his son to place women above men. "A good husband can be a good father. It's simple logic," he said. Experts believe that being a caring husband can positively influence fatherhood. However, Dr Rimpa

Sarkar, PhD, Sentier Wellness, Mumbai, argued that "it does not automatically make someone a good father," further stressing that the two roles are connected but not identical.

"A respectful and emotionally available partner creates a healthy environment at home, which children observe and learn from. However, being a good father also requires direct emotional engagement with the child, understanding their needs, and building a relationship that is separate from the marital dynamic," Dr Sarkar explained. She also shared that children begin absorbing ideas about gender, respect, and emotional behaviour at home from toddler years. "Even before they fully understand language, they observe tone, behaviour, and interactions between adults. By early childhood, many of these patterns are already forming. This is why consistent behaviour at home plays a crucial role in shaping their understanding of relationships and respect," the psychologist said. Dr Sarkar highlighted the importance of modelling behaviour versus verbal teaching when raising boys. According to her, if a child consistently notices communication and respect at home, those values become internalised. "Modelling behaviour is far more powerful than verbal teaching. Children learn primarily by observing how adults behave rather than what they are told," she said, adding, "Verbal teaching can support this, but without consistent behaviour, it often does not have the same impact." She suggested parents encourage children to express emotions, acknowledge their feelings, and teach them to consider how others feel in different situations. "Simple practices like asking for permission before physical contact, respecting boundaries at home, and showing kindness in daily behaviour help build these concepts naturally. It is about creating an environment where respect and empathy are practised, not just explained," Dr Sarkar said.

Is your dog snubbing your friends? Why your pet might be secretly judging your social circle

This is a familiar moment in many homes. A guest walks in, conversation flows, everything seems normal and yet, the dog lingers at a distance. No barking, no excitement, just a quiet refusal to engage. It's often brushed off as mood or instinct. But science now suggests something more deliberate may be at play. Research in Animal Behavior indicates that dogs can form opinions about people based not on direct interaction, but on how those people treat their owners, a phenomenon known as "third-party affective evaluation." Not just loyalty, but observation. Dogs have long been seen as loyal companions, responding to commands and forming deep bonds with their owners. But this research suggests they may also be careful observers of human relationships. In controlled experiments, dogs were less likely to accept food or attention from individuals who behaved negatively or refused to help their owners. On the other hand, they showed a clear preference for those who were cooperative or kind. In essence, dogs were not just reacting—they were evaluating. Unlike humans, dogs don't rely on words. They read tone, body language, and emotional cues. A raised voice, a dismissive gesture, a moment of visible discomfort—these are signals dogs appear to register with surprising accuracy.

"Dogs are extremely observant animals. They may not understand human language fully, but they are highly sensitive to tone, behaviour, and emotional energy," says a senior veterinarian at Royal Pet Clinic. "If an owner is uncomfortable or treated poorly, the dog often mirrors that discomfort." This ability to pick up on subtle social cues may explain why dogs sometimes react to people in ways their owners don't immediately understand. For years, canine behaviour has often been explained in terms of training and conditioning. But these findings suggest a more complex cognitive process. Dogs appear capable of assessing interactions they are not directly part of—watching, processing, and forming responses based on what they



observe. Experts believe this sensitivity is rooted in thousands of years of domestication. Living closely with humans has likely shaped dogs into highly attuned companions, able to interpret not just commands, but emotions and relationships. For pet owners, this research may offer an unexpected perspective. That hesitation, that distance, that subtle avoidance—it may not be random at all. Instead, it could reflect an assessment of behaviour that humans themselves might overlook or ignore.

It also raises an intriguing thought: in social situations where people second-guess their instincts, dogs don't. They respond directly to what they perceive, without overthinking or rationalising. A quiet social mirror. While researchers caution that more studies are needed to fully understand the extent of this behaviour, the findings add to a growing body of evidence that dogs are far more perceptive than they are often given credit for. They are not just companions reacting to commands, but observers interpreting human interactions in real time. In many ways, dogs may act as a quiet mirror to our social world—reflecting not what people say, but how they behave. So the next time your dog seems unsure about someone, pauses instead of wagging its tail, or simply walks away, it might be worth paying attention.

Rihanna blends global glam with Indian heritage at Fenty Beauty Ki Haveli launch in Mumbai



Pop icon Rihanna is back in India for the launch of her beauty brand's store 'Fenty Beauty Ki Haveli' in Mumbai — a Reliance-led collaboration with Isha Ambani. Two years after her last visit during Reliance heir Anant Ambani's wedding in Jamnagar, Rihanna's media appearances have left the internet buzzing. Delivering a striking tribute to Indian craftsmanship, she turned her jewellery choices into the defining highlight of the evening. Across two dramatic looks, Rihanna embraced traditional Indian pieces from high jewellery collections of the country's two leading designers: Manish Malhotra and Sabyasachi Mukherjee. Blending global pop glamour with heritage-inspired design, Rihanna styled her boxy yellow ensemble with a standout diamond haathphool by Malhotra, a regal touch elegantly wrapped across her hand and wrist. The haathphool was paired with intricately detailed Mughal-inspired earrings, designed with old-style table-cut diamonds and delicate motifs influenced by Indo-Islamic artistry. For the second look of the night, Rihanna radiated dark feminine glam in an 'Alaia' all-black ensemble from Pieter Mulier's last collection—an alligator-skin column dress with sheer mesh sleeves, accentuated with smokey eyes and nude lips. A luminous floral ear cuff by Birdichand Jewellers, inspired by Mughal botanical studies, softened the look, while bold gemstone rings and layered bracelets from Sabyasachi's high jewellery atelier added maximalist depth and character.

"The Assam Bracelet is crafted in 18k gold with tourmaline, emerald, ruby, spinel, sapphire, garnet, iolite, kyanite, turquoise, coral, and brilliant cut EF VVS VS diamonds.

Paired with a bracelet from the Bengal Broadway Byzantine collection crafted in gold with multi-coloured gemstones and diamonds," he mentioned in the caption of his Instagram post, adding that it was layered with rings from the Bengal Royale collection crafted in 18k gold with sapphire, aquamarine and brilliant cut EF VVS VS diamonds. Isha Ambani, founder of Tira Beauty, looked elegant in a sea-foam blue Dior gown with hand-sewn floral appliqué, perfectly complementing Rihanna's bold ensemble as they hugged and posed for the cameras at the event. By spotlighting Indian jewellery traditions on a global stage, Rihanna created a powerful cultural moment that celebrated craftsmanship, heritage, and modern luxury in equal measure.

Pakistan's Karachi reports first Congo virus death of 2026

Karachi: A 17-year-old boy died on Thursday at a hospital in Pakistan's Karachi city after contracting the Congo virus, becoming the first confirmed victim of the disease this year, health authorities said. "The boy died today. He was brought to the hospital on Monday with high fever," Sindh Infectious Diseases Hospital and Research Centre Director Dr Abdul Wahid Rajput said.

"His blood samples were taken and sent to Aga Khan University Hospital for testing. He was transferred to the Infectious Diseases Hospital on Tuesday for further treatment after the presence of the Congo virus was confirmed in the patient," he added. The boy, who worked at a live-stock farm, showed symptoms of Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) and was moved to an isolation unit, Rajput said. The Congo virus is a tick-borne viral disease that can cause severe hemorrhagic fever in humans. The virus is primarily transmitted through bites from infected ticks, particularly those of the Hyalomma species, or through direct contact with blood or tissues from infected animals. Human-to-human transmission can also occur through exposure to infected bodily fluids, making the virus particularly dangerous in healthcare settings.

How the University of Tennessee’s agricultural college is helping FIFA bring consistency to grass on football World Cup pitches?



GNS News Agency, May 1

More Americans get screaming notices for unsatisfactorily mowed front lawns than parking tickets. They may not be batshit crazy about football or soccer, but Americans can get ridiculously pedantic and particular about their front yard grass or turf lawns. So when FIFA faced a knotty issue – eight of the sixteen stadiums hosting the World Cup were designed for artificial turf—and FIFA only used natural turf, USA’s ace grass experts were summoned. The University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville’s world-renowned turfgrass experts led a first-of-its-kind research collaboration with Michigan State University and FIFA, the global governing body for soccer, to set up the pitches.

While the uneven bounce at Pan-Am drew criticism, the UT were confronted with the eventual question. “How can a soccer ball bounce the same on a pitch in Vancouver, Canada, and in Mexico City?” the UT website writes. So through a five-year research project, UT’s expert turfgrass team developed turfgrass systems along with irrigation, maintenance, and testing methods to produce identical pitches that were same and safe for players. Two of these systems include conventional rootzone and shallow profile. Conventional rootzone systems are typically found beneath high-end, natural turf fields. But eight of the sixteen stadiums hosting the World Cup are designed for artificial turf—and FIFA only uses natural turf. That’s where the shallow profile system comes in. Instead of a gravel base layer used in the conventional rootzone system, the shallow pro-

file system uses permavoid and geotextile materials,’ the website writes. Bermudagrass, the turf itself for warm climes, is well known to all American home owners, and the Sod is the top layer of both turfgrass systems. For cooler climes, it’s a mix of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass. The website elaborates: ‘A method known as hybrid stitching provides additional stability by reinforcing the pitch with fibers. The rod method of stitching, used for most outdoor stadiums and some indoor stadiums, injects reinforcing fibers into the soil as the grass grows. Some pitches for both domed and one outdoor stadium are grown using the carpet method, in which seeds are planted directly into a layer of fiber-reinforced soil, allowing the grass to grow into the stitching.’ The middle layer is a sand rootzone. It allows for more consistent footing and surface firmness. It reduces compaction compared to native soil fields and supports healthier turfgrass growth by allowing for more air and water movement, they elaborate.

Conventional rootzone systems have the Gravel base which allows for quick water drainage while retaining enough moisture to promote healthy root growth. Drainpipes move excess water away from the pitch. UT informs that all FIFA World Cup 26 stadiums are equipped with an in-ground irrigation system with sprinkler heads that can emerge and water the entire pitch. They also have a vacuum ventilation system to assist with water drainage. The unique feature however is the Shallow profile system. The UT website explained how instead of the traditional gravel, the shallow profile system used permavoid and geotextile materials. Geotextiles were a plastic woven sheeting that rests on top of the permavoid, the geotextile layer prevents sand from filling the openings in the permavoid and helps regulate moisture by allowing excess water to pass through. The Permavoid, UT explained, was the base layer of the shallow profile system — a high-strength modular interlocking plastic structure that allows for adequate water drainage and can be more quickly removed than gravel when a pitch is temporary. Besides an in-ground irrigation system with sprinkler heads that can emerge and water the entire pitch, FIFA will also have a vacuum ventilation system to assist with water drainage.

Stephen Fleming on changing team: Concerned we would be exposed early



GNS News Agency, May 1

As Chennai Super Kings suffered another costly defeat, this time at the hands of Gujarat Titans at home on Sunday, the spotlight once again fell on head coach Stephen Fleming and the decision to play Urvil Patel, which disturbed the batting combination. Coming in at No 3, he lasted just three deliveries, which forced CSK to use Sarfaraz Khan as an Impact Player inside the powerplay overs. Speaking after the defeat, Fleming said they made the decision to include Urvil because of Gujarat’s strong pace attack. “We were a little bit worried about our batting order against these guys,” Fleming admitted. “It’s a very good bowling attack, and we know that they’ve got pace and bounce. So we were a little bit concerned that if there was some movement and bounce in the wicket, that we could be exposed early. And last time we played here it spun, and we played well against Kolkata. So we were expecting something similar, but it was a little bit different to that. But the security could either have

an extra bowler or an extra batter. And when it’s sniffing around and a little bit of bounce, then you get to make a call pretty early to try and extend the batting order,” Fleming added. Having beaten Mumbai Indians in the previous game, the defeat was a hammer blow for CSK to keep pace with the play-off qualification. Made to bat first on what was a tacky pitch, CSK struggled and in the first 10 overs managed only 43 runs before recovering in the second half to post 158/7.

“I don’t want to sound like I’m making too big an excuse, but I just think the first 10 overs today were tough in terms of conditions. That’s what we felt. We were all looking through a different lens. But we felt it was tough, and then we were always behind the game. We need to keep being positive. It is one step forward, one step back. But if that continues, we look forward to winning the next game,” Fleming said. Captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, who top-scored with an unbeaten 74, said the first half of the innings was the most challenging to bat on thanks to uneven bounce. “Sometimes I hate to assess it this way but it was challenging in the first innings. It was holding for the medium pacers and the bounce was up and down. We lost too many wickets but it was difficult to play some shots. It is hard to assess how it plays. This game we didn’t have any idea. By the time we wanted to adapt, it was too late. At the first timeout, when Fleming came out I told him, ‘I am trying to attack but it was tough’. There was more bounce, or less bounce, and I told him I am trying to change. It just did not come good. It was just an off day and even on the field we were lethargic,” Gaikwad said.

Angkrish Raghuvanshi given out for obstructing the field as controversy erupts in LSG vs KKR IPL match. Here’s what rules say



GNS News Agency, May 1

Controversy erupted during the Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants match as KKR batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi was adjudged to be obstructing the field and given out by the third umpire. Kolkata, already in a bit of trouble after losing 2 early wickets, fell to 3 down after just 5 overs. The incident happened during the 5th over when Raghuvanshi, trying to get a run was sent back by Cameron Green. As Raghuvanshi was running back to his crease, a throw hit him with LSG players appealing for an obstructing the field dismissal.

The decision was sent upstairs with the third umpire adjudging that the batter changed his direction, trying to get back to his crease and gave it an out. It wasn’t a popular decision in the KKR camp as Raghuvanshi had a chat with the umpire before walking off. He hit his bat on the floor of the ground, even throwing away his helmet as he made his way back into the locker room. Even the commentators looked to have been taken aback by the decision while KKR head coach Abhishek Nayar was shown having a discussion with the fourth umpire. 37.1.1. Either batsman is out Obstructing the field if, except in the circumstances of clause 37.2, and while the ball is in play, he wilfully attempts to obstruct or distract the fielding side by word or action. See

also clause 34 (Hit the ball twice).

37.1.2. The striker is out Obstructing the field if, except in the circumstances of clause 37.2, in the act of receiving a ball delivered by the bowler, he wilfully strikes the ball with a hand not holding the bat. This will apply whether it is the first strike or a second or subsequent strike. The act of receiving the ball shall extend both to playing at the ball and to striking the ball more than once in defence of his wicket. 37.1.4. For the avoidance of doubt, if an umpire feels that a batsman, in running between the wickets, has significantly changed his direction without probable cause and thereby obstructed a fielder’s attempt to effect a run out, the batsman should, on appeal, be given out, obstructing the field. It shall not be relevant whether a run out would have occurred or not. If the change of direction involves the batsman crossing the pitch, clause 41.14 shall also apply. See also paragraph 2.2 of Appendix D. Earlier, Lucknow Super Giants won the toss and opted to bowl against Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Sunday. Coming off their first win of the season after seven defeats, KKR went unchanged from the side that defeated Rajasthan Royals. Reeling from four losses on the trot, Rishabh Pant-led LSG made one change, bringing in George Linde.

Sai Sudharsan powers Gujarat Titans to win over CSK

Chennai: Bowlers calling the shots in a format dominated by big hitters is a rarity, but that script played out at Chepauk on Sunday as Gujarat Titans exploited a bounce-friendly surface to stifle Chennai Super Kings before chasing down the target through a Sai Sudharsan masterclass to win the IPL contest by eight wickets. If the first half belonged to the bowlers, the chase was all about calculated aggression as Sudharsan produced a fine display of adapting to conditions, smashing 87 off 46 balls to anchor Titans’ comfortable pursuit of 159. The win moved Titans to fifth position from seventh with eight points. On a pitch that had earlier demanded caution, Sudharsan showed how to blend

CSK mess up the Impact Player ploy within 5 overs, thanks to their muddled selection



GNS News Agency, May 1

A day after two placid surfaces produced high-scoring contests in Delhi and Jaipur, Chennai offered a contrasting pitch for the first afternoon fixture at the MA Chidambaram Stadium this season. In a format where pitches generally don’t create an overbearing impact, there are exceptions. With the mercury rising, the groundstaff had the natural elements to work around for there was this genuine fear of the pitch breaking up under the heat. On the eve of the game, until the shadows lengthened, it was under covers – a clear tell tale of the groundstaff preparing for the worst. The heat factor meant, there was considerable watering too. So what they threw up was a tacky pitch, which the Gujarat Titans pacers led by Kagiso Rabada used to good effect reducing Chennai Super Kings to 26/3 inside the five overs. With that sort of a start, and only 43/4 in the first 10 overs, they did well to manage 158/7 with Ruturaj Gaikwad remaining unbeaten on 74 off 60. The chase needed a bit of grinding than flamboyance, which Gujarat managed successfully with 8 wickets in hand and 20 balls to spare. Muddled selection

Of all the right boxes that Chennai have ticked in their heydays, the top most was how they used to keep it simple. When it came to selection, they largely employed horses for courses policy. But those heydays are far behind now, and what remains is just traces here and there. Having posted a thumping win at the Wankhede, a win against a struggling Gujarat would have given them further impetus to have a good shot at finishing in the top four. Instead, they once again chose to disturb the combination. Impact Sanju Samson of Chennai Super Kings and Ruturaj Gaikwad of Chennai Super Kings during the Match 37 of the TATA Indian Premier League 2026 between Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans at MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai, India, on April 26, 2026. Photo by Vipin Pawar / CREIMAS for IPL. They brought in Urvil Patel instead of Sarfaraz Khan,

Shreyas Iyer’s advice to PrabhAnsh: ‘Don’t try to emulate, mimic, or be someone else’

Shreyas Iyer completed a historic highest chase with the base set by Prabhsimran and Priyansh Arya against Delhi Capitals. But the champion captain of Punjab Kings has been building the bond with his Top Two tornadoes for a while now. Speaking to JioHotstar after their win over Rajasthan Royals last week, where the trio overshadowed Vaibhav Sooryanshi’s 100, the captain had said, “We have a team room, which is probably there for every team. We try to spend a lot of time together in that team room before and after games, and whenever we have off days. We come together and build that bond.”

The skipper has been keen on letting them know that they don’t need to fit in any prior mould but create their own niche. “Whenever I speak to them, my only message is, just be yourself. Don’t try to emulate, mimic, or be someone else. When you are playing at this level and you are fearless and flamboyant in your own way, you don’t have to resemble or copy anyone. When you tell these guys that they are match-winners, both Prabhsimran and Priyansh Arya, it instils confidence in them. They can just go out there and play freely. They have been delivering for us and hopefully, they continue to do so,” he said. While 100s are raining on IPL and PBKS topped KL Rahul’s sensational highest score, Shreyas had words of praise for the young Sooryavanshi too. “He is a spectacular talent, and all the adjectives would be pretty less for him. The way he has that bat flow, the rhythm and momentum he creates before the delivery, I think he is one for the future,” he said. Iyer



also said that no matter what the result he had put it out there in the universe that he wanted to lift the trophy this year. On manifesting the IPL trophy this year, with an eye on winning the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup 2027, he told JioHotstar, “Whenever I play in any tournament, I play to win. For me, winning is everything; there is no substitute. Even if it doesn’t happen, that is fine, I can accept it and move on. But whatever I do, whatever my efforts are for, it is for the trophy. I play to win. Whatever tournaments and opportunities come up next, I will definitely want to win them. For this year, the manifestation is to win the IPL. I just want to put it out there in the universe that I want to lift the trophy. There are going to be small steps to reach that stage. It will definitely take a team effort and everyone has to think in that direction; only then can you achieve that.”

Deepti Sharma gets cracking in T20Is with fifer: ‘Focus on off-spin more than faster one’



The Player of the Match in the 50-over World Cup final is finally finding her groove in T20s as Deepti Sharma gave India their first win in the T20 series against South Africa. India’s 14 run win after defending a score of 185 finally arrived after three losses, as the off spinner worked her magic claiming 5-19 to restrict Saffers to 171 for 9. Deepti had earlier combined with Richa Ghosh for a 65-run partnership as the other totem of India’s success. Jemimah Rodrigues top scored with 43, sharing a 55 run stand with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur. Deepti later told BCCI website that she was eventually rediscovering her form focusing on classical flighty offspin rather than faster ones. “First I kept

belief in myself. And then there is line and length. Which line I have to bowl. And basically today more of my focus was on my offspin ball than the little faster one. That gave me confidence to bowl better and better,” she said.

India had scored 185-5 hinging on two partnerships as Deepti contributed 36 off 26, batting with Richa Ghosh, who remained unbeaten on 34. Struggling to crack the code, the team had begun setting targets over by over breaking down the batting inning, instead of looking at an eventual high target. “I think Richa batted well, she finished well and we were talking about batting till 20th over and to have a good partnership and then we finished well. We calculated each and every over and then that’s how we played,” Deepti told BCCI website. But four games had seen the Indians unable to defend their score. So the bowling was crucial. It was here that Deepti played a lions part, but only after Kranti Gaud had cut short Laura Woolvaardt’s run of five 50s in a row, before she limped off with an ankle issue. The rest of the batters were trapped by Deepti into submission. “There was little dew here so we were just having a conversation among bowlers to bowl in right areas and that would give you results,” Deepti told bcci website. Her first wicket was Sune Luus who charged her and was bowled by one that stayed low. She also had Dercksen rushed into a shot with a short delivery for her second bowled.

Sai Sudharsan powers Gujarat Titans to win over CSK

restraint with intent, picking the right deliveries to attack while respecting the bounce on offer. He found an able partner in skipper Shubman Gill, who made a brisk 33 off 23 balls before falling to spinner Noor Ahmad. The Titans openers laid a solid foundation with a 58-run stand, effectively taking the game away from CSK in the Powerplay itself. Gill looked fluent, mixing elegance with aggression, but his dismissal did little to slow the visitors. Sudharsan, who had struck a century in the previous game against RCB, carried his fine form forward, playing a range of strokes, particularly against pace, to keep the scoreboard ticking at a healthy rate. The left-hander’s seven sixes underlined his dominance on a

surface where CSK’s batters had struggled earlier in the day. Jos Buttler played the perfect supporting role, remaining unbeaten on 39 off 30 balls as Titans reached 159 for 2, finishing the chase with 20 balls to spare. Ahmad and Akeal Hosein took a wicket apiece, while the rest struggled to contain the flow of runs as the Titans batters showed far better awareness of the conditions. Earlier, on a pitch that offered sharp carry, stroke-making demanded discretion and adaptability. Instead, CSK’s batters often opted for high-risk shots without fully assessing conditions and paid the price with a flurry of miscued dismissals, managing 158/7. Invited to bat, CSK never quite found rhythm

‘Will take severe legal action’: Ashu Reddy hits back at reports of alleged Rs 9 crore fraud



Hours after several media reports emerged claiming that Telugu actor and social media personality Ashu Reddy has been booked for allegedly cheating a man of over Rs 9 crore, she has stepped forward, warning those spreading “false information” of stringent action. In a short but strongly worded note shared on her Instagram stories, Ashu asserted that she would take legal action if necessary. “Without my consent, any news or false information that is passing through, will be taken a severe legal action. Respect (sic),” the actor wrote.

What’s the case against Ashu Reddy?

A case has reportedly been filed against Ashwini Reddy, popularly known as Ashu Reddy, at the Hyderabad City Central Crime Station (CCS) over a complaint filed by a London-based software engineer. According to Deccan Chronicle, the complainant, identified as YV Dharmendra,

alleged that they had been in a long-term relationship and that the actor had cheated him on the promise of marriage. After meeting in Hyderabad in 2018, Dharmendra claimed that they grew close over the years, eventually developing a romantic relationship, and they even planned to get married in the future. Subsequently, the complainant alleged that he transferred large sums of money and gold to her over time under the pretext of marriage. He also purchased assets reportedly registered in her name, believing they were for their combined future. However, the wedding never materialised. Now, Dharmendra has accused Ashu Reddy and her family of defrauding him to the tune of about Rs 9.35 crore. According to South First, the two became romantically involved while the complainant’s divorce proceedings from his previous marriage were ongoing, and the actor knew about this. Although Dharmendra pushed for marriage in 2020, Ashu allegedly refused without explanation, prompting him to demand the return of the money and assets. A few months later, they reconciled after her family took the initiative. Between 2020 and 2025, Dharmendra alleged that Ashu and her family further defrauded him while repeatedly assuring him of marriage. In mid-2025, the actor outrightly refused marriage again and severed contact with the complainant, leading him to file the complaint.

Who is Ashu Reddy?

A well-known figure in the Telugu entertainment industry, Ashu Reddy is noted for her roles in movies such as Chal Mohan Ranga, Focus, Spark Life, Yevam, and Padmavyuham Lo Chakradhari. She rose to widespread fame after her appearance on Bigg Boss Telugu. Previously, she had been embroiled in a drugs-related case, as reported by the Times of India, although she denied any involvement at the time.

Karan Johar urges Bollywood to ‘stop doing PR, let achievements speak’: ‘Everything available at a price now’

Karan Johar recently criticised Bollywood’s apparent PR overdrive, noting that paid compliments blur lines between genuine and manufactured praise. Karan Johar’s last directorial venture was the Ranveer Singh-Alia Bhatt starrer Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani. (Credit: Instagram/@karanjohar) As big a cheerleader as he is for Bollywood, filmmaker Karan Johar is also one of its loudest critics, never mincing words when calling out the hypocrisies and improprieties of industry professionals. Recently, Karan tore into Bollywood’s apparent PR overdrive. He noted that every compliment now comes with a price tag, which has blurred the line between genuine and manufactured praise.

During a recent interaction with The Week, Karan Johar was asked about the promotional strategies Bollywood has witnessed in recent times. Citing Janhvi Kapoor wearing shirt(s) with “Sundari” inscribed on them for Param Sundari (2025) and Shanaya Kapoor “doing crocodile gimmicks” for Tu Yaa Main (2026), an audience member asked Karan if Bollywood was following in the footsteps of Hollywood and if such publicity tactics would become more common going forward.

In response, Karan opined that Hindi cinema should dial down its PR activities, as they have become too much. “I think Bollywood should stop doing PR. It will be much better. They should let their achievement speak for themselves because, unfortunately, all of the PR is now paid PR. If you want someone to say, ‘You are looking gorgeous,’ you just have to pay. If you want someone to say that you are the best actor on planet Earth, you have to pay,” he pointed out. Delving further into the subject, the director-producer noted that this situation makes it difficult for people, including himself, to discern between genuine and paid compliments. “I think we are in an overdrive mode when it comes to PR. So whether they are doing method marketing or not is secondary. They should stop marketing themselves and let their work speak for itself.” Mentioning that he was not referring to Janhvi Kapoor or Shanaya Kapoor specifically, Karan Johar added, “I mean everyone in general... I think PR has gone into overdrive mode. There’s a certain way of



doing it. Publicity and marketing are very important work categories, and they should be treated accordingly. Karan continued, “Now everything is available at a price, and that is something that could be deeply upsetting because then you really can’t gauge what’s connecting and what’s not. Now you look at everything and be like, ‘Are people really liking these things or are they paid to like it?’ I don’t know, I can’t tell half the time. It’s confusing me too because even I sometimes pay for it.” One of the most celebrated director-producers in Bollywood, Karan Johar’s last production venture was director Sameer Vidwans’ Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, starring Kartik Aaryan, Ananya Panday, Neena Gupta, and Jackie Shroff in key roles. It turned out to be a box office bomb, grossing just Rs 49.5 crore against a budget of Rs 90 crore, according to industry tracker Sacnilk. His last directorial venture was the Ranveer Singh-Alia Bhatt starrer Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani (2023).

No more guaranteed fees: Tamil Film Producers Council mandates revenue sharing model for big films

The Tamil film industry woke up to a significant shift on Sunday as the Tamil Film Producers Council held its general body meeting and passed a resolution that could fundamentally change how its biggest films are made and how the talent in them are paid. According to their resolution, going forward, medium and big-budget Tamil films will be produced under a revenue-sharing model. The traditional system, in which actors and key technicians receive fixed remuneration regardless of how a film performs at the box office, will no longer apply to productions in those categories. Under the new model, the principal cast and key technicians will share both the profits and the losses with producers, directly tying their earnings to the film’s commercial outcome.

To signal that intent, the TFPC has announced a one-day token strike on May 2. The strike is described as a symbolic gesture for now, a way of demonstrating that producers are united behind this demand and are prepared to act on it. But the council has made clear that the token strike is only the beginning. If the Nadigar Sangam, the association that represents actors in Tamil Nadu, does not cooperate with the revenue-sharing model, the one-day token strike will be escalated into a continuous strike, which would effectively bring Tamil film production to a halt. The council has also passed resolutions on OTT release windows: big-budget films must wait six to eight weeks before premiering on streaming platforms, mid-range films are given a six-week window, and smaller productions have a shorter interval.

A continuous strike, if it comes to that, would affect not just actors but the thousands of technicians, daily wage workers, and crew members who depend on Tamil film production for their livelihood. The human cost of a prolonged shutdown extends well beyond the stars whose fees are at the centre of the argument. This is not the first time the TFPC has pushed for revenue sharing. The council had raised



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the demand at its 2025 general body meeting as well, urging A-list stars including Kamal Haasan, Vijay, Ajith, Suriya, Dhanush, Sivakarthikeyan, Silambarasan TR, and Vishal to cooperate with a model that ensures fairer revenue sharing and reduced production risk.

Mammootty initially had reservations about Patriot; Rajiv Menon compares film to The Bourne Identity



If there’s anything Malayalam movie audiences are certain about regarding director Mahesh Narayanan’s Patriot at the moment, it’s that the film won’t follow the obsolete formulas and worn-out templates usually adopted by filmmakers when crafting multi-starrers. Despite marking the on-screen reunion of superstars Mohanlal and Mammootty in central roles after 17 years since Joshly’s Twenty:20 (2008), audiences are confident that the movie won’t be just another star vehicle. From its promotional materials, it’s also evident that Patriot will be the industry’s biggest spy thriller yet. Opening up about the project, megastar Mammootty noted that the Mahesh Narayanan directorial will prove that Malayalam cinema can produce films on such a grand scale. Only in Screen | No 20 Madras Mail: When Mohanlal and Mammootty made us believe they would take a bullet for each other Patriot will appear that it’s been mounted on a much larger scale than it actually is’

“It will demonstrate that Malayalam cinema can also make a movie on such a massive canvas, like how Hollywood, Bollywood, Telugu and Tamil industries have been doing for the longest time. It will give the feeling that the film has been mounted on a significantly larger scale than it

actually has been,” Mammootty pointed out during a session titled “Patriot Legends Hangout,” organised as part of the movie’s promotions. He was accompanied by his Patriot co-stars Mohanlal, Fahadh Faasil, Kunchacko Boban, and Rajiv Menon. The movie’s director, Mahesh Narayanan, and composer Sushin Shyam were also present, and actor-ad filmmaker Prakash Varma took on the responsibility of interviewing the whole team. Discussing the birth of Patriot and how it gained an initial form, Mahesh Narayanan revealed that he never writes a script with any particular actor in mind, giving him more agency and freedom over the work. “After it took shape, I approached Mammootty. He was the first actor I told the story to. Although Patriot is a plot-driven movie, it unravels alongside the character of Daniel James (played by Mammootty),” the director explained.

However, Mammootty wasn’t very confident in the project initially, as he had doubts about the film’s scale. “After I started narrating the story to him, Mammootty began having doubts, worried over its scale and wondering how we would pull it off,” Mahesh shared. He added, “Then he asked me who all would play the remaining characters in the film, and I suggested a few names like Kunchacko Boban and Fahadh Faasil, albeit being unsure if they would come on board. I basically wanted to pitch Patriot to Mammootty first and then approach other actors. After hearing everything, he told me to start talking to the aforementioned actors for the other characters.”

Although Patriot explores a significant theme that required a massive budget, the director noted that he has not made any tweaks to the film in accordance with market-mandated trends. “No one has been presented as stars in the film; they are just characters,” he added. Adding to the conversation, Rajiv Menon pointed out that Patriot progresses at a relentless pace. “Upon hearing the narration, it sounded like The Bourne Identity. It has one set piece after another.”

‘I take full responsibility’: When Randhir Kapoor opened up on his separation from Babita and his ‘mistakes’

Veteran actor Randhir Kapoor, the eldest son of Raj Kapoor and father to Kareena Kapoor and Karisma Kapoor, has witnessed his share of highs and lows in his film career. On the personal front, his marriage to Babita also faced challenges. In an old interview, Randhir reflected on not taking his career too seriously and spoke candidly about the turmoil in his married life. Randhir Kapoor on his separation from Babita

Talking about the ‘turmoil’ in his marriage on the Javed Jafferi-hosted show Yaadein BTown Ki – Is Duniya Ke Sitaray, Randhir said, “I take full responsibility for everything. Whatever happened was in the spur of the moment. Even today, Babita is my wife, and will always be. Karisma and Kareena are my daughters, and only they will be my kids. I am a human, I do make mistakes, and I am working on it. We are together.”

Randhir also spoke candidly about his equation with his co-stars, including Babita. “I married my first time heroine. I did my first directorial film Kal, aaj, aur kal with Babita. We both liked each other, and then we married. She gave me two lovely daughters. All my heroines became my boy-friends. Because of my on-screen image, no one took me seriously. They started not taking me as their boyfriend, but we became buddies. I was a shoulder to cry on, and Babita was their best friend.” This is not the first time that Randhir Kapoor has opened up about his troubled marriage. In an earlier interview with Hindustan Times, Randhir said, “She found that I was a terrible man who drank a lot and came home late, which was something she didn’t like. And I didn’t want to live the way she wanted, and she couldn’t accept me as I am, though it was a love marriage. So it’s



okay. We had two lovely children to look after. She brought them up in the best way, and they have excelled in their career. What else could I have asked for as a father?”

Randhir Kapoor on claims of not taking his career seriously During his conversation with Javed Jaaferi, Randhir Kapoor also addressed the perception that he took his career lightly. Talking about it, Randhir said, “I was a happy-go-lucky man. I was a lazy chap. I grew irresponsible. I am to be blamed for that.” As per reports, Randhir Kapoor first met Babita in 1969, and they dated for two years. In 1971, the couple took the plunge. They welcomed Karisma Kapoor in 1974 and Kareena Kapoor in 1980. However, Randhir and Babita separated in 1988. After living separately for over three decades, they reconciled in 2023.

Rihanna attends intimate luncheon with Ambanis; performs aarti, dances with Isha Ambani, Radhika Merchant.

Ever since global icon Rihanna landed in India, social media has been abuzz. The singer-entrepreneur, brought to the country by Reliance Retail for the launch of her beauty brand Fenty Beauty, has been making appearances across Mumbai. Recently, she attended an intimate luncheon hosted by the Ambani family at their residence Antilia. Several videos and photos from the private luncheon have surfaced online. In one clip, Rihanna is seen being welcomed at the Antilia by Isha Ambani, Radhika Merchant, Shloka Ambani, and Anant Ambani.

The video then shows Rihanna offering prayers at the family’s temple inside the residence. Towards the end, she joins the hosts in a celebratory dance as flower petals are showered over the gathering. VIDEO | Rihanna and her guests visited the Ambani family at their home for an intimate lunch; Isha Ambani, Shloka Mehta, Radhika and Anant Ambani welcomed Rihanna for an afternoon immersed in Indian dance, culture and art; Reliance Retail has brought Rihanna to India to celebrate... pic.twitter.com/9zmmmp2SoN1 On Saturday evening, Rihanna hosted a grand Fenty Beauty after-party in Mumbai. The event drew the city’s elite, including fashion designers, beauty creators, business figures, and film personalities. Several clips featuring Orry, Janhvi Kapoor, and Manish Malhotra quickly went viral on social media. Isha Ambani was also spotted walking hand-in-hand with Rihanna at the event. The pop star’s brand will be available in India through Reliance Retail’s beauty platform Tira, as well as global retailer Sephora. For the unversed, Rihanna made her India debut in 2024 at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant’s wedding. She performed her hit tracks, like “We Found Love,” “Work,” “Rude Boy,” “Bitch Better Have My Money” and “Umbrella.” In the middle of the performance, she thanked



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the Ambani family and said, “I am here tonight in honour of Anant and Radhika. Thank you for having me here. Bless your union. Wishing you all the best. Congratulations.”