

INDIAN CHRONICLE

Telangana govt forms panel to identify Udyamakarulu, honour sacrifices

Hyderabad: The State government has constituted a six-member committee for the identification of Telangana Udyamakarulu (Telangana movement activists) to recognize and honour their contributions and sacrifices. Advisor to the Government K Keshava Rao is the Chairman of the Committee and BC Welfare Minister Ponnampallabharani is a Member. MLC Prof Kodandaram, MLC and whip Addanki Dayakar, former MLC S Ramulu Naik and Mothe Sobhan Reddy are the other members.

Karimnagar: Two men killed by sons in separate incidents

Karimnagar: Two persons were killed by their respective sons in separate incidents in Karimnagar district on Friday. A man Arepalli Narsaiah was hacked to death by his son Mallesh in Mukarampura area in Karimnagar town. According to police, while an inebriated Mallesh was arguing with his mother, Narsaiah tried to intervene. However, Mallesh attacked him with an axe. Narsaiah died on the spot from severe bleeding injuries.

Not an iota of truth in this: PM Modi on reports of government planning to levy tax on foreign travel

New Delhi, May 15

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday dismissed reports that the government is considering levying a tax or cess or surcharge on foreign travel as "totally false".

The prime minister said this in response to a news report suggesting that the government is considering levying a tax or cess or surcharge on foreign travel but no final decision has been taken yet.

"This is totally false. Not an iota of truth in this. There is no question of putting such restrictions on foreign travel. We remain committed to improving 'Ease of Doing Business' and 'Ease of Living' for our people," Modi said in a post on X.

It is rare that the prime minister himself has denied a media report

The report, quoting sources, claimed that the proposal to levy a cess or tax or surcharge on foreign travel is being discussed at the highest levels.



Revanth Maps 2034 National Leap; Backs Rahul for PM

Hyderabad, May 15

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday said that he would step into national politics in 2034, expressing confidence that he would continue as Chief Minister of Telangana until then. He also stated that he would not accept the Chief Minister's post in 2034 even if the Congress retained power in the state for a third consecutive term.

Speaking at a conclave in Hyderabad, Revanth Reddy said his political goal was to see Rahul Gandhi become Prime Minister and would accept any responsibility entrusted to him in Delhi. Revanth Reddy said there was growing recognition for him at the national level and termed it a matter of pride for the people of Telangana.

Recalling his political journey, the Chief Minister said he had joined the Congress when the party was not in power and added that he never changed loyalties for opportunities. He said the Gandhi family had given him opportunities in recognition of his commitment to the party. Revanth Reddy also said Telangana would not have become a reality even in a thousand years without Sonia Gandhi.

Referring to his recent interaction with Prime Minister Modi, Revanth Reddy said both of them had spoken only in an official capacity during a government programme and there was nothing secretive about the exchange as the conversation took place openly before microphones. He said the Prime Minister had asked the Telangana government to work together with the Centre for securing funds and projects.

Contrasting his approach with that of his predecessor K. Chandrashekar Rao, Revanth Reddy said the former chief minister had never worked in coordination with the Centre. Revanth Reddy added that Modi was aware of his political commitment and ideological stand despite cooperation between governments on developmental issues.

The Chief Minister also made strong remarks over the Pocco Act case involving Sai Bageerath, son of Union minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar. He appealed to Sanjay to take moral responsibility and ensure his surrender before the police, stating that absconding was not a solution and that he should face the legal process. Revanth Reddy asserted that the state government would stand firmly with the victim and ensure that those found guilty were punished according to law.

Detailing the sequence of events in the case, the Chief Minister said the complaint was lodged by the minor girl's mother at Petbasheerabad police station on the night of May 8. He said the police initiated investigation on May 9 and subsequently altered the sections in the case after further inquiry and recording the victim's statement.

Notices were then issued on May 11. He pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had attended 10 programmes during his Telangana visit on May 10 and around 10,000 police personnel were deployed for security arrangements for four days prior to PM's visit, which also affected the pace of investigation.

Revanth Reddy said the police had to proceed cautiously in a case involving a minor and could not act recklessly. He said had the police rushed with a large force to the accused's residence, the government would have faced criticism for overreaction. "Whether they are film personalities or political leaders, there will be no exemptions," he asserted. He added that registering a Pocco case itself reflected the government's commitment to protecting the victim.

The Chief Minister said five police teams were working on the case and that police had gone to Sanjay's residence in Delhi to serve notices, but the accused had reportedly moved to his relative's house. The Chief Minister warned that if there was no response to notices within the stipulated time, the police would take strict action. He stressed that the issue concerned the future of children and even minor mistakes could destroy lives. He also revealed that the victim had two birth certificates and the police needed time to investigate all related aspects thoroughly.

Revanth Reddy said the complaint related to incidents that allegedly took place before December 31, 2025 and investigating events dating back four to five months naturally required time. He maintained that even if there was a delay of one day, the accused could not escape punishment. The Chief Minister questioned whether filing a Pocco Act case amounted to threatening someone or supporting the victim, reiterating that his government was fully committed to protecting victims and punishing offenders.

Revanth Reddy said Sanjay's handling of the issue involving his son was morally wrong and urged him to face the matter courageously. "Bandi Sanjay should stand up and answer. He should personally bring his son and hand him over at the police station. They should face the investigation and not run away," he said.

The Chief Minister also dismissed allegations of political vendetta, saying he had not acted harshly even against the family of former chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao despite being jailed during the previous BRS regime. He said he did not know what differences existed between Sanjay and the BRS or between Sanjay and K.T. Rama Rao. He also remarked that BRS leader R.S. Praveen Kumar was no longer an IPS officer and he should stop behaving like an investigation officer probing a Pocco case.



Madhya Pradesh High Court Declares Bhojshala in Dhar as Temple

Bhopal: In a significant verdict, the Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh high court on Friday ruled that the disputed Bhojshala complex in Dhar in the state is a Hindu temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati (Vagdevi).

The ruling is seen as parallel to the supreme court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi- Babri masjid dispute, paving the way for the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

A division bench of the Madhya Pradesh high court comprising Justice Vijay Kumar Shukla and Justice Alok Awasthi also quashed the order of 2003 issued by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the protector of the Bhojshala temple- Kamal Maula Mosque complex, permitting to offer Namaz by the Muslims at the site and suggested the community to approach the government for alternative site elsewhere to build a masjid.

Amid the decades-long dispute over the competing claims by the Hindus and Muslims over the 11th century monument, the ASI had made an arrangement in 2003 allowing Hindus to worship at the Vagdevi temple on every Tuesday and Muslims to offer Namaz at the mosque, situated on the other side in the complex, on every Friday.

While Hindus regard the Bhojshala as a temple dedicated to Vagdevi, Muslims call it the Kamal Maula Mosque built more than a century ago.

This led to the dispute.

The high court had last year ordered the ASI to do a scientific survey of the complex to decide whether the mosque was built by demolishing a temple at the site.

The ASI had submitted its report to the court around five months prompting the court to begin hearing in the case.

The court has held that historical records, archaeological material and literary evidence established the religious character of the monument as a Saraswati temple associated with Raja Bhoj, the Paramar ruler credited with making Dhar a Centre of Sanskrit learning.

"We have noted the continuity of the Hindu worship at the site, through, regulated over time", the court has observed.

In a move to safeguard the religious rights of the Muslims, the bench said that 'In order to secure the religious rights of the Muslim community, in case the respondent no.1 (Muslim community) submits an application for allotment of suitable land within Dhar district for construction of the mosque, the state may consider the said application as per law.'

The court has also held that the ASI will continue to have overall administration and management of the monument.

Reacting to the verdict, AIMIM (All India Majlis-e- Ittehadul Muslimeen) chief Asaduddin Owaisi has drawn a parallel between the court order in the case of Bhojshala temple- Kamal Maula Mosque dispute in Dhar and the supreme court judgement in Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue in Ayodhya, indicating that the order of the Madhya Pradesh high court will be challenged in the supreme court.

"We hope the Supreme Court will set this right and overturn this order. Glaring similarities with the Babri Masjid judgement", a post by him on X said.

Meanwhile, the Hindu groups have hailed the verdict and said that the court has recognized the exclusive rights of Hindus over the complex.

In a related development, security has been tightened in Dhar district to maintain law and order in the wake of the high court verdict on the vexed issue. Dhar district collector Rajiv Ranjan Meena appealed to the people to maintain peace in the district and avoid spreading misleading information or rumours.



BRS to take up padayatra for Palamuru Rangareddy project

Mahabubnagar: Accusing the Congress government of sidelining the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS), the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) announced plans to undertake a padayatra in June to demand completion of the pending works.

The BRS government had taken up the PRLIS to curb migration from erstwhile Palamuru district. Accordingly, the majority of works have been completed, with only 10 per cent pending, former Minister V Srinivas Goud said.

Addressing media persons here on Friday, he said the BRS leaders would take up a padayatra from Narlapur to Uddandapur reservoir and demand the Congress government complete the remaining works.

"The action plan will be announced after discussing with our president K Chandrashekhara Rao," Goud said.

As Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy hails from Palamuru, people believed that he would ensure development of the region. But, they are regretting having elected him as the Chief Minister, former Minister S Niranjana Reddy said.

The Congress government was only focused on conducting a false campaign on Kaleshwaram and was neglecting the PRLIS, he slammed.

Former Minister C Laxma Reddy charged that the Congress government had even failed to conduct a review meeting on the PRLIS pending works. Despite the Congress leaders filing cases and attempting to halt the project, the BRS government had completed 90 percent of the work, he said.

"We waited all these days to give some time for the government to complete the pending works. Any further delay will not be tolerated," Laxma Reddy added.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Delhi's recurring shame on women's safety

FOURTEEN years after the Nirbhaya case shook the conscience of India, Delhi finds itself confronting another horrifying reminder of how unsafe public spaces remain for women. The alleged gangrape of a woman inside a private sleeper bus in Nangloi by the driver and conductor is a damning indictment of the failure of governance, policing and transport regulation in the national capital. The brutality of the incident lies not only in the assault itself but in the chilling familiarity of the circumstances. Once again, a bus — a space meant for public mobility and safety — allegedly became a site of terror. Once again, those entrusted with responsibility allegedly turned predators. And once again, arrests are being presented as evidence of swift action, while the larger systemic rot remains untouched. After the 2012 Nirbhaya horror, governments promised sweeping reforms. CCTV surveillance was expanded, fast-track courts announced and women's safety schemes publicised with great fanfare. Yet, the reality on the ground tells a different story. Private buses continue to operate with inadequate monitoring, verification mechanisms remain weak and enforcement of safety protocols is often cosmetic. The absence of rigorous checks has created spaces where impunity flourishes. Delhi's reputation as an unsafe city for women persists because accountability appears episodic rather than institutional. Public outrage erupts after every horrific crime, but soon fades into political rhetoric and bureaucratic complacency. Women, meanwhile, continue to navigate fear as part of daily life. This latest incident must become a turning point rather than another passing headline. Authorities must conduct a comprehensive audit of private transport operators, enforce real-time GPS tracking and ensure strict background verification of transport staff.

Responding to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji's 7 Appeals to the Nation, Telangana BJP President Shri N Ramchander Rao garu travelled by Hyderabad Metro to attend a programme in Jubilee Hills. "This step is aimed at promoting fuel conservation, environmental protection, and responsible use of resources, while encouraging greater adoption of public transportation in our daily lives.

TWJF Khammam District Committee Celebrates 39th Wedding Anniversary of Founder Mamidi Somaiah



Khammam, May 15 Indian Chronicle: "The 39th wedding anniversary celebrations of TWJF founder Mamidi Somaiah were organized grandly by the TWJF Khammam District Committee at the district headquarters. Federation members celebrated the occasion by cutting a cake and distributing sweets among members. "Speaking on the occasion, Khammam District President Nanabala Ramakrishna and General Secretary Arvapalli Nagesh extended their heartfelt wedding anniversary wishes to Mamidi Somaiah and his wife. They stated that Mamidi Somaiah founded the TWJF (H-2843) Union in 2010 and has since been successfully balancing both his family and the union with equal dedication. "They praised Somaiah for leading the union across Khammam district and all 33 districts of the state in a transparent, impartial, and selfless manner without any controversies or irregularities. They wished him many more happy wedding anniversaries and once again conveyed greetings on behalf of the Khammam District Committee. "Among those who participated in the program were TWJF (H-2843) District President Nanabala Ramakrishna, General Secretary Arvapalli Nagesh, State Council Member Nalla Rakesh Reddy, Videographers Association Khammam District President Amaraboyina Upendar, TBJA City President Elugoti Venkat, Assistant Secretary Chinnamshetty Rambabu, Press Club President Anthoti Srinivas, Kondal, Pulipati Paparao, Ramakrishna, and others.

Central Bank of India hosts corporate, exporters' meets in Hyd

Hyderabad: Central Bank of India organized Corporate Customers' Meet and Exporters' Meet in Hyderabad as part of its initiatives to strengthen engagement with key business sectors and enhance long-term business partnerships. M. V. Murali Krishna, Executive Director of the Bank, interacted with leading corporates and exporters from infrastructure, renewable energy, trading, manufacturing, healthcare, power generation and other sectors during the meetings.

Additional Collector Reviews MGNREGS Meeting



Wanaparthy correspondent ,May 15, (Indian Chronicle) Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Kheemya Nayak directed officials to give special focus to labour mobilization under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and accelerate village-level works to provide employment opportunities to eligible workers. On Friday, the Additional Collector visited Kalvarala village in Veepanagandla mandal and inspected the ongoing MGNREGS works. He also reviewed activities being implemented as part of environmental protection initiatives. Later, he held a review meeting with Field Assistants (FAs), Technical Assistants (TAs), and Panchayat Secretaries. During the meeting, he instructed officials to maintain quality standards in the execution of works and ensure that government targets are completed within the stipulated timeframe. He further advised the staff to regularly water and safeguard the plants raised under avenue plantation programmes. "DRDO Uma Devi and other officials were present during the inspection and review meeting.

Ragging Is a Punishable Offence - Dr K. Anitha Reddy



"Hanumakonda, May 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Dr K. Anitha Reddy warned that those involved in ragging will face stringent legal consequences. She serves as Chairperson of Anurag Society, a member of the Governing Body of Kakatiya University, and a district member of the Anti-Ragging Committee. "An awareness programme on ragging was conducted on Friday at KMC Nursing College under the chairmanship of Principal Sunita. Addressing the students as chief guests, Dr Anitha Reddy, Mattewada Circle Inspector, She Team Sub-Inspector Swathi, Traffic Circle Inspector Sujatha, and Rama Rao explained the laws related to ragging and the seriousness of the offence. "They stated that harassing fellow students in any form—mental, physical, emotional, or otherwise—amounts to ragging. Deriving



pleasure from troubling others, they noted, is inhumane and unacceptable. "Speaking on the occasion, Dr Anitha Reddy made it clear that ragging will not be tolerated under any circumstances. She cautioned students against falling prey to harmful addictions and substance abuse, which can ruin lives. She emphasized the need for every college to establish Anti-Ragging Committees and Internal POSH Committees to ensure student safety. "Students facing any difficulty were advised to immediately dial the police helpline at 100 or report to the Anti-Ragging Committee. Posters on Anti-Ragging, Anti-Drug Abuse, and She Team initiatives were later unveiled by Dr Anitha Reddy, CI Sujatha, and SI Swathi. "Principal Sunita, faculty members, She Team personnel, and students participated in the programme.

Bandi Bhagirath Must Be Arrested Under the POCSO Act - Ambati Srinivas

"Narsampet/Warangal, May 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Ambati Srinivas, State Vice President of the Telangana Jana Samithi, has demanded the immediate arrest of Bandi Sai Bhagirath—who is facing allegations of sexually assaulting a minor girl—and called for strict action to be taken against him in accordance with the law. "Speaking at a press conference held in the town on Friday, Srinivas urged BJP leaders—who frequently speak about women's dignity on public platforms—to provide a clear response regarding this incident. Noting that the victim was a minor at the time the incident occurred, he emphasized that the case must be registered in strict adherence to regulations and that the investigation should be expedited. "He stated that this case falls under the purview of Section 6 of the POCSO Act, in addition to Section 65(2) of the 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita' (BNS). He stressed that the victim's age must be determined based on the specific date on which the incident took place, and demanded that the accused be taken into custody without any delay. "Srinivas asserted that the police



must act impartially during the investigation and, by upholding the principle that everyone is equal before the law, ensure that the judicial processes are completed swiftly. "Warangal District President Sheikh Javed, along with state leaders Gunti Ramachander, Bonagani Ravinder, Mohammed Sandani, and others, participated in this press conference

Congress Division President Mohammed Rafiq Visits Basti in Ramanthapur

Mohammed Rafiq Urges Officials to Resolve Low Voltage Electricity Problem"



"UPPAL , MAY 15 (INDIAN CHRONICAL) : "As part of the "Basti Bata" programme, Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq visited Shekhar Basti and Masjid Galli in Indiranagar of Ramanthapur Division

on Friday. During the visit, local residents brought to his notice the severe low-voltage electricity problem being faced in the area. "Responding immediately after learning about the issue, Rafiq spoke to the concerned officials and demanded that the problem be resolved at the earliest. He also spoke over the phone with AE Lavanya and requested electricity officials Sarayya and Srinivas to visit the spot and take necessary measures to ensure that residents do not face inconvenience. "Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq stated that he has been continuously taking public issues to the notice of the concerned authorities and making every effort to ensure their resolution. He affirmed that he would continue his fight for the people until their problems are solved. "Adinarayana Goud, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Laghusani Srinivas Goud, MD Shakeel, Abdul Mateen, Mahesh, MD Nayeem, Chinna Kumar, Shiva and others participated in the programme.

NEET Paper Leak a Blot on the Education System - MLA 'Nayini'

"Hanamkonda, May 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Nayini Rajender Reddy, MLA of Warangal West, termed the NEET question paper leak a "stain on the education system," stating that such incidents occurring under BJP rule are deeply unfortunate. "Addressing a press conference on Friday over the leak in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), the MLA said the episode had played with the futures of lakhs of students. He noted that poor and middle-class aspirants who pinned their hopes on medical education have been pushed into severe uncertainty. "He criticized what he described as a "double standard," saying that while patriotic rhetoric is voiced publicly, students' futures are being jeopardized in practice. "There is a clear mismatch between what is said and what is done," he remarked. "The MLA asserted that opposition leaders cannot match the services rendered by the Congress party to the nation. He alleged that repeated instances of examination paper leaks have surfaced in BJP-ruled states, while Telangana has conducted numerous competitive examinations without such incidents. "He further accused the Union government of



implementing policies that, from "gully to Delhi," divert the wealth of the poor toward corporate entities. He said public sector undertakings such as Indian Railways, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and BSNL have been weakened through privatization. According to him, these institutions were strengthened under previous governments but are now being rendered ineffective under the present regime.

Telangana NSUI staged a protest in front of Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy's residence, demanding a response regarding the alleged NEET examination paper leak. The protesters also demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, holding the Central Government accountable for failing to ensure transparency and fairness in the examination process. The protest highlighted the concerns of students and parents across the country over the credibility of the NEET examination system.

MLA 'Nayini' Launches Construction Work for Bhadrakali Temple Chariot



"Warangal, May 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Nayini Rajender Reddy, MLA for the Warangal West constituency, visited the Bhadrakali Temple on Friday accompanied by his family members. Upon their arrival at the temple, the MLA and his spouse were accorded a traditional welcome—complete with the 'Purna Kumbham' ritual—by the temple priests, officials, and members of the temple governing body. "He performed special prayers to Goddess Bhadrakali and sought her divine blessings. As part of the temple's development initiatives, the MLA formally inaugurated the construction work for a new temple chariot—intended for use during special processions conducted along the temple's processional streets (Mada Veedhulu)—by ceremonially breaking a coconut. "Members of the temple governing body, officials, priests, local public representatives, and devotees participated in this event.

BJP CONDEMN NOT ALLOWING SAFFRON SHAWLS IN SCHOOLS IN KARNATAKA

Hyderabad, May 15 : Telangana State BJP chief official spokesperson and Media in-charge N V Subhash today strongly criticised Karnataka government for using "colours" to derive political mileage. " "Not allowing saffron shawls in schools is nothing but an appeasement policy to garner support of muslims by grand old Congress party which has been practising for decades, Subhash alleged and asked why Karnataka CM is so particular in allowing students to wear Hijab. " Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah's order is to save his CM seat and he should understand that saffron colour also similar one of the seven natural colours of Rainbow, he said.

Membership Drive Should Be Made Successful for Strengthening the Party:



Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy "UPPAL , MAY 15 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy called upon party leaders and workers to work collectively for strengthening the party and to make the membership registration drive a grand success in Habsiguda Division. "The MLA attended the BRS party membership preparatory meeting held on Friday at Indira Imperial under the leadership of Old Habsiguda Division TRS president Dr. B. Vichari and Kancherla Somi Reddy. "Leaders including Pasula Prabhakar Reddy, Lakshminarayana, V. Yadagiri, Kailaspati Goud, Kaleru Jai Naveen, Veerender, Yakantha Rao, Mekala Srinivas, Manohar, Sanjay, Narender, women's president Yadamma, Lakshmi, along with several party leaders and workers, participated in the meeting. "Speaking on the occasion, the MLA urged party workers to work unitedly for the strengthening of the party. He stated that every worker should take responsibility for ensuring the success of the membership enrollment programme. He said the membership drive would play a key role in increasing the party's support among the people. "Local leaders, former division presidents, youth leaders, women leaders, and party workers participated in large numbers in the meeting.

Medicover Hospitals launches advanced eye centre in Hitec City

Hyderabad: Medicover Hospitals, Hitec City on Friday launched a state-of-the-art Advanced Eye Centre offering comprehensive Cataract, Retina, Refractive, Corneal, and Neuro-Ophthalmology services under one roof which was inaugurated by actress and philanthropist Amala Akkineni.

MP Vaddiraju Confident BRS Will Win All 10 Assembly Seats in Khammam District



“Khammam May 15 Indian Chronicle:“BRS Parliamentary Party Deputy Leader and Rajya Sabha MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra expressed confidence that the BRS party would capture all 10 Assembly constituencies in Khammam district in the next elections. “Addressing a press conference at Telangana Bhavan in Khammam on Friday, Ravichandra alleged that the state has fallen into a “whirlpool of problems” under Congress rule and that people from all sections are unhappy with the government. He criticized Congress leaders for failing to govern effectively and for not implementing any of the promises made before the elections. “The meeting was attended by BRS General Secretary and MLC Takkallapalli Ravinder Rao, former minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar, former MLAs Sandra Venkata Veeraiah and Kandala Upender Reddy, along with other party leaders. “Ravichandra said development activities in Telangana have come to a standstill and welfare benefits are not reaching the people, leading to growing public dissatisfaction. He claimed that farmers are suffering due to the lack of Rythu Bharosa assistance, pending farm loan waivers, poor paddy procurement, and power cuts, forcing some farmers to commit suicide. “He further stated that stu-

dents, youth, women, workers, and other sections of society are remembering the “good governance” of former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and regretting their decision in the previous elections. “The MP asserted that whether the Assembly elections are held in 2028 or 2029, the BRS would secure all 10 Assembly seats in Khammam district and give a strong setback to the district’s three ministers. He called upon party leaders and cadre to work in a united manner to strengthen the party further. “Ravichandra also announced that, in line with the digital era, the BRS leadership has decided to launch the party membership enrollment drive online. Welcoming the decision of the party high command, he urged party workers, supporters, and well-wishers to participate voluntarily and make the membership campaign a grand success. “During the meeting, Ravichandra felicitated MLC Takkallapalli Ravinder Rao, who was appointed as the in-charge for membership enrollment and committee formation in the united Khammam district. “Several party leaders, including Lingala Kamal Raj, Koorakula Nagabhushanam, RJC, Pagadala Nagaraju, Sheelamsetti Veerabhadram, Bacchu Vijay Kumar, Bellam Venu, Manjula, Krishna, and Giribabu, were present at the event.

‘Basti Bata’ Conducted in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division



Resolving Public Issues is the Main Objective: Akarapu Arun Patel“UPPAL , MAY 15 (INDIAN

CHRONICAL): Following the instructions of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Paramesh Reddy, Youth Congress leaders led by Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel conducted the “Basti Bata” programme on Friday in the Old Ramanthapur area under Venkat Reddy Nagar Division along with government officials. “During the programme, Arun Patel visited the local bastis and interacted directly with residents to understand their problems. Colony residents mainly raised issues related to drainage pipeline works, installation of new manholes, and low-pressure drinking water supply, which has been causing inconvenience to the public. Residents also complained about the poor condition of roads in several lanes and requested the construction of new roads. “Taking the grievances of the people seriously, Arun Patel immediately urged the officials to take up the works on a war footing. He assured the residents that, with the support of Uppal Constituency Congress Party President Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, all the pending issues would be resolved at the earliest and efforts would be made for the development of the colony. “Former Shiva Temple Chairman Raju Reddy, Shiva Temple Director Arun, colony residents B. Ramu, Krishna, Ashok, Anand, Mohan, Venkatayya Chary, Poshayya, Mahesh, Sandeep, Kurma Mahesh, Bikshapathi, Srikanth, Akash, Chota Rajesh, Sunil, Mittu, Akhil, and Congress leaders and party workers participated in the programme.

State Government Protecting Bandi Bhageerath: Former Corporator Bannala Geetha

---State Home Minister Revanth Reddy Shielding Union Minister's Son: Bannala Geetha “UPPAL , MAY 15 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Former Chilkanagar Division Corporator and GHMC Standing Committee member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj participated in a protest organized by the BRS Party State Women's Wing at the Ambedkar statue on Tank Bund, demanding the immediate arrest of Bandi Bhageerath, son of Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar, in connection with a POCSO case involving a minor girl. “Speaking to the media during the protest, Bannala Geetha alleged that even after eight days since the POCSO case was registered against Bandi Bhageerath, the police had failed to arrest him and were remaining inactive. She further accused the state government of extending full support and protection to the Union Minister's son. “Geetha questioned whether the government would have acted in the same manner if an ordinary person had been accused in a similar POCSO case. She alleged that the state government and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy were shielding the accused instead of ensuring justice for the minor



victim. “She demanded that the state government immediately arrest Bandi Bhageerath and ensure his appearance before the SIT investigation. Bannala Geetha warned that if immediate action is not taken, the BRS Party would intensify its protests across the state and continue the agitation until the arrest is made.

Systematic literature review workshop held at Satavahana University.

KARIMNAGAR May 15 (Correspondent): A workshop on systematic literature review for research scholars was organised at the College of Commerce, Satavahana University, as part of the State government's “Prajya Palana-Pragati Pranalika” and Education Week celebrations. Vice-Chancellor Umesh Kumar, speaking at the programme, said research scholars should systematically collect and evaluate literature to ensure transparency and credibility in research. He advised scholars to make effective use of online databases and analytical tools for comprehensive studies.

Registrar Peddapalli Satish Kumar stressed the importance of data collection, quality assessment and evidence-based research. Amolak Singh of the Faculty of Management Studies, Central University of Pondicherry, delivered the keynote address. He said systematic literature review helps researchers identify research gaps, define the scope of study and undertake structured and transparent research. He also underlined the importance of developing literature review skills for preparing credible research reports.

The programme was held under the chairmanship of College Principal D. Harikant and coordinated by Education Week celebrations coordinator S. Ramakant. Faculty members Nazimuddin Munawar, K. Padmavathi, K. Shri



Vani, Manoj Kumar, K. Tirupati, B. Naresh, Sri Vidya and Savithri participated. Around 45 research scholars attended the workshop and received presentation certificates.

Police intensify checks ahead of Bakrid in Karimnagar

Special check-posts set up in border areas to prevent illegal transportation and maintain law and order.

KARIMNAGAR May 15 (Correspondent): Police Commissioner Gaush Alam has directed officials to strengthen surveillance and intensify vehicle inspections across the Karimnagar Police Commissionerate limits in view of the upcoming Bakrid festival. According to an official statement issued on Thursday, special police check-posts have been established in border areas to prevent illegal transportation activities and ensure peaceful conduct of the festival. Continuous monitoring is being carried out at the check-posts, while necessary infrastructure and safety equipment are being arranged for personnel deployed on duty.

As part of the inspection drive, the Police Commissioner visited the Magdumpur check-post during the early hours of Thursday and reviewed the arrangements on the ground. During the inspection, he reportedly found shortages of certain protective equipment, though reflector jackets and lighting facilities were available. Mr. Alam instructed officials to ensure that all check-posts are fully equipped from Saturday onwards without any lapse in enforcement measures. He directed that each check-post should be provided with torchlights, LED batons for vehicle checks, whistles for emergency alerts and communication base sets for coordination among personnel.

The Commissioner also ordered the immediate installation of CCTV cameras at all check-posts to record the



movement of vehicles and individuals round the clock. Police personnel on night duty have been asked to wear reflector jackets to improve visibility for motorists. Separate registers are also being maintained to document details of suspicious vehicles passing through the check-posts, officials said. Stating that the intensified inspections were aimed at preventing unlawful incidents and curbing unlawful transportation during the festival period, the Commissioner warned of strict action against violators. He appealed to the public and motorists to cooperate with police personnel to ensure peaceful celebrations.

Karimnagar to get Hyderabad-level skill training facilities

District administration plans specialised coaching through library network.

KARIMNAGAR May 15 (Correspondent): Karimnagar District Collector Chitra Mishra on Friday said the administration would introduce skill development and employment-oriented training programmes in the district on par with those available in Hyderabad, with a focus on supporting unemployed youth and job aspirants. Addressing a programme organised at the Karimnagar District Central Library as part of the State government's Prajapalana Pragati Pranalika educational week celebrations, the Collector said the district library system would be strengthened into a comprehensive training centre offering coaching for various government recruitment examinations.

The event, held to mark Library Day celebrations, was organised under the aegis of District Library Organisation chairman Sattu Mallesh. Karimnagar Mayor Kolagani Srinivas, SUDA chairman Komatireddy Narendra Reddy, Additional Collector Ashwini Tanaji Wakade and Revenue Divisional Officer Maheshwar were among those present. Ms. Mishra said Karimnagar already possessed adequate educational infrastructure and resources, enabling the administration to provide high-quality coaching locally and reduce the need for youth to travel to Hyderabad for training. She said special coaching programmes would be organised in coordination with BC, SC, ST and Minority Welfare departments.

Calling upon students and unemployed youth to make effective use of the district library, the Collector said reading habits played a vital role in improving knowledge and personality development. She emphasised the need to strengthen reading culture among younger generations. Mayor Kolagani Srinivas said the Municipal Corporation would extend full support for the development of the library system. He noted that a new district library building, constructed at a cost of ₹7 crore under Smart City funds, had been completed and would be inaugurated shortly. SUDA chairman Komatireddy Narendra Reddy described libraries as centres of knowledge and personality development, and urged people to cultivate the habit of reading. He said the State government was according priority to



education and healthcare.

Library Organisation chairman Sattu Mallesh said education had the power to transform an individual's social and economic condition. Describing the library as a “knowledge hub”, he appealed to students and job aspirants to utilise its facilities effectively. Additional Collector Ashwini Tanaji Wakade said reading books should become an integral part of everyday life and recalled how regular reading during her student days had enriched her knowledge. Several books were donated to the library during the programme. The dignitaries also inaugurated a book exhibition and launched eight air coolers donated by the Ponnam Sathayya Charitable Trust for the benefit of students. Local corporator Padala Srija, Library Organisation secretary Saritha, officials, students and members of the public attended the programme.

Skill Training Provides Financial Security for Women – Pendem Srilakshmi Ramanand

“Narsampet/Warangal, May 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Municipal Chairperson Pendem Srilakshmi Ramanand stated that skill development training plays a pivotal role in achieving the economic empowerment of women. “She spoke on Friday at the inaugural ceremony of a free tailoring and embroidery (Maggam) training program, organized by the Prathibha Voluntary Service Organization in collaboration with the Warangal-based FMM Social Service Organization. Certificates were also distributed to women who had successfully completed the training, held within the premises of Wisdom High School in the town. “Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, the Municipal Chairperson observed that, due to a lack of employment opportunities in contemporary society, women are often compelled to migrate to other regions in search of a livelihood. She noted that such circumstances frequently lead to hardships for both women and children. She emphasized that skill development training plays a crucial role in preventing these issues, enabling women to create self-employment opportunities, and helping them achieve financial independence. “Bathula Karuna, Project Coordinator for the FMM Social Service Organization, stated that their organization conducts employment-oriented training programs with the aim of eradicating child marriages, preventing child trafficking, curbing sexual abuse against children, and promoting women's empowerment. She stated that the primary objective of their organization is to build a society free from violence against women and children, and she urged everyone to make full use of such opportunities. “On this oc-



casion, training materials required for tailoring and embroidery were distributed free of cost. Certificates were also presented to women who had previously completed tailoring training. “The event was attended by FMM Social Service Organization Project Coordinator Erra Srikanth, Finance Manager M. Ajay Kumar, Municipal Councillors Juluri Rojarani, Ramoji Rojarani, and Velpula Sripatha, ACDPO Jyothi, trainers Swetha, Sandhya, and Sharifa, Prathibha Seva Samstha Secretary Girigani Sudarshan, Sudarshan Seva Samstha Secretary Prabhakar, Boyina Venkataswamy, and approximately 70 women.

Former MLA NVSS Prabhakar Unveils Poster for Centering Workers’ Strike

UPPAL , MAY 15(INDIAN CHRONICAL): Former Uppal MLA NVSS Prabhakar unveiled the poster announcing the statewide strike by centering union contractors and workers demanding remunerative prices for centering works in the construction sector. “Representatives of the centering unions from Uppal and Ramanthapur met Prabhakar and informed him that centering workers across the state have decided to suspend work from May 16 to June 16, protesting against the lack of fair wages and viable rates for centering works in building construction activities. They sought his complete support for the month-long bandh. “Speaking on the occasion, Prabhakar expressed his full support for the strike and stated that the demands of centering workers are justified and deserve immediate attention. “Several union leaders and BJP func-



tionaries participated in the programme, including Ramanthapur Division President Vangala Santosh Gupta, Medchal District Council Member Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Medchal-Malkajigiri District OBC Morcha General Secretary Revu Narasimha, senior BJP leader Shaga Ravi, and Ravula Beerappa, among others. “[

Telangana Police Officer Raju Pilli Achieves Rare Feat“Khammam Hero Completes Prestigious Procam Slamfor the Fourth Time



“Khammam, May 15 Indian Chronicle:“ “Raju Pilli, a prominent long-distance runner from the Telangana Police Department, has achieved yet another remarkable milestone. He successfully completed the prestigious “Procam Slam” for the fourth time, earning nationwide appreciation for his extraordinary accomplishment.“The “Procam Slam” is regarded as one of India’s most prestigious running achievements. It is awarded to runners who complete four major national-level running events, all recognized with the World Athletics Gold Label, within a single cycle.“With this achievement, Raju Pilli has now earned a total of four Procam Slam medals and 16 major event medals, placing him among the country’s leading endurance runners.“By participating in prestigious marathons across India, he continues to proudly represent the Telangana Police and in-



spire countless fitness enthusiasts. His journey proves that with discipline, determination, and dedication, one can successfully balance professional responsibilities with personal goals.“Major Races Completed by Raju Pilli:“Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon – 21.097 km“Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata – 25 km“Tata Mumbai Marathon – 42.195 km“TCS World 10K Bengaluru – 10 km“Speaking on the occasion, Raju Pilli said:““Completing the Procam Slam was my long-cherished dream. This journey was not only a test of physical endurance but also of mental strength and commitment. Every race gave me a new experience. This achievement is not the end; it is just the beginning of many more goals I wish to achieve in the future. My aim is to inspire others through disciplined fitness.““He expressed gratitude to his family members, senior officials of the Telangana Police, Khammam CP Sunil Dutt, Additional DCP Kumaraswamy R, Kamaraju, Srisailam R.I., and the Hyderabad running community for their constant encouragement and support.“He also conveyed special thanks to Tirupati Reddy, who introduced him to the world of running, and to the members of the Telangana Runners Group.“With the slogan:““Run for passion... “Run for a goal...“Run to inspire others...““members of the Telangana Runners Group encouraged more runners to take inspiration from Pilli Raju’s national-level achievements and pursue fitness and excellence.

Field-Level Verification of Praja Darbar Applications Underway in Agricultural Fields

“Khammam Nelakondapalli May 15 Indian Chronicle:““Officials are conducting field-level verification of applications received during the Praja Darbar program organized under the special initiative of Telangana Revenue, Housing and Information Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy to ensure speedy resolution of public grievances.“A total of 714 applications related to revenue issues were received during the Praja Darbar programs held in the Rayagudem, Bodulabanda, and Guvvalagudem clusters of the mandal. Farmers submitted applications regarding Sada Bainama, passbooks, name corrections, and other land-related issues.“Nelakondapalli Tahsildar P. Ramprasad formed special teams to examine the applications village-wise. Revenue officials are carrying out field inspections in various villages across the mandal. On Friday, the Tahsildar personally supervised the ongoing verification process.“Officials visited farmers’ agricultural lands and conducted spot inspections. They also interacted with neighboring farmers and carried out panchanamas to verify whether the land details and extent matched official records



and submitted documents.“Speaking on the occasion, Tahsildar Ramprasad said that the applications are being examined on a war footing and efforts are being made to resolve as many issues as possible at the earliest.“Mandal Revenue Inspectors Alasya Madhusudhan Rao and Allam Ravi Kumar, along with concerned GPOs, participated in the program.

SP Nitika Pant Warns of Strict Action Against Vigilantism in the Name of Cow Protection



“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, May 15: Asifabad: District SP Nitika Pant warned that strict action would be taken against anyone taking the law into their own hands in the name of cow protection.“Addressing a meeting with members of the Cow Protection Committee at the District Police Office in Asifabad, the SP issued key guidelines regarding

the prevention of illegal transportation of cattle. She stated that no individual or group should resort to violence or unlawful activities while attempting to stop cattle smuggling.“The SP clarified that attacking individuals, damaging vehicles, or engaging in vigilantism under the guise of cow protection are punishable offences under the law. She urged the public to immediately report any suspected illegal transportation of cows or calves to the police by contacting 8712670505, 8712670557, the nearest police station, or Dial-100.“She further informed that 14 check-posts have already been set up along the district borders, with round-the-clock monitoring being carried out in three shifts. Strict action would also be taken against those involved in illegal cattle transportation, sale, or slaughter, she added.“The SP appealed to citizens to cooperate with the police and contribute to maintaining peace and law and order in the district.“Special Branch Inspector Satish also participated in the meeting.

Dyagala Srinivas Congratulates Nature Enthusiast Nalgonda Sammayya



“Nekkonda/Warangal, May 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Nalgonda Sammayya—a prominent environmental activist actively striving for environmental conservation—has been selected for the “Haritha Mitra International Award 2026,” presented by the University of Louisiana in the United States.“Following this announcement, Dyagala Srinivas Mudiraj—President of the BC Welfare Association (Warangal District) and In-charge of the Narsampet constituency—extended his congratulations to Sammayya. On Friday, he met with the environmental activist at the Nekkonda Mandal headquarters and conveyed his best wishes.““Speaking on the occasion, Dyagala Srinivas noted that Sammayya—a native of Gundrampalli village in Nekkonda Mandal who works as a ‘Gopalamitra’ (veterinary assistant)—has, for many years, been planting and

nurturing trees using his own personal funds, transcending all political affiliations.““He remarked that the saplings planted by Sammayya have, over time, grown into large trees, contributing significantly to maintaining environmental balance. He added that it is a matter of great pride to see such dedicated environmental service recognized with an international award.““Dyagala Srinivas offered further accolades to Sammayya for rising from a humble background in a remote village, achieving recognition through ceaseless social service, and bringing honor to his native land.

Nine-year-old missing girl traced, reunited with family in Chatrinaka

Hyderabad: The Chatrinaka Police Station reunited a nine-year-old girl with her family within hours after she went missing on Friday.According to police, the child was located after a Dial 100 distress call alerted officers about an unidentified girl wandering alone. A constable rushed to the spot and found the child in a distressed condition. As she was initially unable to explain her whereabouts, police comforted her and began searching nearby areas to trace her family.

No Permanent Solution Yet to Telangana’s Podu Land Issue When Will the ‘Podu’ Issue Be Resolved?

“Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, May 15:““Annual Tensions Continue, Farmers Remain Worried“Kumuram Bheem Asifabad District, May 14: The long-pending issue of Podu lands has once again intensified in the district. Even before the onset of the monsoon season, tensions between Podu farmers and Forest Department officials have become a recurring situation.“Disputes are continuing in several areas of the district as Forest officials attempt to enter lands that have allegedly been cultivated by farmers for decades, while farmers resist such actions. Fresh tensions surfaced on Wednesday in Dind village of Chintalamanepally mandal after Forest officials reached the area following information that farmers had begun agricultural activities on Podu lands.“Officials reportedly tried to stop the farming activities, leading to large-scale protests by Podu farmers and villagers. Heated arguments broke out between the farmers and officials, creating tension in the area for nearly two hours.“Forest officials stated that farmers had already been warned last year not to carry out cultivation activities on the disputed forest lands. However, despite prior notices, agricultural work was allegedly resumed on the lands belonging to the Forest Department.“Farmers, on the other hand, appealed to the government and officials not to take away lands they claim to have cultivated since their ancestors’ time. Similar situations are reportedly prevailing in Asifabad, Chintalamanepally, Bejjur, Rebbera and several other mandals of the district.“Although the government had earlier distributed land ownership documents for thousands of acres and implemented the Rythu Bandhu scheme, the issue remains unresolved. In particular, the lack of land titles for non-tribal farmers and the absence of clarity regarding forest boundaries are leading to fresh disputes.“Meanwhile, reports that field-level officials have been instructed to re-



claim Podu lands in every forest range have further heightened tensions. Forest Department staff are also said to be working under pressure.“While the Forest Department is reportedly preparing to reclaim the lands for plantation activities, Podu farmers have urged authorities not to deprive them of lands they have been cultivating for many years.“Agriculture Is Their Only Livelihood“For many Podu farmers, agriculture remains the sole source of livelihood, yet they continue to face hardships every year. Demands are growing for the government to protect not only forests but also the livelihood rights of tribal communities.“At present, the Podu land issue in the district is no longer just a land dispute; it has evolved into a political, administrative and social concern. The lack of coordination among departments and the absence of a clear policy are resulting in the same tensions being repeated every year.“However, the question of when a permanent solution will be found still remains unanswered.

CPI Leaders Submit Memorandum to Nagiligonda Panchayat Secretary

“Khammam,Chinthakani May 15 (Indian Chronicle):““Under the leadership of the agricultural workers’ union affiliated with the Communist Party of India, CPI district assistant secretary Jammula Jitender Reddy submitted a memorandum to the Nagiligonda Gram Panchayat Secretary.“Speaking on the occasion, Jitender Reddy demanded that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme be strengthened and continued effectively. He urged the central government to provide insurance coverage of ₹10 lakh to workers employed under the employment guarantee scheme.“He also demanded the implementation of a comprehensive Minimum Wages Act for agricultural labourers across the country. Further, he called for the immediate withdrawal of the practice of taking photographs of workers twice a day at worksites under the scheme.“Jitender Reddy emphasized that workers should be provided with minimum basic facilities at workplaces



during working hours. He demanded that employment be guaranteed for 200 days a year and that workers be paid ₹600 per day.“Among those who participated in the programme were CPI district executive member Apuri Ravindra Babu, Sheikh Hussain, Pandi Sekhar, Kandula Hussain, Sheikh Mustafa and others.

Modi Government Burdening Common People: Dandi Suresh

“Khammam, May 15 (Indian Chronicle):“ “CPI district secretary Dandi Suresh alleged that the Modi government is serving corporate interests while imposing heavy burdens on common people by increasing petrol and diesel prices. He said the government’s actions do not match its promises and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of ignoring the struggles of ordinary citizens.“On Friday, under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (CPI), party workers organized a protest rally from the CPI office to the bypass road in Khammam against the fuel price hike. Demonstrators pulled an auto-rickshaw with ropes as a mark of protest and also burnt an effigy of the central government.“Speaking on the occasion, Dandi Suresh said that during the recent elections in five states, the Modi government had assured people that fuel prices would not be increased. However, after the elections, petrol and diesel prices were hiked, and he warned that prices of essential commodities may rise further in the coming days.“He stated that the increasing prices have made life difficult for common people and alleged that the Modi government is working only for the wealthy sections of society while attempting to hand over the country to corporate forces.“Suresh pointed out that when Modi came to power, petrol was around ₹60 per litre, whereas it has now reached ₹111 per



litre. Diesel prices too have reportedly risen to around ₹99 per litre. He said the rise in fuel prices would increase transportation charges and create an additional burden on the public.“He demanded that the central government immediately withdraw the increased fuel prices. He further said that people are beginning to understand the “reality behind Modi’s governance” and called upon citizens to support public movements against the government’s policies.“Among those who participated in the protest were CPI state committee member SK Janimiah, district executive members Tati Venkateswara Rao, Enugu Gandhi, Yanali Sambasiva Reddy, district leaders Tati Nirmala, and leaders from student and youth organizations including All India Youth Federation and All India Students Federation.

Record Purchase of 2.18 Lakh Metric Tons of Maize: District Collector Divakar TS



“Do not create panic among farmers with false news““Farmers need not worry... the government will procure the entire crop“Khammam, May 15(Indian Chronicle):“Khammam District Collector Divakar TS stated that a record 2.18 lakh metric tons of maize has been procured in the district so far.“The Collector issued a rejoinder stating that the news published in various newspapers on Friday, May 15, claiming delays in maize procurement and lifting, was based on incomplete information.“He said that the maize procurement process in the district is being carried out smoothly under government guidelines through the district administration and TG Marked.“Due to the large-scale yield during the Yasangi season 2025–26, temporary pressure has arisen in the movement of loaded vehicles at some procurement centers. Although some delays occurred because of excess stock accumulation and limited unloading space, the administration is taking high-priority measures to resolve the issue, he said.“The Collector stated that a record 2.18 lakh metric tons of maize has already been procured in the district, and procurement had never reached this level in the past. To ensure that farmers do not

face any inconvenience, additional transport vehicles are being arranged, along with alternative warehouses and storage centers.“District officials are continuously monitoring the functioning of procurement centers, and procurement is being carried out according to the standards fixed by the government, he added.“The Collector further said that a toll-free number, 1077, has been set up for farmers cultivating maize and paddy in the district to report any issues. If any deductions are imposed on grain or maize that meets the quality standards prescribed by the Central Government, or if farmers face any other problems, they should immediately lodge a complaint, and strict action will be taken.“The Collector clarified in the rejoinder that farmers should not believe false or incomplete news, and assured that the government will purchase every grain produced by the farmers.“Issued by the District Public Relations Officer’s Office, Khammam.

Wyra police seize 128 kg of ganja worth Rs 64 lakh, arrests three

Khammam: Wyra police in the district have arrested three interstate ganja smugglers and seized ganja worth Rs 64 lakh.Speaking to the media on Friday, Wyra ACP Sarangapani informed that Wyra Sub-Inspector of police P Rama Rao and his team were proceeding to conduct vehicle inspections near Anjaneyaswamy Temple at Somavaram village in Wyra Municipality limits.They spotted three individuals standing suspiciously by the roadside with five gunny bags.

Maharashtra cuts VAT on aviation fuel to 7% for next 6 months



In the wake of the West Asia crisis which is likely to spiral into a financial crisis for the aviation industry, the Maharashtra government announced reducing VAT on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) from 18 per cent to 7 per cent till November 14, 2026. The state government issued the notification on May 14 which will be applicable from Friday. "Due to the West Asia crisis, the Indian aviation industry is facing certain issues like air space closures, un-

certain operations, spike in ATF prices. During these times, under the leadership of Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji, the government of India has given multiple respites to airlines in the form of Capping of ATF prices for domestic scheduled operators, reduction in Airport Charges, Emergency Credit Linkage scheme etc. One of the important expenditures in aviation industry is the VAT on ATF that is levied by state governments. Ministry of Civil Aviation has been engaging with State governments to reduce this VAT since some time, and specifically during the crisis times," Union Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said on social media. He said he was thankful to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for notifying the reduction in VAT for ATF from 18% to 7%. Naidu informed that Maharashtra State is having 16 operational airports and highest annual air traffic amongst the states, of around 75 million passengers, daily passengers of around 2 lakhs. "This reduction in VAT will help the flight operations in all these airports, and benefit the large number of passengers, by keeping the airfares in check while the global challenges continue to push airfares upwards," he said.

St Stephen's vs DU: A long-running battle over admissions, autonomy and control



GNS News Agency, May 15

DU's letter to St Stephen's, sent barely two weeks before Elias was to take charge as the first woman principal in the 145-year history of the college, marked the latest flashpoint in the years-long confrontation between one of India's most storied colleges and the university of which it is part. Over the last four years, the relationship between St Stephen's and DU has steadily deteriorated over a range of issues: admissions through the Common University Entrance Test (CUET), interview weightage for Christian minority students, implementation of supernumerary quotas, seat allocation disputes, postgraduate admissions, and now the appointment of the principal. The disagreements, which essentially stem from the status of St Stephen's as a Christian minority institution, have been litigated in the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court, where both sides have invoked constitutional principles, university statutes and questions of minority rights.

What has triggered the latest confrontation?

On Thursday (May 14) DU Registrar Vikas Gupta wrote to St Stephen's, directing the college to put on hold the appointment of Susan Elias as principal. DU argued that the process of selection of the principal had violated the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations, 2018 because nominees of the university were allegedly not included in the selection committee. Sub-clause VIII-A of Clause 5.1 of the Regulations describes the composition of the Selection Committee for a "College Principal and Professor". DU's letter to St Stephen's has underlined that as per items (a)(iii) and (a)(vi) of this sub-clause, the vice-chancellor and the university will continue to have a role in the appointment of the principal even in the case of "colleges notified/ declared as minority educational institutions".

The college announced Elias's appointment on May 12. College Chairman Paul Swarup had earlier told The Indian Express that the appointment was made after "the proper procedure" was followed, including a public advertisement, interviews, shortlisting, and candidate presentations before the selection. The registrar's letter, however, suggested that the university believes key procedural requirements involving university nominees and expert panels were bypassed. Therefore, "You are requested to not proceed with appointment of new principal", and instead "convene a meeting of the Selection Committee constituted as per the provisions of UGC Regulations 2018", DU has told the college. St Stephen's is yet to respond to the letter. But over the years, it has argued in a range of issues that it has broad autonomy in matters of governance.

What grounds does St Stephen's claim this autonomy in its functioning?

St Stephen's argues that it enjoys constitutional protection as a minority educational institution under Article 30(1) of the Constitution, which grants religious and linguistic minorities the right to "establish and administer educational institutions of their choice". The college was founded in 1881 by the Cambridge Mission, and it became one of the original constituent colleges of Delhi University in 1922.

But even after affiliation, the college retained a distinct governing structure under its own constitution and governing body. St Stephen's has long argued that its minority character allows it to preserve independent admission practices and internal governance mechanisms. This position received judicial backing in the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in 1992 in 'St Stephen's College vs University of Delhi' case.

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the court upheld the right of the college to maintain its minority character, and recognised its authority to devise its own admission procedures, including interviews. The court held that while the state could regulate educational standards, it could not excessively interfere in the internal administration of minority institutions. This 1992 judgment has remained central to nearly every legal battle the college has fought since.

How then is DU able to intervene in the affairs of the college?

Its minority status notwithstanding, St Stephen's remains an affiliated college of Delhi University. DU therefore argues that the college must comply with the university's statutory framework, admission ordinances, academic rules, and UGC regulations that are applicable to its affiliated colleges.

The university has consistently maintained that autonomy cannot mean complete exemption from common academic and administrative standards. This includes adherence to sanctioned seat matrices, university-wide admission systems like CUET, the Common University Entrance Test administered by the National Testing Agency, the scores of which are used for admission to undergraduate programs in all central universities and other participating universities across the country, reservation policies, and regulations governing appointments.

What was the CUET controversy, the last time DU and St Stephen's locked horns on the question of autonomy?

DU adopted CUET for undergraduate admissions in 2022, mandating that admissions across affiliated colleges would be based entirely on CUET scores. However, St Stephen's announced in its prospectus that it would continue to give 15% weightage to interviews while assigning 85% weightage to CUET scores. DU objected, arguing that the college could not impose interviews on all applicants once a centralised admission framework had been adopted.

The matter reached the Delhi High Court, and in September 2022, a Division Bench comprising then Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad ruled that St Stephen's could not conduct interviews for non-minority seats, and must admit general category students based solely on their CUET scores. However, the court held that the college could continue conducting interviews for Christian minority candidates with 15% weightage.

The ruling effectively created a dual admission structure: 100% CUET for non-minority applicants, and 85% CUET plus 15% interview for Christian minority applicants. The college challenged parts of the ruling in the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, in December 2022, DU attempted to enforce 100% CUET even for minority seats, and the matter went to court again. In July 2023, the Bench of Chief Justice Sharma and Justice Prasad granted interim relief to St Stephen's and restored the 85:15 formula for Christian minority admissions. "...As an interim measure, this Court directs that the admission policy as framed by this Court vide judgment dated 12.09.2022 shall be followed for the Academic Year 2023-24 and the St. Stephen's College will adopt the marks secured in the CUET with 85% weightage for CUET and the College's interview for shortlisted candidates with a weightage of 15% for Christian minority candidates," the court said.

Sleeper bus where Delhi woman was raped operated despite 36 pending challans

GNS News Agency, May 15

The sleeper bus on which a woman was gangraped allegedly by the driver and cleaner in the early hours of Tuesday had been operating despite having 36 pending challans issued against it in Delhi, it is learnt. The Delhi Traffic Police and the Transport Department have now launched separate investigations to determine how the private vehicle was plying on an all-India tourist permit despite these challans. The bus was registered in Bihar; it operated between Delhi and Bihar via Uttar Pradesh. Sources said according to traffic challan documents, between February 2, 2025, and May 6, 2026, the bus had accumulated 36 challans: for permit violations, improper parking, RC violations, not wearing seat belt, absence of reflectors, wrong-side driving, and speeding.

The challans, sources said, were issued in areas such as Shakarpur, Chilla Border, Akshardham, Khanna Market, under the Geeta Colony flyover, and Gokhale Market. The total penalty amount is around Rs 3.3 lakh. Source said the last two challans were in the name of the accused driver, Umesh Kumar. Police said they summoned the bus owner from Bihar's Gopalganj district; he told them that the two accused men had been working on his bus only for the past few months. Delhi Police are also trying to ascertain if there were more challans against the bus in Bihar and UP from their respective transport departments.



On Tuesday morning, police said the bus was scheduled to pick up passengers from Nangloi, although its usual route ran from Central Delhi through East Delhi to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Police said the woman, a sex worker, had allegedly boarded the bus from a bus stand at Saraswati Vihar. The vehicle allegedly travelled for around 7 km with the woman before stopping near Nangloi Railway Road, close to Nangloi railway station. Inside the stationary bus, Umesh and his helper, Ramendra, allegedly raped her. Nangloi railway station is located around 700 metres from the Nangloi Police Station and the office of the DCP (Outer North). Around 2.30 am, the woman was captured on CCTV cameras getting off the bus.

From NTA official to hard copy to WhatsApp: CBI details NEET-UG paper leak trail



The NEET-UG paper leak, which has led to the exam's cancellation and sparked nationwide outrage, originated from within the National Testing Agency (NTA), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has told a Delhi court. The central agency, which has made seven arrests in the case so far, explained the trail behind the alleged leak to the court on Thursday. The CBI has said that Shubham Khairnar, an Ayurveda student and the first to be arrested in the case from Maharashtra, got the paper from Dhananjay Lokhanda. Lokhanda, who knew Khairnar, is alleged to have got the paper from Pune-based Manisha Waghmare. Waghmare, it is alleged, got it from a "source in NTA". The CBI has said. Both Lokhanda and Waghmare have been arrested and are now in the CBI's custody. Gurgaon's Yash Yadav enters the picture next. According to the CBI's submissions, Khairnar allegedly "facilitated accused Yash Yadav for distribution of leaked NEET (UG) 2026 question paper and accordingly on 29.04.2026, accused Yash Yadav got the PDF files of the NEET question papers through Telegram". The agency has recovered the PDF files containing papers of Physics, Chemistry and Biology. The CBI also told the court that it wanted to ascertain the role of public servants in the leak after confronting the accused. Lokhanda was produced in court on Friday. Five accused were produced in court on Thursday: Khairnar, Mangilal Biwal, Vikas Biwal, and Dinesh Biwal from Jaipur, and Yadav.

The accused, arrested in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Haryana, have been brought to Delhi on transit remand. "Their remand is necessary as it was a larger conspiracy in the whole nation... Papers were leaked and distributed. We need to find the extent to which the accused persons had access to the public servants and how many people from the printing press were involved," the public prosecutor representing CBI told the court. On Friday, the public prosecutor said the investigation was ongoing and that Waghmare and Lokhanda were allegedly involved in providing the papers to Khairnar. The agency provided the same grounds of arrest for all seven accused persons.

The CBI is learnt to have found that Khairnar allegedly informed Yash that Mangilal Biwal had approached him for "arranging leaked NEET UG 2026 question papers before the examination for his younger son for 10-12 lakhs". According to the CBI, Mangilal allegedly contacted Yash on WhatsApp for the leaked papers. "On 29.04.2026, Shubham (Khairnar) allegedly informed Yash Yadav that he would provide leaked question papers of Physics, Chemistry and Biology papers which will have approximately 500-600 questions capable of securing around very good marks, which can ensure admission in reputed medical colleges," the CBI said. After this, Yadav allegedly received PDF files of leaked question papers on Telegram. Mangilal allegedly purchased the paper from Yadav for 10 lakh, and provided it to his son, his cousin and his son's friends. Mangilal's son allegedly contacted several other candidates and shared these details with Yadav over WhatsApp and Instagram, the CBI has said. "Dinesh Biwal... stated that Yash Yadav had provided NEET UG 2026 leaked question sets in PDF format to his elder brother... on the Telegram application in consideration of Rs 12 lakhs, to be paid later, after taking security in the form of original educational documents and a signed blank cheque," the CBI alleged. In its remand papers submitted before the court, the CBI said it needed the custody of the accused to "prevent further commission of similar offences involving leakage of question papers" and to "identify and apprehend other co-accused persons involved in the offence".

It also said it needed to "recover and analyse digital devices" and uncover the "financial trail connected to the NEET UG 2026 examination". There was also a need to "unearth the larger conspiracy" by identifying officials of NTA, which conducts the NEET, and other departments allegedly involved in the leak, the central agency told the court. A massive leak According to the CBI, a 150-page "guess paper" with 410 questions was circulated. Of those 410 questions, about 120 appeared in the chemistry paper of the exam. This paper was with students weeks before the examination on May 3, the agency said. While the CBI claims to have recovered chats of Yash Yadav with Khairnar from the latter's phone and seized the phones of other accused, the exact role of NTA officials is yet to be examined. This will be done in the coming days after the seven accused are questioned.

The paper leak case was registered following a complaint on May 12 by Varun Bhardwaj, Director, Department of Higher Education (NTA Division), Ministry of Education, Government of India. The complaint says the NEET-UG 2026 examination was compromised due to the circulation of confidential examination questions in PDF format on WhatsApp ahead of the examination, and that some of the circulated questions matched questions in the actual examination paper. The complaint said a fact-finding enquiry by the Special Operations Group of Rajasthan Police confirmed the leak. According to the CBI, public servants, candidates, institutes, middlemen and other unknown persons were involved in the "larger conspiracy" behind the leak. Over 22.7 lakh aspirants had appeared for the exam. The NTA has now announced a re-test on June 21.

Women's helpline, help desks in police stations, geo-tagging-based garbage complaint: Here are the latest initiatives of the new BJP government in Bengal



A series of civic and public safety initiatives, including a plan for an integrated women and child emergency helpline mechanism, geo-tagging-based garbage complaint system, and stricter parking regulations, are the latest announcements from the new BJP government in Bengal. Speaking to media persons, minister Agnimitra Paul highlighted some of the initiatives on Thursday evening. Paul addressed concerns regarding women and child safety, saying the government was working toward strengthening emergency support systems across the state.

The government is planning to introduce a women's emergency helpline (181), Paul announced. According to the minister, any woman dialing 181 will have her exact location immediately identified through geo-tagging and forwarded to the nearest police station for an immediate response. "The nearest police station will instantly receive the caller's location through geo-tagging," Paul said. She further stated that every police station will have a separate women's help desk from where emergency assistance would be coordinated and dispatched without delay.

According to Paul, the government is examining ways to create a more integrated and responsive support mechanism for women and children facing distress or emergencies. "We have to ensure that women can move around safely even at night," she said. Apart from women's safety, she also said the government was preparing to introduce a

technology-driven system that would allow citizens to report garbage accumulation in real time through a mobile application. "Just take a picture and send it," Paul said while explaining the proposed geo-tagging-based complaint mechanism. According to the minister, residents would be able to upload photographs of garbage dumps or unclean public spaces through the application, which would automatically identify the location using geo-tagging and alert the civic authorities concerned.

"It will have to be cleaned within one to two hours," she said, stressing that municipal workers would be expected to work quickly after a complaint is registered. The proposed application is being presented as part of a broader effort to improve municipal responsiveness through digital monitoring and location-based tracking of complaints. Alongside the sanitation initiative, Paul also announced a crackdown on illegal roadside parking, particularly in crowded urban areas where vehicles parked on both sides of roads often lead to severe traffic congestion. "For years, illegal parking has been allowed on both sides of roads," Paul said, adding, "Vehicles will now be parked only on the designated side of the road." According to the minister, the government has already taken a "decision" to regulate parking more strictly in order to improve traffic movement and reduce congestion in busy city areas. Paul also alleged that illegal parking fee collection networks had been operating in several locations. "In many places, money is being collected illegally," she said, alleging that unofficial parking collections often do not reach government accounts. The minister said the administration intends to bring parking operations under tighter monitoring while ensuring that designated parking systems function more transparently. Though detailed operational guidelines for the proposed parking rules, garbage complaint application, and integrated helpline system are yet to be formally released, the announcements indicate that the state government is preparing a coordinated civic management and public safety push involving municipal bodies, urban administration, and law enforcement agencies.

Maharashtra CET first attempt planned for December-January: Commissioner Dileep Sardesai

The Maharashtra Common Entrance Test (MHT-CET) Cell plans to conduct the first attempt of the exam between December 15, 2026, and January 15, 2027, aligning it with national tests such as the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), said its Commissioner Dileep Sardesai.

CET provided candidates with the option of two attempts for the Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics (PCM), Physics, Chemistry, Biology (PCB), and Master of Business Administration/Master of Management Studies (MBA/MMS) groups in academic year 2026-27 for the first time. In its first year, the first attempt was scheduled for April 2026, and the second for May 2026.

Speaking to journalists Thursday, Sardesai said, "Students finish their syllabus by December every year. JEE is conducted in the third week of January. So we want to conduct the first attempt of CET before JEE." Currently, both CET attempts of the MBA/MMS and PCB Group, scheduled for April and May, have been completed. The second attempt of the PCM group began on May 12 and will end on May 21. According to AY 2026-27 data shared by the CET

cell for the MAH-MBA/MMS-CET, over 1.16 lakh candidates appeared in the first attempt conducted from April 4 and 53,931 candidates appeared for the second attempt held from May 9. For MAH-MHT CET 2026 (PCB Group), 2.64 lakh candidates appeared in the first attempt, conducted from April 24, and 95,634 candidates appeared in the second attempt, conducted from May 10.

The first attempt of MAH-MHT CET 2026 (PCM Group) saw 4.54 lakh students appearing for the exam, with the second attempt currently ongoing. Overall, 18.12 lakh candidates registered for the 17 CETs conducted by the Cell this academic year till now. 13.44 lakh of these candidates appeared for the tests. Final numbers from the second attempt by the PCM group will be added to this figure. Registrations for the 18th and final test conducted by the Cell (PGP/PGO CET) are tentatively scheduled to begin in September. MAH-MHT CET is held for admissions to undergraduate and postgraduate professional courses, including engineering, pharmacy, law, management, and agriculture, in Maharashtra.

Diljit Dosanjh shuts down appeal by retired IAS officers, defence personnel asking him to lead Punjab



GNS News Agency, May 15

A think tank of retired IAS officers, defence personnel, and professionals in Punjab on Saturday issued a public appeal to singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh to take over the leadership of the state, “brought to its knees by successive dispensations”. Dosanjh, however, declined the offer, saying “Kadey v Nhi..In a full-page newspaper advertisement addressed directly to Dosanjh, Chandigarh-based Jago Punjab Manch stated that Punjab did not need another politician, but needed a citizen of consequence. “This letter is not flattery. It is a reckoning,” the appeal stated, invoking the failures of successive governments, the silence of those who should have spoken, and what it called the possibility that one man of unimpeachable reach could change the course of a people’s destiny.Dosanjh reacted to the appeal on X on Saturday, saying, “Kadey v Nhi.. Am Very Happy in My Field. Thank You So Much.”

Though appeals to film stars to enter politics are not uncommon in India, a signed full-page public appeal from a group of retired officers to a singer asking him to lead a state has no precedent in Punjab.The signatories include retired IAS officer S S Boparai, retired brigadiers M S Dullat, Harwant Singh and Inder Mohan Singh, retired colonels

Avtar Singh Hira, Malwinder S Guron, Gurbir S Sandhu and Iqbal Singh, and others.The letter identified four crises consuming the state. Punjab’s fiscal architecture, it said, is in ruins, pointing out that the state carries one of the heaviest sub-national debt burdens in the country, with governance reduced to populist announcements and negligible returns in health, infrastructure or human capital.It added that social institutions, from public hospitals to government schools, are being quietly hollowed out. Communal polarisation, it warned, was deliberately being injected into Punjab’s political bloodstream at a moment when the state, given its border location and the living memory of Partition, could least afford it. It also highlighted the migration crisis, saying every young Punjabi was boarding a flight to Canada, Australia, or the United Kingdom.The appeal comes weeks after Dosanjh found himself at the centre of a charged controversy when pro-Khalistani organisations displayed banners targeting him at one of his concerts abroad, accusing him of being insufficiently committed to the Khalistan cause. Dosanjh told his audience that everything he does, he does for Punjab, not for any ideology, not for any organisation, not for any geography beyond the land that made him.The letter pointed to his access to the Punjabi diaspora worldwide, and his authenticity, citing his “solidarity with farmers during the agitation when it was neither fashionable nor without professional consequence.” It also says, “Dosanjh has a credibility that has not been purchased, a discipline that has been lived and not constructed.”Punjab heads to polls in early 2027. The Manch did not ask Dosanjh to join any political party or contest any election, but invoked Nepal and Tamil Nadu as models where change came from people and movements that the conventional political calculus had not accounted for.“Punjab’s moment is now,” the letter stated. “And they are willing to stand, once more, for something larger than themselves.”

Nilesh Lanke hospitalised in Pune; Ahilyanagar MP stable after fever

GNS News Agency, May 15

Ahilyanagar MP Nilesh Lanke was admitted to Ruby Hall Clinic in Pune with viral fever and dehydration. Ahilyanagar MP Nilesh Lanke was admitted to Ruby Hall Clinic in Pune with viral fever and dehydration. The condition of Ahilyanagar MP Nilesh Lanke, who was admitted to Ruby Hall Clinic on Friday with viral fever and dehydration, is in stable condition, said hospital authorities.Dr Prachee Sathe, director, ICU, Ruby Hall Clinic, said the 46-year-old MP has been admitted for observation and is currently stable. “The medical team is carrying out the necessary procedures and further evaluation,” he said in a statement.Lanke, who belongs to NCP(SP), initially underwent treatment in Ahilyanagar after he complained of uneasiness. But later, he was shifted to Pune after his condition deteriorated.

On Wednesday, he posted on X that he had become slightly unwell two days ago. “After receiving treatment, my condition is now stable, and there is no reason for concern. With your good wishes, love, and blessings, I will soon rejoin your service.”According to party sources, Lanke’s health



deteriorated after he took part in a fort conservation drive at Gingee Fort in Tamil Nadu on May 1, where he performed physical labour for a few hours under scorching heat.“Besides, he was already feeling exhausted due to continuous tours, public meetings, and social engagements. After his return to Pune, he was admitted to a hospital in Ahilyanagar,” the sources added.

Can’t get a table at Soam? Pinky Chandan Dixit’s Varsoo is your answer



GNS News Agency, May 15

Varsoo by Soam, founder Pinky Chandan Dixit’s newest venture, is housed in a 120-year-old heritage building in South Bombay. Photo courtesy: Special ArrangementVarsoo by Soam, founder Pinky Chandan Dixit’s newest venture, is housed in a 120-year-old heritage building in South Bombay.If you’ve spent time in the queue outside Soam wishing you could book a table, here’s your answer. Founder Pinky Chandan Dixit has opened Varsoo by Soam, a reservation-friendly venture that carries Soam’s most-loved dishes like moong dal sheera, handvo, panki, khichu, muthiya and turiya paatra, alongside newer additions like peru ananas ki chaat with crushed peanuts, a flavourful salad.

Tucked inside a heritage building that is over 120 years old, right above Aamchee, Varsoo is designed by Saloni Kothari of Studio SKO, who has worked alongside Dixit to honour the structure’s original character. Arched doorways, high ceilings, original windows, grand wooden doors — all of it has been preserved and woven into the new space. Round poker tables, now repurposed as dining tables ideal for groups of six, add to the sense of a room that has been lived in.The restaurant unfolds across three zones — two indoor spaces and an outdoor nook for quieter moments, with a section that can be closed off for private dining. A live juice and chaat counter and a live kitchen add to the experience.Varsoo, which translates to ‘inheritance’ in Gujarati, says Dixit, is her personal expression — a gathering of lived experiences, shared meals, and inherited recipes, brought together into a space designed for today.Layered dal baati churma and dal dhokli ravioli. Photo courtesy: Special ArrangementLayered dal baati churma and dal dhokli ravioli. Photo courtesy: Special Arrangement“Soam was opened in 2005 at a space where my father had an office for reservations to our hotel in Mahabaleshwar. When my brother suggested we start a cafe, I jumped at the opportunity, before we realised we were ahead of our times and should go for something we know: Gujarati food. And so Soam was born,” recalled Dixit, an alumna of Le Cordon Bleu.

The early days were not without resistance. Dixit had decided to break with the thali culture synonymous with Gujarati restaurants at the time, deconstructing the meal into standalone dishes rather than serving the traditional spread. “Gujarati food in Bombay meant having a thali. Everybody was unhappy but I said to them, give me six months,” she said. The recipes, meanwhile, kept evolving: started with a Maharaj and dishes borrowed from her

mother, their hotel, and family, the menu grew richer as guests brought their own versions. “Post opening, every guest would give me their recipe, saying ‘in our home, we do it like this’. The recipes kept getting better.”A conversation with veteran food writer Rushina Munshaw Ghildiyal gave Dixit the confidence to introduce seasonal menus, which became, as she puts it, “a big part of our DNA.” During COVID, the team — drawn from various regions — began cooking food from their own homes, and some of it found its way onto the menu.

The outdoor nook (left), and live chaat counter (right). Photo courtesy: Special ArrangementThe outdoor nook (left), and live chaat counter (right). Photo courtesy: Special ArrangementAll of this and more now comes to Varsoo. “Varsoo is Soam’s inheritance, for people who didn’t wish to wait in queues, or have a rushed meal because they can see others standing behind them waiting for the table. Soam always appealed to an older population, but we couldn’t offer them a reservation to celebrate their 60th or 70th birthday. With Varsoo, we can.”On the plate, the guava-pineapple salad was refreshing, enough texture and brightness to polish off quickly. Dal dhokli ravioli, served with pickled oil, sev and pomegranate, managed to feel both familiar and new. The instinct to present the old in a new avatar runs through much of the menu: the layered dal baati churma arrived with disc-shaped baked baatis, dal and churma. While baatis didn’t appeal to us, the churma had the texture and taste of something made in a Rajasthani home. Nachni khichu was comforting, enough that we polished it off. Hot pankis came with a chilli pickle. Pro tip: the one on the condiment tray is better, it really elevates the dish. While the muthiya didn’t quite land, malai dhokla and patice were done well.The jamun masala, lifted with a little cumin and salt, served as both cooler and palate cleanser throughout the meal. Don’t skip it.On the sweeter end, a very rich but liquidy mohanthal and a mango ravioli from the seasonal menu that had no added sugar, and beautiful to look at (courtesy food stylist Shubhangi Dhaimade), rounded things off. The menu is extensive; it will need multiple visits to do it justice. Aavjo, as Dixit would say.

Six held for performing dangerous bike stunts on Hyderabad roads

Hyderabad: The Commissioner’s Task Force (Rajendranagar) on Friday caught six persons who were performing bike stunts on main thoroughfares and seized two scooters from them.

Those apprehended are Syed Shahed (19), Shaik Naseer Hussain (19), Shaik Junaid (18), Mohammed Bin Isa (18), Abdul Samad (20) and Mohammed Arbaz Hussain Khan (22).According to the police, the six persons were moving on the main thoroughfares in the city in the night and performing stunts causing grave danger to the other road users and themselves. After the videos went viral, the police teams tracked them down and apprehended them.A case was registered against the six persons at the Rajendranagar police station.

ED searches premises linked to minister Sanjeev Arora: ‘Punjab will never bow to Modi’s tactics,’ hits out Bhagwant Mann



The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday carried out searches at five premises in Delhi, Gurgaon, and Chandigarh linked to Punjab Cabinet Minister Sanjeev Arora and his company. The action comes as Punjab continues to witness a series of searches by the central agency on leaders and people linked to the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).Sources said the searches were conducted at the office premises of Hampton Sky Realty Limited and at Arora’s residence as part of a money-laundering investigation linked to alleged fake GST transactions and exports.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann slammed the search operation. “Today, once again, the BJP’s ED has come to Sanjeev Arora’s house. In one year, this is the third time the BJP’s ED has come to his house. And in the last month, the second time. Yet, they haven’t found anything,” he said.“I want to tell (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji that Punjab is the land of the Gurus, which even (Mughal emperor) Aurangzeb could not subdue. This is the land of Bhagat Singh, who never bowed before the British...Punjab will never bow to Modi’s tactics. The end of this unethical alliance of ED-BJP will begin from Punjab itself,” he added.According to ED sources, the agency has detected “a large-scale money laundering operation allegedly carried out through Arora’s company involving fake GST purchases of mobile phones worth more than Rs 100 crore

and subsequent exports aimed at round-tripping illegitimate funds from Dubai to India”.Sources alleged that multiple fake GST purchase bills were procured from non-existent firms in Delhi to claim fake input tax credit (ITC), GST refunds on export credit, and duty drawback benefits, allegedly causing losses to the exchequer and leading to personal enrichment.The agency had earlier raided premises linked to Sanjeev Arora in October 2024, in connection with an alleged land fraud and money laundering case. Sanjeev Arora had earlier stated that he would cooperate with the probe.At that time, the ED had searched multiple premises linked to Hampton Sky Realty, formerly known as Ritesh Properties and Industries Limited, and alleged illegal change of land use, fraudulent bookings and generation of proceeds of crime.

The agency had also alleged that companies linked to Arora were under the scanner for booking fake export bills and purchases from non-existent GST entities. Friday’s raids were part of a wider probe into alleged financial irregularities involving the round-tripping of funds from the UAE, insider trading and routing of illegal money into India through shell entities and fake commercial transactions, sources said.The ED had also conducted searches linked to AAP Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Kumar Mittal and his educational institutions. Mittal, founder of Lovely Professional University, had switched to the BJP, triggering speculation within political circles over mounting pressure from central agencies.The latest action comes amid heightened ED activity in Punjab. On Thursday, the agency linked builder Gaurav Dhir to Punjab AAP president Aman Arora in a money-laundering case after searches at premises associated with Dhir and others.The ED action assumes political significance, coming at a time when the AAP government in Punjab has repeatedly accused the BJP-led Centre of using investigative agencies to target Opposition leaders ahead of elections.

Haryana MLA injured as vehicles in convoy collide with each other

Haryana minister Krishan Lal Panwar was injured in a road accident in Panipat after multiple vehicles in his convoy collided near Eldeco City on the national highway. Haryana minister Krishan Lal Panwar was injured in a road accident in Panipat after multiple vehicles in his convoy collided near Eldeco City on the national highway. Haryana’s cabinet minister (Panchayats) Krishan Lal Panwar sustained injuries in a road accident Friday afternoon in Panipat as vehicles in his convoy collided with each other near Eldeco City on the national highway. The front portion of Panwar’s Toyota Innova car got badly damaged.

Immediately after the accident, his security personnel and nearby people safely pulled the minister out of the vehicle, rushing him to the civil hospital in Panipat. Doctors in hospital said his condition is currently stable but he was admitted in the hospital for further treatment.As soon as the accident news spread, Panipat (urban) MLA Pramod Vij, Deputy Commissioner (Panipat) Virender Dahiya, SP (Panipat) Bhupender Singh, along with other BJP workers, reached the hospital.According to the information available, Panwar was returning to Panipat from Chandigarh on Friday. At around 3 pm, a vehicle ahead of his convoy suddenly applied brakes, near Eldeco City at the toll plaza. Following this the remaining vehicles, including the minister’s, in the convoy crashed into one another. All airbags in the car were deployed.On December 14, 2025, Panwar underwent surgery of his left knee at Fortis Hospital, Mohali. He had been facing difficulty walking for several days prior to the operation. Before the surgery, Panwar used to travel in a government allotted Toyota Fortuner. However, after the operation, he started traveling in a government allotted



Toyota Innova.Panwar currently holds the Panchayat and Development Department, and the Mines and Geology Department in the Nayab Singh Saini-led government. This is his second term as a minister in Haryana. Panwar has had a long political career. In 1991, he was elected MLA from Assandh on an INLD ticket. He was elected again as an INLD MLA in 1996, 2000 and 2009.After the 2009 delimitation, he contested from Israna on an INLD ticket and defeated Congress leader Balbir Valmiki.Panwar had earlier served as Transport, Housing, and Jails Minister in the government led by former Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.Since he was considered a prominent SC face in the state, the BJP later sent him to the Rajya Sabha. When he expressed his desire to contest the 2024 Assembly elections, BJP again gave him a ticket. He resigned from his Rajya Sabha seat and contested from Israna in October-2024 Haryana Vidhan Sabha polls and won.

Punjab recorded 106 drug overdose deaths in 2024, much higher than neighboring Haryana, Himachal: NCRB report



GNS News Agency, May 15At least 106 people in Punjab died of alleged drug overdose in 2024, way more than similar deaths recorded by Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Union Territory of Chandigarh, as per latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report.As per the report, released by the union ministry of home affairs (MHA), Himachal Pradesh recorded 31 such deaths in 2024, Haryana three and Chandigarh seven. Nationally, Punjab recorded second highest number of such cases, behind Tamil Nadu where 313 people died of drug overdose. Punjab was followed by Madhya Pradesh (90), Rajasthan (69) and Mizoram (65). A total of 978 drug deaths were reported across the country in 2024, up from 654 in 2023. The number of drug deaths in Punjab have increased from 89 in 2023 to 106 in 2024. In 2023, Punjab had recorded the highest number of drug overdose deaths while Tamil Nadu was placed second.NDPS cases: Punjab not among top-3Punjab recorded 29 NDPS Act cases per lakh population, second only to Kerala, with 75.5 cases per lakh population, as per the report. But, compared to Punjab, the neighboring Haryana (10.8) Himachal Pradesh (22.8) and Chandigarh (7.2) have lower crime rate for drug offences. Punjab’s crime rate under drug offences is way higher than national average of 7.8.When it comes to registration of cases under the NDPSAct, Punjab was placed fourth nationally with 8973 cases. The list is led by Kerala (27,149), followed by Maharashtra (15,641) and Tamil Nadu (11,037). However, Punjab witnessed way higher cases than neighboring Haryana (3,325), Himachal Pradesh (1,715) and Chandigarh (90). The country recorded 1.09 lakh cases under the NDPS Act in 2024.Punjab tops in drug trafficking, Kerala in personal consumptionWhile Kerala tops the country in possessing drugs for personal consumption, Punjab witnessed the highest cases in the country for drug trafficking. Punjab, in 2024, registered 6,060 cases for drug trafficking, followed by Uttar Pradesh (3,219), Rajasthan (2,758), Tamil Nadu (2,753) and Maharashtra (2,324). In neighbouring Haryana

2,046 trafficking cases were registered, while Himachal Pradesh recorded 1292 such cases and Chandigarh 90. In possessing drugs for personal use/consumption, Punjab is not among the top three states. The list is led by Kerala (25,856 cases), followed by Maharashtra (13,317) and Tamil Nadu (8,284). In Punjab, 2,913 cases were registered for possessing drugs for personal consumption, higher than Haryana (1,279), Himachal Pradesh (423) and Chandigarh .

Cloudflare to cut over 1,100 jobs amid AI-led restructuring

New Delhi: US-based connectivity cloud company Cloudflare has announced that it plans to cut more than 1,100 jobs globally as the company restructures its operations around the growing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), according to an internal memo sent to employees by the company.The company said that its internal use of AI has surged by more than 600 per cent over the last three months, with employees across engineering, finance, human resources and marketing increasingly relying on AI agents to carry out day-to-day tasks.Cloudflare described the move as part of a broader organisational overhaul aimed at adapting to the ‘agentic AI era’, rather than a conventional cost-cutting exercise or a performance-driven layoff programme. “This decision is not a reflection of the individual work or talent of those leaving us,” the company said in the memo.“We are reimagining every internal process, team and role across the company.” The company further added that all employees would be informed directly about how the restructuring affects them, with notices being sent to both official and personal email addresses for impacted workers.Cloudflare said the severance packages for departing employees would include full base pay through the end of 2026, continued healthcare support in the US through the end of the year and additional equity vesting benefits through August 15.The company noted that employees who had not yet completed their one-year vesting cliff would receive prorated equity vesting as part of the separation package.According to the memo, the company intends to complete the restructuring exercise in a single phase to avoid prolonged uncertainty and repeated rounds of layoffs. Cloudflare said it was reshaping its organisational structure to remain competitive as AI rapidly transforms business workflows and operating models across the technology industry.

Trump touts transparency as Pentagon unveils UFO files



GNS News Agency, May 15

Washington: Buzz Aldrin observing a “fairly bright light source” while aboard the Apollo 11. A mysterious object making “multiple 90-degree turns” at a speedy clip. A blaringly bright object doing corkscrew twists over the skies in Kazakhstan. Those are some of the details in a new batch of files on UFOs that the Pentagon began releasing on Friday as President Donald Trump taps into the public’s long-held curiosities about “unidentified anomalous phenomena” in the broader universe. Though the Pentagon has been working on declassifying the documents for years, Trump put attention back on the topic months ago by teasing a major UFO document dump. “Whereas previous Administrations have failed to be transparent on this subject, with these new Documents and Videos, the people can decide for themselves, ‘WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?’ Have Fun and Enjoy!” Trump wrote Friday in a Truth Social post.

Trump’s Republican administration says the public can draw its own conclusions with the information in the files, which includes old State Department cables, FBI documents and transcripts from NASA of crewed flights into space. A new Pentagon website housing the documents on UAPs has a decidedly retro feel, with black-and-white military imagery of flying objects displayed prominently on the page, with statements displayed in typewriter-like font.

Experts urge caution around the release of the new files, warning that UAP videos are often misinterpreted and mischaracterised by those unfamiliar with military technology. A 2024 Pentagon report rebutted claims that the US government has recovered alien technology or confirmed evidence of alien life. The initial release is a trove of videos, other imagery and testimony that is sure to stir more speculation among those who believe we are not alone in the universe. For instance, a State Department cable from the US Embassy in Tajikistan in 1994 details how one Tajik pilot and three Americans saw a brightly lit UAP while flying a jet over Kazakhstan. The object, according to the cable, was “making 90 degree turns, doing corkscrews and maneuvering in circles at great rates of speed.”

That’s not the only instance of erratically moving objects cited in the document release. A military report from the Aegean Sea in 2023 cited a UAP flying just above the surface of the ocean and making “multiple 90-degree turns at an estimated 80 mph” (129 km/h). One interview with a U.S. intelligence official details an incident last year in which the official, doing a search on a helicopter, encountered a “super-hot” orb hovering over the ground, traveling about 20 miles (32 kilometres) at a speedy clip, then spotted four or five more orbs that flared up and down. In a 1969 debriefing of Apollo 11 crew members, the astronaut Aldrin recalled spotting several unusual sights, such as a “sizeable” object close to the moon and a “fairly bright light source” that the crew felt could be a laser. One document details an

FBI interview with someone identified as a drone pilot who, in September 2023, reported seeing a “linear object” with a light bright enough to “see bands within the light” in the sky. “The object was visible for five to ten seconds and then the light went out and the object vanished,” according to the FBI interview. Another file is a NASA photograph from the Apollo 17 mission in 1972, showing three dots in a triangular formation. The Pentagon says in an accompanying caption that “there is no consensus about the nature of the anomaly” but that a new, preliminary analysis indicated that it could be a “physical object.”

The documents include more than 20 video files showing unidentified objects captured by military sensors in locations from Syria and Japan to North America. The objects range from fast-moving specks captured in the distance to a football-shaped object spotted over the East China Sea in 2022. The most recent video is from Jan. 1 of this year and appears to show two circular lights flying against an inky black backdrop in North America.

Several files include military videos from the past several years that showed small ambiguous dots moving above the landscapes of Iraq, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. The white objects sometimes streaked across the screen in less than a second, while others slowly glided through the air or were followed by the camera. Other files include written reports from U.S. military service members who were surveilling locations in the Middle East. One report described an object that was “shaped as a bouncy ball” and traveling 483 mph (777 km/h) consistently for at least seven minutes over Syria in 2023. The object was later determined to be benign.

Among the files are hundreds of pages detailing reported sightings dating to the 1940s. A 1948 report from U.S. airmen in the Netherlands raised concerns about recurring flying saucer sightings. Swedish counterparts saw them, too, and believed they did not come from “any presently known culture on earth,” the report said. One military video that quickly caught attention on Friday appears to show an aircraft shaped like an eight-pointed star weaving through the air. The video, from 2013 in the Middle East, is probably nothing more than a hot jet engine producing a diffraction pattern in the camera, said Sean Kirkpatrick, a former director of the Pentagon’s All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, which investigates UAP. Kirkpatrick said there’s nothing unexpected in the release and warned that without analysis it will “only serve to fuel more speculation, conspiracy and arm-chair pseudoscience.” Trump administration touts transparency on UFO file release Trump has previously released records related to the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. that revealed little beyond what was already known.

The Pentagon has been working on declassifying documents related to UFOs for years, and Congress created an office in 2022 to declassify material. Its 2024 debut report revealed hundreds of new UAP incidents but found no evidence that the U.S. government had ever confirmed a sighting of alien technology. A small group of Republicans in Congress has pressed for further transparency, accusing the Pentagon of holding documents back. A March letter from Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., demanded 46 UAP videos identified by whistleblowers. Luna said Friday those videos will be released later by the Pentagon. Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., thanked Trump for “keeping his word” on transparency and disclosure. “I would like to remind people that transparency won’t all happen at once, it will take some time,” Burchett said in a statement. Others used Friday’s release to urge further transparency into what the government knows about UAPs. The Sol Foundation, a research group focused on UAPs, pushed for passage of legislation that would force a “thorough” review of classified UAP records “with the aim of providing Americans with the full truth about longstanding government knowledge and programs concerning technologies and vehicles not of human origin.” “While today’s new step toward a full disclosure of government knowledge concerning UAP is welcome, many more need to be taken to bring an end to the decades of secrecy by which the American people were kept in the dark,” said Peter Skafish, the foundation’s executive director, and retired Rear Adm.

UAE condemns Iran’s missile, drone strikes; Three Indians wounded



GNS News Agency, May 15

Abu Dhabi: The Ministry of Defence of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stated on Friday that Iran has once again launched ballistic missiles and UAV’s on its territory. Condemning the attack, the ministry said that the UAE air defence systems engaged two ballistic missiles and three UAV’s that were launched from Iran. It also mentioned that the attack resulted in three moderate injuries. Earlier this week, the UAE’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that three Indian nationals were injured due to Iran’s attack on civilian sites and facilities. The UAE called the actions of Iran an “unacceptable act of aggression” and a “direct threat to the UAE’s security, stability and territorial integrity”. It said the attacks are in violation of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

On Tuesday, Iran’s main military command, Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, said that the country’s armed forces have carried out no missile or drone operation against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the past days, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. Headquarters spokesman Ebrahim Zolfaghari made the announcement, stressing that if Iran had taken such actions, then the country “would announce it decisively and explicitly”. He rejected a report by the UAE that accused Iran of launching drone and missile attacks against the country, calling on the UAE’s officials and statesmen not to let their country fall into the trap laid by the United States and Israel, Xinhua news agency reported. Several countries around the world, including Japan, Ireland, Austria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, on Tuesday condemned the recent at-

tack carried out by Iran on the UAE. India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) called the attack, which injured three Indian nationals, “unacceptable” and stated that New Delhi “continues to stand for dialogue and diplomacy” to deal with the situation in the Gulf, so that “peace and stability may be restored across West Asia”.

China confirms on-site support to Pakistan during India conflict

Beijing: China, for the first time, has confirmed that it provided on-site technical support to Pakistan during the four-day conflict with India last year, official media reports here said. China’s state broadcaster CCTV on Thursday aired an interview with Zhang Heng, an engineer from the Aviation Industry Corporation of China’s (AVIC) Chengdu Aircraft Design and Research Institute, a key developer of China’s advanced fighter aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicle design. Zhang had provided technical support to Pakistan during the four-day war last May, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported, quoting CCTV.



Pakistan’s air force operates a fleet of Chinese-made J-10CE jets, produced by an AVIC subsidiary. “At the support base, we frequently heard the roar of fighter jets taking off and the constant wail of air-raid sirens. By late morning, in May, the temperature was already approaching 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). It was a real ordeal for us, both mentally and physically,” Zhang said. What drove his team was the “desire to do an even better job with on-site support” and to ensure their equipment could “truly perform at its full combat potential”, Zhang told CCTV. “That wasn’t just a recognition of the J10CE; it was also a testament to the deep bond we formed through working side by side, day in and day out,” he said.

Tehran could withstand blockade for four months, CIA report shows, as fighting flares



WASHINGTON/CAIRO, GNS News Agency, May 15 Efforts to end the war between the U.S. and Iran appeared to stall as the two sides traded fire in the Gulf on Friday, while a U.S. intelligence analysis concluded Tehran could withstand a naval blockade for months. A CIA assessment indicated that Iran would not suffer severe economic pressure from a U.S. blockade of Iranian ports for about another four months, according to a U.S. official familiar with the matter, suggesting that U.S. leverage over Tehran remains limited as the two sides seek to end a conflict that has been unpopular with U.S. voters.

The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. The Washington Post first reported the assessment. A senior intelligence official called the “claims” about the CIA analysis “false,” saying the blockade “is inflicting real, compounding damage - severing trade, crushing revenue, and accelerating systemic economic collapse.” Recent days have seen the biggest flare-ups in fighting in and around the Strait of Hormuz since a ceasefire began a month ago, and the United Arab Emirates came under renewed attack on Friday. Washington is awaiting Tehran’s response to a U.S. proposal that would formally end the war before talks on more contentious issues, including Iran’s nuclear program. “We should know something today,” U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in Rome earlier in the day. “We’re expecting a response from them.” Iran’s foreign ministry spokesperson said Tehran was still weighing its response, and none was reported by mid-afternoon in Washington, just before midnight in Tehran. Meanwhile, more sporadic clashes between Iranian forces and U.S. vessels took place in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran’s semi-official Fars news agency reported. The Tasnim news agency later cited an Iranian military source saying the situation had calmed, but warning more clashes were possible. The U.S. military said it struck two Iran-linked vessels attempting to enter an Iranian port, with a U.S. fighter jet hitting their smokestacks and forcing them to turn back. Iran has largely blocked non-Iranian shipping through the strait since the war began with joint U.S.-Israeli airstrikes across Iran on February 28. The U.S. imposed a blockade on Iranian vessels last month. Oil prices rose, with Brent crude futures above \$101 a barrel, though still down more than 6% for the week. Trump said on Thursday the ceasefire was still holding despite the flare-ups in the strait, which before the war handled one-fifth of the world’s oil supply. The confrontation extended beyond the waterway. The United Arab Emirates said its air defenses engaged with two ballistic missiles and three drones from Iran on Friday, with three people sustaining moderate inju-

ries.

During the war, Iran has repeatedly targeted the UAE and other Gulf states that host U.S. military bases. In what the UAE called a “major escalation”, Iran stepped up attacks this week in response to Trump’s announcement of “Project Freedom” to escort ships in the strait, which he paused after 48 hours. Iran accused the U.S. of breaching the ceasefire, which had largely held since it was announced on April 7 but has come under strain this week. “Every time a diplomatic solution is on the table, the U.S. opts for a reckless military adventure,” Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Friday. Iran’s Mehr news agency reported that one crew member was killed, 10 wounded and four missing after a U.S. Navy attack on an Iranian commercial ship late on Thursday. Rubio, after meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, questioned why Italy and other allies were not backing Washington’s efforts to re-open the strait. “Are you going to normalize a country claiming to control an international waterway? Because if you normalize that, you’ve set a precedent that’s going to get repeated in a dozen other places,” he said.

The U.S. Treasury on Friday announced sanctions against 10 individuals and companies, including several in China and Hong Kong, for aiding efforts by Iran’s military to secure weapons and raw materials used to build Tehran’s Shahed drones. Treasury said in a statement it remains ready to take economic action against Iran’s military industrial base so Tehran cannot reconstitute its production capacity and project power abroad.

It also said it was prepared to act against any foreign company supporting illicit Iranian commerce and could impose secondary sanctions on foreign financial institutions including those connected to China’s independent “teapot” oil refineries. The announcement came days before Trump plans to travel to China for a meeting with President Xi Jinping. Twenty oil refineries in the Middle East have been struck, or have made precautionary shut downs amid drone attacks, since the start of the Iran war, taking more than 2.3 million barrels per day of capacity offline by mid-April. Reporting by Reuters bureaus; Writing by Andrea Shalal, Lincoln Feast, Ros Russell and Alex Richardson; Editing by Andy Sullivan, Alexandra Hudson, Peter Graff, Mark Potter and Cynthia Osterman National security correspondent focusing on the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Reports on U.S. military activity and operations throughout the world and the impact that they have. Has reported from over two dozen countries to include Iraq, Afghanistan, and much of the Middle East, Asia and Europe. From Karachi, Pakistan. Erin Banco is a national security correspondent focusing on the intelligence community. She covers everything from the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to U.S. covert operations overseas. She previously worked at POLITICO as a national security reporter. Banco has a long history covering the Middle East region, from Cairo to Baghdad to Aleppo where she’s reported on the Arab Spring and its aftermath, including the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS. Her 2017 book, Pipe Dreams, focuses on the development of the oil and gas industry in the northern Kurdistan region of Iraq. Banco attended The University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she majored in Arabic and journalism. She earned a master’s in public administration from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs in 2014.

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SPORADIC CLASHES IN STRAIT Meanwhile, more sporadic clashes between Iranian forces and U.S. vessels took place in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran’s semi-official Fars news agency reported. The Tasnim news agency later cited an Iranian military source saying the situation had calmed, but warning more clashes were possible. The U.S. military said it struck two Iran-linked vessels attempting to enter an Iranian port, with a U.S. fighter jet hitting their smokestacks and forcing them to turn back. Iran has largely blocked non-Iranian shipping through the strait since the war began with joint U.S.-Israeli airstrikes across Iran on February 28. The U.S. imposed a blockade on Iranian vessels last month. Oil prices rose, with Brent crude futures above \$101 a barrel, though still down more than 6% for the week.

Trump said on Thursday the ceasefire was still holding despite the flare-ups in the strait, which before the war handled one-fifth of the world’s oil supply. Item 1 of 5 A woman walks past an anti-U.S. billboard depicting U.S. President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz, in Tehran, Iran. Majid Asgaripour/WANA The confrontation extended beyond the waterway. The United Arab Emirates said its air defenses engaged with two ballistic missiles and three drones from Iran on Friday, with three people sustaining moderate injuries.

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While pursuing diplomacy the U.S. also ratcheted up sanctions to pressure Iran. The U.S. Treasury on Friday announced sanctions against 10 individuals and companies, including several in China and Hong Kong, for aiding efforts by Iran’s military to secure weapons and raw materials used to build Tehran’s Shahed drones. Treasury said in a statement it remains ready to take economic action against Iran’s military industrial base so Tehran cannot reconstitute its production capacity and project power abroad. It also said it was prepared to act against any foreign company supporting illicit Iranian commerce and could impose secondary sanctions on foreign financial institutions including those connected to China’s independent “teapot” oil refineries. The announcement came days before Trump plans to travel to China for a meeting with President Xi Jinping.

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Tracing the history of Sarai Kale Khan: Gujjar stronghold to Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chowk



A bastion of Gujjar-dominated villages boasting fierce warriors, with land spread out from Purana Qila in the North-west to Taimoor Nagar in the South of what is now Delhi. Or a place of rest and recuperation for weary travellers? — Sarai Kale Khan is famous for many things but finding a mention of it in official government records is a tough task.On Friday, the Sarai Kale Khan Chowk was renamed ‘Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chowk’, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurating the tribal cultural icon’s statue on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary year.

Zafar Hasan, in his exhaustive work, List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments, Volume IV, mentions Sarai Kale Khan being situated in a village named Bahlolpur Bangar. He wrote, “The sarai of Kale Khan which is constructed of rubble masonry was originally surrounded by arched cells, with their outer walls crowned by battlements. Most of these cells have now fallen down, and the rest which stand are used by villagers as residential houses. It is said to have contained a gateway on the north and west, but both of them have disappeared.”sarai kale khan In the present day, the urban village of Sarai Kale Khan is still dominated by Gujjars. (Express Photo by Praveen Khanna)Maulvi Hasan also mentioned a tomb 150 yards from the sarai, constructed of plaster and rubble, which was in a dilapidated condition and contained no grave.Who is the mysterious Kale Khan though? To unravel this, one must first understand where the sarai system came from.In the chapter, Caravanserais Along the Grand Trunk Road in Pakistan, Saifur Rahman Dar points out in the book, The Silk Roads: Highways of Culture and Commerce, that no one knows when exactly the Grand Trunk Road was built. Precursor forms of the road existed during the time of Panini and Chandragupta Maurya, and repairs were undertaken under Sher Shah Suri’s rule.During the arterial road’s re-construction, Sher Shah Suri would emphasise the need to build rest stops for travellers. In his article, Sarais in Mughal

India, history professor Nazer Aziz Anjum writes, “(Sher Shah Suri) initiated building of sarais on a large scale on routes basically for the need of state and partially for the need of wayfarers... it was during the Mughal period that work of building sarais was carried out on an extensive scale.”Meanwhile, history presents three possibilities for the person behind the name — Mubarak Khan Lohani, whose eternal resting place in South Extension is named Kale Khan Gumbad; Kale Khan, a Sufi saint from the reign of Sher Shah Suri, whose tomb now rests near Delhi Airport’s Terminal 2; and Kale Khan, the spiritual advisor and friend of Mirza Ghalib, whose house Ahata Kale Khan still stands in Ballimaran’s Gali Qasim Jan.

Delhi chronicler and journalist R V Smith seemed to be equally baffled by the three men who shared the same name. However, he agreed that Sarai Kale Khan was likely named after Ghalib’s friend. “Kale Khan who built a sarai in Southeast Delhi was probably born in the early nineteenth century and lived on to see the Mutiny of 1857 and its aftermath,” writes Smith in his book, Delhi: Unknown Tales of a City.Sarai kale khan According to local Vicky Choudhary, Kale Khan was a peer and a sant, a devout Gaud Brahmin forced to convert to Islam to save his life. He explains further that Khan was probably born with another name, but received the nickname ‘Kale Khan’ because of his dark complexion.

Smith also mentions that Kale Khan would have probably witnessed the 1857 Mutiny since a snippet of history does emerge from the area just after the violence had died down. Gujjars pastoralists and farmers have long been settled in the area since the land near the Yamuna provided rolling grasslands for their cattle to graze on. However, in the short duration of lawlessness after the Mutiny, many local Gujjars from Sarai Kale Khan formed raiding parties and wreaked havoc on neighbouring villages.In the present day, the urban village of Sarai Kale Khan is still dominated by Gujjars. But their version of the area’s history differs. According to local Vicky Choudhary, Kale Khan was a peer and a sant, a devout Gaud Brahmin forced to convert to Islam to save his life. “He was the one who made the sarai for travellers... in 1650, the Gujjar community from Khanpur shifted near the sarai... land was good and there were vast fields for the cattle to graze in,” he said.Another popular folktale from the area goes that the Gujjars of Khanpur saved a royal retinue from being attacked by highwaymen on the way to Nizamuddin dargah from Mehrauli. Impressed by their act of bravery, the king awarded them land near the dargah to protect all those who travelled on the route and ensure the safety of those who spent the night in the sarai.

How gangs and gangsters are inching closer to the heart of Delhi



Shootouts and extortion bids are no longer limited to the zones outside the heavily policed areas of Delhi. Gangs are increasingly trying to breach the red line to strike fear in the heart of the Capital.

– September 13: Greater Kailash, 10.30 pm: Showered with bullets, gym owner, businessman and police informant Nadir Shah is killed, allegedly by jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi’s associates.– September 20: Greater Kailash: Music composer Aman Batra receives an extortion call from gangster Rohit Godara, an associate of Lawrence Bishnoi, demanding Rs 5 crore.– September: Sainik Farms: Godara calls a builder in Sainik Farms, threatening him with dire consequences if he did not pay him Rs 5 crore.– September 30: Vasant Vihar: Real estate developer gets a WhatsApp call from a man claiming to be US-based gangster and Lawrence Bishnoi associate Goldy Brar, who demands Rs 2 crore from him.– September 26: Naraina: Twenty rounds of bullets are fired at a luxury car showroom. The shooters leave behind a note: ‘Bhau Gang. Since 2020’– June 18: Burger King at Rajouri Garden, 9.30 pm: Three men on a bike walk up the stairs of the popular eating joint, fire 39 rounds at Aman Joon, killing him. Gangster Himanshu Bhau, Lawrence Bishnoi’s rival, claims responsibility for the killing.– January 22: Sarai Kale Khan: Over a dozen shots ring out as a team of the Delhi Police pursue two men allegedly associated with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, wanted for the murder of an Air India crew member in Noida a week earlier.A decade ago, Neeraj Bawana and Tillu Tajpuriya were among Delhi’s most wanted gangsters. They took on the names of their villages in North West Delhi and Haryana. These monikers not only declared their regional loyalties but also the areas they dominated.Gangsters of today, in whose names extortion calls are made and to whom several young men swear allegiance, have little to do with the city. They have transcended the limits of rural Delhi and are closing in on the heart of the National Capital.While Lawrence Bishnoi is lodged in the Sabarmati Jail in Ahmedabad, Himanshu Bhau is believed to be in the US. Bhau, police said, formed an association with gangster Navin Bali, a close associate of Neeraj Bawana. Bawana has an alliance with the Punjab-based Bambiha gang.Police investigation has shown that the number of extortion and shooting cases in Delhi is rising, even as the shots are being called from inside jail and other countries.Rise in Shootings, Extortion CallsIt was Nadir Shah’s killing in September, in the upmarket Greater Kailash neighbourhood, that shook Delhi. It was a crime scene that most in Delhi would previously have seen only in movies or in CCTV camera footage of a crime that occurred in parts of Outer Delhi.It is 10.30 pm. Shah — who ran a gym called Sharx in the E block of this posh neighbourhood — is talking to another man standing next to a black SUV on the road, 300 m away from the GK police station. Another man enters the frame and pumps several bullets into his tall frame. Seconds later, the assassin hops onto a motorcycle and flees.The hit, police said, was ordered by jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.Extortion calls in Greater Kailash and Sainik Farms that followed the incident were allegedly made by gangster Rohit Godara, an associate of Bishnoi.Reports of shootouts, encounters and complaints of extortion have trickled in regularly from Bawana, Narela and Alipur in outer and outer north Delhi over the years. The gangs, however, are now expanding their activities to areas like Vasant Vihar, Greater Kailash, Rajouri Garden and Pitampura too.

According to Delhi Police data, 144 cases of extortion have been reported in the city till August this year, much like 2023, when 147 cases were registered. In 2022, however, the number was 119. In South Delhi, 14 cases were reported this year and 16 last year, as compared to 10 in 2022.With men allegedly affiliated with Lawrence Bishnoi and his internationally-based aides Godara and Brar recruiting young men who are looking to make a name for themselves in the world of crime, there is no limit to their area of influence either.On the night of October 12, Madhur alias Mota Armaan, accused of killing Shah in Greater Kailash, was chased by the Delhi Police Special Cell sleuths in Narela. He was shot in both legs and arrested, the police said. A few hours later, three men shot dead former MLA and NCP leader Baba Siddique in Mumbai.The common thread connecting these two incidents was Lawrence Bishnoi. Both the shooters allegedly belonged to his gang.In September, a Delhi businessman whose son, a bookie, was arrested in the 2013 IPL spot-fixing scandal, allegedly received a threat from Godara. On Diwali, the businessman’s associate Akash Sharma and his nephew were gunned down in Shahdara’s Farsh Bazar.Motive, modus operandiThe aim of the gang to inch closer to the heart of Delhi, according to the police, mostly is extortion. They target businessmen and indulge in violence when they don’t comply.The Lawrence Bishnoi gang is not alone.Besides Lawrence Bishnoi, Godara and Brar, the police said that gangs like UK-based gangster Kapil Sangwan’s Nandu gang and Jitendra Gogi gang, among others, are following similar modus operandi in Delhi, resulting in an increase in cases of extortion being reported in the city.An officer of the Special Cell said the members of the gangs usually fire a couple of rounds outside a home or a shop to threaten major businessmen of an area.As per the police, it is not that the ground presence of these gangs has increased. There are more “shooters-for-hire” juveniles being approached and used by them.According to the National Investigation Agency’s (NIA) chargesheet against Bishnoi, his gang hires shooters and new members using social media. “They upload posts on criminal/terrorist activities on social media, attracting new members, who (send requests seeking) to join the gang... The gangs then scrutinise their requests and shortlist members,” it alleged.

“The activities of gangs in Delhi have increased because they no longer rely on traditional shooters for hire or even gang members. They target people who are either from low-income groups or are juveniles, and provide them with ammunition for one-off shootings. The price is anywhere in the range of Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000 for a warning shot, depending on the expertise of the shooter,” said a senior officer with the Delhi Police.“Lawrence Bishnoi isn’t in contact with any of these shooters, and operates via Brar and

Godara. They are both international fugitives. Their presence outside the country and lack of any regular link with hired shooters makes these shootings difficult to control,” the officer added.However, no one gang continues to rule without a challenger. In the case of Lawrence Bishnoi, it is the Bambiha gang.The Bambiha gang, named after its founder and slain gangster Davinder Bambiha — who was gunned down in 2016 — has been active mostly in Punjab and Haryana. This gang was never directly operating in the Capital, a Special Cell officer said.This, a Delhi Police officer said, changed after the death of Davinder. The gang was taken over by gangster Kaushal Chaudhary and his associate Amit Dagar. Their rivalry with the Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate, which led to the Bambiha gang allegedly killing Akali Dal leader Vicky Middukheda in 2021, started their association with his rivals in Delhi, the Neeraj Bawana-Navin Bali-Himanshu Bhau syndicate, a police officer said.On October 26, two members of the Bambiha gang opened fire outside a businessman’s house in Pitampura, and demanded Rs 10 crore. The shooters were arrested on October 29.“Usually, Bambiha gang members are not directly involved in extortion demands in Delhi. However, they have started to operate through the Bhau and Bawana alliance,” an officer said.

Encryption appsA major tool for jailed or fugitive gangsters to hire and direct shooters are end-to-end encryption apps. On August 23, shots were fired by alleged shooters of Kapil Sangwan’s Nandu gang outside Singla sweet shop in Tilak Nagar. The police said the gangsters had demanded Rs 2 crore. “Sangwan was in touch with shooters throughout via an app, instructing them from the UK. He was telling them when and how to open fire,” an officer said.According to the police, juvenile shooters are usually arranged for the gangs by middlemen and financiers, who also arrange for the weapons. “We are trying to track the financiers and second and third rung men in the hierarchy of these gangs... We have been able to identify some,” said a senior officer.A senior officer further said that the juveniles are a major hindrance in controlling such crime. “The gang leaders convince juveniles that because of their age, they won’t be prosecuted like adults. They would rather be celebrated,” he added.The officer insisted that there “has been an overall reduction in arms distribution networks over the years”.

On Tuesday, in a major crackdown on gangs and their operations, the Delhi Police apprehended over 1,200 people with alleged associations to notorious gangs. Among them, around 700 were arrested. An officer had said those detained and arrested were associated with multiple gangs including those led by Lawrence Bishnoi, Neeraj Bawana, Kaushal Chaudhary, Tillu Tajpuriya, Kala Jatheri, Manjeet Mahal and Kapil Sangwan.Reliance on juveniles, youthsA senior officer said that with the right-hand men of gangsters going in and out of hiding or operating from abroad, their reliance on juveniles and youngsters in awe of them would continue to increase. “The glamorisation of weapons on social media and the ability of gangsters to make contacts from jails are the major challenges,” the officer added.Former additional commissioner of police (Crime Branch) Ashok Chand said, “Every gang lord begins his career with activities that do not immediately attract harsh police action. Once they amass wealth, they use it to protect themselves and their associates.”In response to a detailed questionnaire on the rising threat of gangs, particularly to South Delhi businessmen, operating out of jails and abroad, Special Commissioner (Perception Cell) of Police, Sagar Preet Hooda said: “Delhi Police is cognizant of all these issues and is committed to work towards keeping Delhi safe... detection of all reported crimes and sincere prosecution of the involved criminals.”Another feature of the recent gang-related activities has been alliances forged between gangs, the police said, mostly inside the jail. One of the reasons is to maintain control and avoid rebellions. Abdul Nasir, a dreaded gangster in Delhi-NCR, saw his gang being taken over by one of his trusted lieutenants, Hashim Baba. Similar fear plagues most jailed gangsters, said police.

“Since Lawrence Bishnoi and Hashim Baba joined forces, after meeting in Tihar in 2021, gangsters Neeraj Bawana, Cheenu Pehelwan and Himanshu Bhau have also come together. This has helped them get a wider reach and demand extortions from across Delhi,” an officer said.Sunil Kumar Gupta, who served as a jailer, legal adviser and spokesperson at Tihar, said gangsters are able to maintain their contacts despite being held in maximum security prison. “All notorious gangsters, who are maximum security prisoners, get a time slot for meeting family and friends... We aren’t allowed to record their conversations,” Gupta said. “They also talk in code language to send out information to their associates”. Gupta claimed the connivance between the prison staff and the gangsters in jail is also a factor because contraband — such as cellphones, weapons, and other communication devices — is smuggled to them from outside jail premises. “No matter how hard you try, the phones will reach the gangsters somehow,” he added.Gupta also pointed out that threats from gangs create fear among jail staff. “The Tamil Nadu Special Police (TNSP), as far as I know, is equally scared for their families and their lives.

Thus, they turn a blind eye.” The TNSP is a security agency that guards inmates at Tihar Jail.A Tihar Jail spokesperson, in response to Gupta’s observations, said, “The Tamil Nadu Special Police team does regular checks of the jail staff, cells, and inmates for mobile devices. If we receive any information on jail staff helping the inmates, we take strict action against them. Our staff also keeps a vigilant eye out for any contraband that may have entered the jail premises.

Every jail staff member is thoroughly checked before they enter the jail compound.”On how high-security inmates are able to convey their messages to their associates outside Tihar Jail, the spokesperson said, “Inmates in Tihar are allowed to visit and talk to their family and friends twice a week. They are also given phone call privileges, subject to good conduct. As per rules, jail authorities cannot record or listen to these conversations.

“Tihar jail officials categorically denied that the proverbial call was coming from inside the house. “We have jammers on the ground floor and also a tower jammer that blocks all phone signals... it would be impossible for inmates to relay orders to the outside world, even if they managed to smuggle in phones,” said a senior jail official.“If calls were made from inside Tihar, we ask the police to provide us with call record details... the time and location from where the call was made, who they called... The absence of such records and the fact that the police haven’t yet come to us for any action, says a lot,” he added.We conduct regular checks of the jail staff, we also check inmates’ cells... of course there have been instances of connivance, but we have taken strict action in such cases,” he said.The official gave details of alternative methods jailed gangsters could use to relay their messages. “...when prisoners go out of the premises for court hearings, they can relay their message through the people they know. They could also ask another prisoner who is going for a court hearing to pass on their message... there are countless ways this can happen,” he said.

Why are women missing from the factory floors in India? | Data



One of the drivers of Viksit Bharat will be manufacturing. One of the pillars of Viksit Bharat is ‘nari (women)’. However, women are missing from the factory floors. The share of women in India’s formal manufacturing sector fell from 20.9% in 2015-16 to 18.9% in 2022-23 (1.57 million out of 8.34 million formal workers). What is even more striking is that of all the women working in manufacturing, Tamil Nadu alone is employing 41%.In informal manufacturing, women form 43% of the workforce. Therefore, it is not the case that women are not working, but that they are not getting the “better” jobs. This again points to informalisation and the low paying nature of jobs held by women.

Manufacturing contributes almost one-fifth of India’s GDP. It is poised to be a key growth driver for India. Yet the participation of women in this sector remains low. Compared to other developing economies such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, India lags behind.Tamil Nadu, which employs the largest chunk of the formal female workforce, and four other States make up almost three-quarters of India’s total. This implies that five States are responsible for most of the formal female manufacturing workforce (Chart 1a).Similarly, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra contribute close to 50% of the informal women workforce in the manufacturing sector (Chart 1b).

Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Haryana have the highest gender gap (Chart 2) in the formal manufacturing workforce, with women making up less than 6% of the workforce.Chart 2: Gender gap in formal and informal manufacturing. In the graph, the higher the positive number, the higher the gender gap, the lower the positive number, the lower the gender gap. Negative numbers correspond to more women working in the sector than menMoreover, even highly industrialised States such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, and U.P. have a high gender disparity in the formal manufacturing sector. Women make up less than 15% of the workforce in these States.There is significant homogeneity across industries in which women are employed within the formal and informal sector. For instance, within the formal sector, 60% are employed in textile, wearing apparel, and food processing (Chart 3A). Within the informal sector, wearing apparel and tobacco sectors are the major employers of women (Chart 3B).Within the formal sector, tobacco is the only industry where more women than men are employed. In the informal tobacco industry, more than 90% are women.Thus, women in India are mostly concentrated in the informal sector, which is low paying and offers a poor standard of working. Therefore, it is important to transition women from the informal to the formal sector to ensure a decent pay and work environment.Given the high degree of informality, and

lack of heterogeneity in the manufacturing workforce for women, the first step to boost participation is skill training. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, about 6% of women in the sector have either formal vocational training or training on the job. Hence, upskilling women is imperative to improve both participation and productivity.Second, it is essential that women complete their higher education, which could improve their chances of being employed in manufacturing. Nearly 47% of men in manufacturing have completed secondary education or higher, compared to just 30% of women.Third, there is an immediate need for greater sectoral diversification. Lastly, it is salient to make work environments safe to improve workforce participation.For instance, Tamil Nadu initiated the ‘Thozhi’ scheme under which it built working women hostels. Such specific interventions are needed in each State to address their unique challenges.

Mexico sends diplomatic note to US over possible new military base near border

Mexico City: Mexico has delivered a diplomatic note to the US after reports emerged that Washington is considering establishing a new military base near the shared border to deter irregular migration, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said.Speaking at her daily press briefing on Wednesday, Sheinbaum acknowledged that the decision is a sovereign matter for the US on its own territory, but emphasised that it must not impact Mexico or cross into its jurisdiction, Xinhua news agency reported.“We respect their autonomy, but we expect the same coordination and cooperation on security that we’ve had so far,” she said. A reporter asked the Mexican President about the US’ reported plan to establish a military base on its southern border with Mexico.The question came after US Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum travelled to New Mexico on Tuesday to “announce the emergency withdrawal and transfer” to the US Army “of administrative jurisdiction over nearly 109,651 acres of federal land along the US-Mexico border,” according to an Interior Department statement.“The Department of the Army requested the withdrawal and transfer of these lands on an emergency basis to allow for the increase in regular patrols by federal personnel, construction of infrastructure to prevent unlawful entry.

How can India meet its rising power demand?



As the fastest-growing major economy in a rapidly heating world, India’s electricity demand is growing fast. Since FY21, India’s electricity consumption has risen at approximately 9% per annum, compared to an average of 5% annually in the preceding decade. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) had projected electricity demand to grow at a 6% CAGR between 2022 and 2030. However, recent trends suggest a strong likelihood of overshooting these estimates. Can India’s power sector keep up with this demand and transition to renewables at the same time?

What’s driving India’s electricity demand?

Besides economic growth and urbanisation, climate change-induced heat stress, marked by increasingly hotter summers, is one of the key factors driving electricity demand. Currently, industries, households, and agriculture comprise 33%, 28%, and 19% of total electricity use in India, respectively. Yet, household electricity demand has grown the fastest over the past decade. The summer of 2024 witnessed a 40-50% year-on-year growth in room air conditioner sales, driven by rising incomes and record-breaking temperatures. All-India peak demand crossed 250 GW on May 30, 2024, which was 6.3% higher than projections. In 2025, after recording the warmest-ever February in 125 years, India must now brace for extended heatwaves and a peak electricity demand growth of 9-10%.In short, India’s electricity demand is growing fast and becoming more and more uncertain.

How has India met rising demand so far?

Since the early 2000s, power generation capacity has quadrupled to 460 GW, making India the third-largest electricity producer globally. Driven by the imperatives of clean energy transition, India’s power sector is undergoing a major shift with the rise of Renewable Energy (RE) technologies like solar and wind. In 2010, the Indian government set a target of 20 GW of RE by 2020, which was revised upwards in 2014 to 175 GW by 2022. In 2021, India further amped its target to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2030.The government has continuously adopted several long-term and short-term measures to meet the spikes in demand. For instance, to manage the peak in 2022, it increased coal allocation to the power sector and prioritised its transportation through railways. It also directed imported coal-based power plants to operate at full capacity. States that have added substantive solar capacities utilised the surplus solar power to meet day peaks. Nights peaks continue to pose a challenge.In many ways, 2024 was a landmark year — India added a record 28 GW of new RE capacity, bumping up the share of RE in the electricity mix to 13.5%. The share of coal in the capacity mix fell below half, though it still caters to 75% of power demand. India’s RE capacity now stands at 165 GW. Another 32 GW of RE is expected to be commissioned in 2025. In the following five years, India would need to add about 50 GW of RE every year to meet its 2030 goal.

Why should India further raise its clean energy ambitions?

Episodes of power shortages in the last two years amid rapid growth in demand pose an important question. How should India act and plan to meet its rising energy demand reliably and cost-effectively?

A new study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) answers this question by simulating six scenarios of India’s power sector in 2030. CEEW found

that failure to achieve 500 GW of clean energy capacity by 2030 will lead to power shortages and higher power costs, even if demand grows moderately. For instance, 0.26% of the demand will not be met if we achieve only 400 GW. Just this small percentage alone could impact the power supply to ~1 million households for 2.5 hours daily. States in northern India would be the worst affected because of network constraints.If demand grows faster (at 6.4% CAGR between 2023 and 2030 instead of 5.8%) and the 500 GW target is achieved, India will still need additional generation capacity to avoid major power shortages. Here, India has two choices — add six GW of new coal (beyond the under-construction capacities now) or 100 GW of new RE capacity (beyond the stated 500 GW). The first choice will meet the demand, but the coal fleet will remain under high stress with a likelihood of increased downtime. This could result in sudden shortages and increased costs. The study finds that the latter choice of 100 GW of new RE capacity, distributed across States, is a better option.

How can India aim for 600 GW by 2030?

India must achieve 600 GW of clean energy by 2030 to keep pace with demand. This will help the country deliver reliable power at lower costs, saving up to ₹42,400 crore (\$5 billion) in procurement costs in 2030 alone. It will also yield higher social and health benefits, with 1,00,000 new jobs (during 2025-2030) and up to 23% lower emission of air pollutants in 2030.However, a 600 GW target would require 70 GW of RE addition annually until 2030 which may sound wishful. Several on-ground and grid-related challenges are already restricting the pace of RE deployment and have dwindled offtake interest among distribution companies. These include delays in securing suitable and conflict-free land, delays in the availability of transmission equipment, uncertainty around incentives for inter-State RE plants, and complexities of grid balancing. Given these challenges, relying on polluting coal power plants may seem more tenable. However, this approach would neither be affordable nor reliable. Historical trends show that coal projects take over seven years to start operations. In comparison, RE plants, being modular, could be deployed faster and supply cheaper electricity.

How can India add renewables faster?

Scaling to 600 GW is urgent and possible with the right market signals. Below are three key strategies to unlock the pace of RE deployment in India.First, new RE projects should be spread across more Indian States. Currently, five Indian States house three-fourths of the total RE capacity. State-agnostic reverse bids and complete waiver of inter-State transmission system (ISTS) charges have crowded investments to a few regions, putting pressure on land. The government must work with more States, like Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, and Kerala, to create a conducive RE environment. For this purpose, the ISTS waiver should not be extended beyond June 2025, barring storage plants, which would also encourage distributed RE plants under the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Uthaan Mahabhiyan) and PM Surya Ghar Scheme.Second, the Central and State governments must promote the co-location of wind and energy storage systems with existing and new solar projects. This would help effectively utilise land and transmission networks and support grid integration of renewables. CEEW’s study estimates that India will need 280 GWh of battery energy storage systems (BESS) and 100 GWh of pumped hydro storage to integrate 600 GW of RE by 2030. Here, we must prioritise BESS, which can be built within six months and is quickly becoming affordable.Third, there is an urgent need for innovation in bidding and contract designs for faster RE procurement and RE availability in power exchanges. Several large solar and hybrid RE tenders, concluded in FY24 by intermediaries like the Solar Energy Corporation of India, did not generate offtake interest from States. The Union government must work with States to generate demand for RE procurement, devise suitable tender designs, and proactively resolve bottlenecks. Besides bilateral RE procurement, we must improve RE availability on our power exchanges. Here, the government could consider support-

Here’s how much protein you can get for just Rs 100



Protein intake dominates most conversations surrounding nutrition, fitness, and wellness. Whatever your health goals are – building muscle or watching your weight – the underlying statement hints at increasing the amount of protein in your diet.Pratiksha Kadam, Chief Dietitian, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Navi Mumbai, shared that protein provides the body with amino acids, the building blocks needed for the production of growth hormone and other crucial biological processes. Animal proteins such as milk, eggs, chicken, and fish are high in quality and easily absorbed. Plant-based proteins—found in lentils, beans, soy products, and nuts—also contribute significantly, especially when consumed in a balanced vegetarian or vegan diet.However, money is an essential factor for the common man — and protein does not come cheap! Trying to keep up with your protein intake while sticking to the grocery budget can seem like a never-ending struggle, but proper guidance can make the process easier.How much protein can you get for 100 rupees?According to Meenu Balaji, chief nutritionist at Pragmatic Nutrition, Chennai,

people think supplements are the only way to get protein and do not realise that they are expensive and not everyone needs them. Here is a table to show the different food sources that give you protein for Rs 100According to this chart, 55g of protein costs Rs 99, which meets the requirement for an adult weighing 68 kg with a sedentary lifestyle (0.8 g protein per body weight).“However, if you are training for bodybuilding, your protein requirement would be higher. You could also choose from high biological value lean sources like chicken, fish, and egg whites. The portion sizes listed for these foods are realistic, and something you can eat in your day-to-day life,” Balaji said.She added that it is equally important to ensure that vitamin D levels are optimized, as it helps in the absorption of calcium, which plays a critical role in bone health and development. Whole grains, fats and oils, fruits, and vegetables should also not be overlooked, as they provide fuel and energy, as well as vitamins and minerals that support overall health and growth.While protein is a key factor in our regular diet, Balaji highlighted the importance of adopting a holistic approach to nutrition.

Does the intermittent fasting diet have a new challenger? Study shows how to lose weight without restricting calories too much



Studies have already shown that reducing carbohydrates, especially refined sugars and starches, helps stabilise blood glucose and insulin levels.Studies have already shown that reducing carbohydrates, especially refined sugars and starches, helps stabilise blood glucose and insulin levels. If intermittent fasting seems a tough call, then you can have similar results with a low carbohydrate diet. New research from the University of Surrey suggests that rather than drastically restricting calories through intermittent fasting and small eating windows, people can achieve similar benefits by cutting back on carbs.Not only that. Researchers found that while test subjects experienced increased hunger on low-carbohydrate days, it didn’t translate into increased food intake over the following two days. This suggests that the body may adapt to the reduced carb intake, potentially making it easier to adhere to this diet in the long-term.

In recent years, a combination of dietary strategies that emphasizes reducing carbohydrate intake, increasing healthy fats and incorporating time-restricted eating (TRE) has worked. “This supports better energy regulation, reduces inflammation and enhances cell repair,” says Dr

Eli Lilly claims new oral weight-loss pill works as well as Ozempic: Here’s what it means

What if you had the same effect as Ozempic, the injectable form of semaglutide that controls both blood sugar and obesity, without experiencing pain from a jab? US pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly has brought out a new experimental pill called Orforglipron, which worked just as well as Ozempic to lower weight and blood sugar in a trial of diabetic patients. It reduced their body weight by 8% over 40 weeks.Announcing the results of the phase III trial of its new oral GLP-1 drug, which mimics sugar regulating hormones in the gut, the company said: “If approved, the company is confident in its ability to launch orforglipron worldwide without supply constraints.” Meaning, the drug may become available even in India as soon as it receives approvals from drug regulators.This is significant as it raises hopes of an effective and easy-to-use treatment in a market that currently relies heavily on weight loss injections. Injectable GLP-1 drugs became available in India only earlier this year.

Why is the trial important?

One of the biggest challenges of taking injectables is the hassle of getting the once-weekly shot. With the ease-of-use, an oral regimen is likely to make the drugs more accessible.“The drug helped over 65 per cent of participants reach healthy HbA1C levels (average blood sugar counts of three months) with mainly mild side effects and excellent adherence. No liver safety issues were observed, unlike Pfizer’s recently abandoned oral obesity drug. While this represents progress, cost and accessibility concerns remain, especially in markets like India where oral GLP-1 receptor analogues are already available,” says Dr Anoop Misra, chairman, Fortis CDOC for Endocrinology and Diabetes.A phase 3 trial showed that type 2 diabetes patients on Orforglipron lost 16 pounds, or nearly 8% of their body weight, over 40 weeks. “Levels of HbA1c, or average blood sugar count over three months, fell by an average of 1.3% to 1.6% across doses. After 40 weeks of treatment in the multi-dose trial, orforglipron showed body weight reductions of 4.7% at 3 mg, 6.1% with 12 mg, and 7.9% with 36 mg. Patients on placebo lost 1.6%. This efficacy seems good for an oral pill,” says Dr V Mohan, Chairman, Dr Mohan’s Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai.“Although we cannot compare the effects with more advanced injectables that are expected to hit the market, this could be

Shivani Gulati, functional nutritionist at Ojas Alchemist Hospital, Panchkula.Reduce refined carbs to stabilise blood glucose

Studies have already shown that reducing carbohydrates, especially refined sugars and starches, helps stabilise blood glucose and insulin levels. By lowering carb intake and opting for more complex carbs (those that release sugar slowly in the bloodstream and take more time to be digested), the body shifts towards burning fat as a primary fuel source.Whole wheat, bajra, barley, oats, multigrain bread, millets, legumes, fruits and vegetables, particularly corn, beans and potatoes, should make the cut. Focus on quality and not quantity.The study found that carbohydrate restriction alone, even without significant calorie restriction and an intermittent fasting diet, improved metabolic markers in overweight and obese individuals. Participants who followed a low-carb diet, regardless of calorie reduction, showed lower triglyceride levels and increased fat burn after a meal. This could thus be a more accessible and sustainable diet for weight loss.Increase healthy fatsIncorporate healthy fats such as those from nuts, seeds, olive oil and fatty fish. These provide essential fatty acids and fat-soluble vitamins, while also promoting satiety. They play a vital role in hormone production, brain function and cellular health. That’s why the Mediterranean diet, rich in monounsaturated and Omega-3 fatty acids, has been consistently associated with reduced cardiovascular disease riskThe growing body of research around carbohydrate restriction offers a flexible diet plan for long-term health improvements. We have conducted Root Cause Analysis (RCA) on more than 50 patients and consistently observed tremendous improvements in HbA1c (average blood sugar count of three months), reduced sugar spikes, lower Hs-CRP (high-sensitivity, C-reactive protein) levels, which quantify inflammation, and better fasting insulin profiles. Rather than relying on quick fixes or restrictive diets, this approach focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes of metabolic imbalance.



a good option for those who do not want injections,” he adds.

How does it compare to other oral GLP-1 drugs?

When it comes to oral semaglutide, the OASIS-1 trial showed that it led to a 15.1% reduction in body weight. But this was at the highest 50 mg dose and at 68 weeks, meaning a higher dose and duration as compared to the current Orforglipron trial.“The Danish company Novo Nordisk had already introduced the first oral semaglutide called Rybelsus, which is being used in India, is safe and helps to reduce weight as well as blood sugar levels. The advantage of Rybelsus is that it is the world’s first ‘peptide (amino acids) in a pill’ and was developed by a revolutionary breakthrough technology. However, Orforglipron is a chemically synthesised, small-molecule drug. So there will be differences in how they are absorbed and taken. So one has to see the results long-term,” says Dr Mohan.Orforglipron, being a small molecule, is absorbed more easily and doesn’t require the same dietary restrictions as Rybelsus, which is a peptide. Rybelsus needs to be taken on an empty stomach and with water, with specific timing restrictions.

What about safety?

Eli Lilly claims Orforglipron’s safety profile was consistent with other GLP-1s. “The trial found that 13% to 18% of patients given the drug experienced nausea across doses, compared with 2% on placebo. The rate for diarrhoea was 19% to 26% and vomiting 5% to 14%. But long-term tolerability has to be studied,” says Dr K P Singh, Director, Endocrinology, Fortis Hospital, Mohali.

4 animals that can swallow humans whole

Discover the real-life animals that possess the size and ability to swallow humans whole, supported by documented cases and expert analysis.Discover the real-life animals that possess the size and ability to swallow humans whole, supported by documented casesThe idea of being swallowed whole by an animal has long fueled folklore, thrillers, and nightmares. From the biblical story of Jonah to modern survival accounts, it seems the concept is both terrifying and oddly fascinating. But what if these stories aren’t just tales spun to entertain? In the wild, some creatures truly have the anatomical capabilities to engulf humans whole or trap them temporarily within their cavernous mouths.Imagine diving into a tranquil ocean, only to find yourself face-to-face with the gaping maw of a whale shark. Or hiking in the jungle and crossing paths with a reticulated python, coiled and ready. While such scenarios are rare, they’re not entirely fiction. Over the years, encounters with creatures like massive pythons, crocodiles, and even whales have shown that nature can be stranger—and more terrifying—than we imagine.Let’s dive deeper into the creatures capable of such feats, backed by real-life accounts.Animals that can swallow humans whole: Real-life incidents and details

While extremely rare, certain animals have the size and anatomical adaptations to potentially swallow humans whole. Below are detailed insights into these species, along with real-life accounts where applicable.1. Reticulated PythonAnatomy and Capability: Reticulated pythons can grow over 20 feet long, making them the longest snakes in the world. Their flexible jaws and powerful constriction allow them to engulf prey significantly larger than their heads.

Real-Life Incidents: In 2018, in Indonesia, a 54-year-

old woman named Wa Tiba was swallowed whole by a 23-foot reticulated python. Villagers found the snake and her body inside its stomach. In 2017, another Indonesian man named Akbar was killed and swallowed by a python while working on his palm oil plantation.2. Green AnacondaAnatomy and Capability: Native to South America, green anacondas are known for their immense weight, with some individuals exceeding 500 pounds. They use their constriction power to subdue prey before swallowing it whole.Real-Life Incidents: While verified cases of anacondas swallowing humans are scarce, their ability to consume prey as large as deer suggests the potential. Locals in the Amazon have reported close encounters, though most lack concrete evidence.Discover the rare but chilling stories of man-eating snakes like the reticulated python, African rock python, and anaconda. Explore verified cases and the reasons behind these unusual encounters. Reticulated pythons can grow over 20 feet long, making them the longest snakes in the world. 3. Saltwater Crocodile

Anatomy and Capability: Growing up to 23 feet in length, saltwater crocodiles are apex predators capable of swallowing large prey whole. Their powerful jaws can crush bones, and their digestive systems can handle tough materials.Real-Life Incidents: In 2016, a 24-year-old woman was attacked and eaten by a saltwater crocodile while swimming in Australia’s Northern Territory. Numerous accounts from Southeast Asia and Australia document crocodiles consuming humans during fishing or swimming.4. Humpback WhaleAnatomy and Capability: Humpback whales use their enormous mouths to filter-feed on krill and small fish. While their throats are too narrow to swallow humans, their size can trap people accidentally.

RBI should access US Fed facility to stabilise rupee: ex-DG Patra



With the rupee falling rapidly and the country’s foreign exchange reserves being depleted, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should lean on a US Federal Reserve facility to ensure US dollars are “flushed continuously in and out of the market”, Michael Patra, former deputy governor of the Indian central bank, says.

Under the Foreign and International Monetary Authorities (FIMA) Repo Facility, central banks such as the RBI can place their holdings of US Treasuries with the Fed for one or seven days and get dollars in return. At the end of this period, the dollars must be returned to the Fed, along with some interest, and foreign central banks get back the securities. The use of the facility would have a “stabilising influence” on the market, economise the RBI’s use of its forex reserves, and give it time to rebuild them, the former central banker said. “Faced with a storm, it is wise to get on to the biggest ship,” Patra, who retired from the RBI in January 2025 after four decades, said in an interview with Siddharth Upasani. Edited excerpts:

The exchange rate has been called by economists as a shock absorber. But with the rupee going from 89-per-dollar to 95 in a few months, is it performing the role of a shock absorber as it should?

I think it was Milton Friedman, the winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, who was among the first prominent voices propounding the equilibrating properties of floating exchange rates in his 1953 essay ‘The Case for Flexible Exchange Rates.’ Since the advent of floating exchange rates, however, the experience has been quite the opposite. Exchange rate behaviour has been characterised by overshoots, self-fulfilling expectations, band-wagon effects, multiple disequilibria and several generations of currency crises.Hence, all central banks monitor exchange rate movements closely and continuously and intervene in various ways to ensure orderly outcomes, because exchange rate volatility can have real economy consequences as well as financial instability.

Last week, the RBI capped banks’ daily open positions in the rupee at \$100 million. Yet, the rupee breached 95-per-dollar. Has this measure failed?

The RBI has a distinct information and analytics advantage relative to all other stakeholders in the foreign exchange market. It also tends to act pre-emptively rather than reactively to market developments. Hence, my hunch is that the build-up of disproportionately large arbitrage positions was detected and had to be curbed, so that markets remain liquid and function normally, especially in the context of the troubled geopolitical environment. The success or failure of any measure has to be assessed in the context of the objective it seeks to achieve. In this case, it is the unwinding of large arbitrage positions. Let us see how that happens within the time limit given by the RBI.You want the RBI to use the US Federal Reserve’s FIMA Repo Facility, akin to the RBI’s own repurchase facility for Indian banks. Can the use of FIMA — or even public knowledge of its availability — put an end to speculation against the rupee, which the RBI tried to do last week?

The objective of proposing access to the FIMA is to ensure that dollars are flushed continuously in and out of the market, so that market is liquid and deep with all regular

demands for foreign exchange being satisfied. It would also economise on the use of the RBI’s foreign exchange reserves and, in fact, provide space to rebuild them. There is also some evidence from countries that have availed it that it has brought about reductions in foreign exchange swap basis spreads as well as in the sensitivity of the latter to daily changes in risk sentiment proxied by the VIX index. Some central banks have also reported stabilisation of capital flows to their economies on announcement effects.

Why has the RBI never used FIMA?

The FIMA was established in March 2020 as a pandemic response and in July 2021, it was made into a standing facility. In the period from 2020-21 to 2023-24, there were very large accretions to the foreign exchange reserves except in some months of 2022-23. In fact, high levels of reserves — the fourth largest in the world then — were maintained even in early 2024-25 up to July. Hence, the need for access to FIMA did not arise.On February 28 — the day the West Asia war began — India and Japan renewed their \$75 billion Bilateral Swap Arrangement. Are more such swap lines needed or can their usage signal some sort of desperation?

Since the global financial crisis, the lack of a truly global, democratically accessible financial safety net has been acutely felt. It has also been recognised that while crises can be global, the responsibility for financial stability is national. For many emerging economies, national holdings of foreign exchange reserves turned out to be the only recourse, especially in the context of managing global spillovers. Accordingly, apart from seeking governance reforms in multilateral institutions, these countries have sought to reinforce their crisis wherewithal with secondary buffers such as swap lines. It has been the experience that the existence of these swap lines has provided confidence to markets and discouraged speculative attacks on the exchange rate.

In my view, getting access to FIMA and using it would demonstrate that uninterrupted provision of dollar liquidity to the foreign exchange market in India has a stabilising influence and it precludes precautionary sales of US Treasury securities in New York which can be destabilising for the markets there. In time, this can pave the way for the establishment of a regular swap line. Faced with a storm, it is wise to get on to the biggest ship.

The RBI has always said the exchange rate is not a consideration while setting interest rates. Is it now?

The RBI has followed a clear assignment rule in which monetary policy is assigned the objectives of price stability and growth, while exchange rate stability is assigned to foreign exchange interventions, macroprudential measures and capital flow management. In my view, this assignment rule has worked well and should be persevered with. In fact, there are only two rare data points of monetary policy being deployed to defend the exchange rate – during the global financial crisis, and during the taper tantrum. We have come a long way since then in strengthening our policy frameworks, building buffers, and in securing macroeconomic and financial stability.

Is the inflationary impact from the war’s energy supply shock being underestimated? Apart from maybe a couple of economists, no one really seems to be predicting an interest rate hike by the RBI anytime soon.As part of the preparations for the meeting of the MPC, teams in the RBI will simulate various scenarios in order to assess the balance of risks around the projections of inflation and growth. The impact of the geopolitical situation in terms of upside risks to inflation and downside risks to growth is too big an imponderable not to be simulated. Other related spillovers will also be taken into account, including the headroom provided by excise duty cuts on key inflation-sensitive petroleum products by the government. After that, the monetary policy decision is best left to the judgment of the MPC, which has wisely kept powder dry.

Protein alone is not enough: This is the missing piece of nutrition for your peak health



Just like you cannot get through a gruelling day without ranting to your work bestie, a high-protein diet alone cannot guarantee long-term health. You need to pair protein with carbohydrates to maximise its efficiency in the body. During a recent episode of The Masoom Minawala Show, health coach Luke Coutinho revealed that if you’ve been relying on dal as your only source of protein, this might change how you build your meals. “Dal alone is not the protein. Dal is a carbohydrate. It’s got amino acids that have to combine with a cereal to complete the amino acid profile so that it becomes a complete protein.”

Why is protein alone not enough?

Dr Samrat Shah, a consultant physician at Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune, explains that without carbs, the body will lack glucose to use as fuel. “In several days, it can start transitioning to burning fat and producing ketones, an experience that can accumulate to producing so-called low-carb flu symptoms of fatigue, headache, irritability, or brain fog as the shift progresses,” explains Dr Shah.If you are on a high-protein diet, consuming carbs becomes even more essential. “Protein, by nature, is very satiating and causes a

natural drop in calorie consumption. It also exhibits a greater thermic effect, aka, your body burns up more calories in order to break down the protein compared to the perspective of fats or carbohydrates,” he further elaborates. This is generally why there is a link between high-protein diets and rapid weight loss.“But, pairing protein with carbohydrates and healthy fats is crucial as this helps stabilise blood sugar and keeps you fuller for longer,” he points out.So, while carbs are important, the type of carbs consumed is also very important.

According to him, minimally processed and whole-some carbs are always preferred. “Ultra processed carbs with little to no nutritional benefits are best consumed minimised. Rather than cutting out carbs, the idea is to eat a balanced diet with complex carbohydrates, sufficient protein and fat as well as plenty of fruits and vegetables,” says Shah.

Make protein work for youDr Dipak Bhangale Consultant Gastroenterology, Hepatology, Interventional Endoscopy, Liver Transplantation, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Navi Mumbai also notes that the body can “absorb” protein at once, but the real issue isn’t digestion. Our gut easily handles large amino-acid loads, but how much protein meaningfully supports muscle growth before returns fade.“Research suggests about 0.3–0.4 g/kg per meal (roughly 20–40 g for most adults) maximizes muscle protein synthesis, spread across 3–4 meals to reach 1.6 g/kg/day,” he said. Larger doses aren’t wasted. They extend the anabolic response or are used for repair and energy,” he illustrates.Finally, it is essential to distribute your protein intake evenly through the day. “Choosing high-quality proteins (milk, eggs, fish, lean meats, or complementary plant sources), and ensuring each meal supplies ~2.5–3 g leucine, a key amino acid that triggers muscle building, would help in this regard. “Combine this with resistance exercise, proper recovery, and spaced meals rather than constant snacking to “re-sensitize” the system,” he added.

Harshvardhan Rane has gained 12kg in 6 months for Force 3: ‘Cutting starts tomo!’



Harshvardhan Rane is busy preparing for his upcoming movie release, Force 3, and the actor recently took to Instagram to share a fitness update. “Gained 12 kg in 6 months for #FORCE3,” he mentioned in the caption, adding that he “touched 93 kg today on my director’s demand for the role. Cutting starts tomo!”Deepalakshmi, a registered dietitian at Shree Balaji Medical College, Chennai, explained that bulking and cutting are structured phases used in fitness to change body composition.

“Bulking refers to a planned period of eating more calories than the body needs to help build muscle, while cutting

is a phase where calorie intake is reduced to lose body fat while trying to maintain the muscle gained,” she told indianexpress.com.These phases are commonly followed in strength training, but they are not necessary for everyone, especially those aiming for general health.“During a bulking phase, the body gets extra energy, which supports muscle growth when combined with regular strength training. Protein intake plays an important role in this process,” said Deepalakshmi.Harshvardhan Rane just finished bulking up During a bulking phase, the body gets extra energy, which supports muscle growth when combined with regular strength training. (Source: Instagram/@harshvardhanrane)However, not all the extra calories go into building muscle—some fat gain is expected. Overeating, especially through unhealthy foods, can lead to excessive fat gain and should be avoided.

According to her, in the cutting phase, the goal is to reduce body fat by eating fewer calories than the body needs. “While this helps the body use stored fat for energy, there is also a risk of losing muscle if the diet is too restrictive. To prevent this, it is important to continue strength training and maintain good protein intake,” she shared, warning against extreme dieting or relying only on cardio as it can lead to tiredness, nutrient deficiencies, and slower metabolism.Deepalakshmi suggested that a safe approach to bulking is to increase calorie intake slightly, by about 250–500 kcal per day, along with adequate protein and a balanced diet. For cutting, a moderate calorie reduction of around 300–500 kcal per day is recommended, without compromising on nutrition.Including a mix of whole foods such as cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, and protein-rich foods helps support overall health, she added.However, note that bulking and cutting may not be suitable for everyone.Deepalakshmi reiterated that adolescents, people with a history of disordered eating, or those with medical conditions should be cautious and seek professional advice. “For most people, a steady approach that includes regular exercise, balanced eating, and small calorie adjustments is more practical and sustainable for long-term health,” she concluded.

Esha Deol brings Met Gala to ‘Aamchi Mumbai’ with a humorous twist



Mumbai: Actor Esha Deol brought her own playful version of the Met Gala red carpet to Mumbai as she shared a fun behind-the-scenes moment from a recent event of hers. The actress posted a picture on her social media account and jokingly called it as her “Met Gala moment in amchi Mumbai.”In the picture, Esha was seen making a stylish red-carpet entry in a lavender mini outfit paired with high heels. Suddenly, things were seen taking an unexpected turn when a large air cooler placed near the entrance sent her outfit flying.Taking the moment sportingly, Esha turned into humorz and wrote a caption “My met gala moment in amchi Mumbai!”. In another clip, she further joked, “When you least expect a cooler at the entrance... this is what you get... easy breezy!”Talking about Esha Deol, the actress is the daughter of legendary superstar late Dharmendra and Hema Malini, and made her Bollywood debut with Koi Mere Dil Se Poochhe in 2002. She later featured in films such as Dhoom, Yuva, No Entry, Dus, and Cash.

On the personal front, Esha was married to businessman Bharat Takhtani in 2012. The couple are parents to two daughters, Radhya and Miraya. The two announced their separation in 2024.For the uninitiated, in mid 2000s, Esha Deol’s popularity reached another level with her song Dhoom Machale from the hit movie Dhoom. Esha who was

extremely close to her father late Dharmendra, was delighted and overwhelmed as he was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan award, the second-highest civilian award of the Republic of India, a few months ago.Expressing her joy, Esha had taken to her social media account to share the news and wrote, “Wishing everyone on Republic Day, Esha wrote on her official Instagram handle, “Happy Republic Day. Really happy that our papa is being conferred with the prestigious Padma Vibhushan Award (folded hands emoji) (sic).”

Sobhita Dhulipala's viral comment on authenticity and self-trust wins praise online

Hyderabad: Actress Sobhita Dhulipala’s recent comment on trusting one’s instincts, honouring oneself and living life with authenticity in response to a heartfelt appreciation post by Dubai-based Telugu influencer Srilata Adepalli has now gone viral.In her video, Dubai influencer Srilata spoke about powerful women with Telugu roots who are creating their own space across the world. From actress Sobhita Dhulipala to Chanel model Bhavitha Mandava, rapper Raja Kumari and beauty entrepreneur Deepica Mutyala, the post celebrated women who were confidently embracing their identity on a global stage and inspiring others along the way.But what truly caught everyone’s attention was Sobhita Dhulipala’s beautiful response in the comments section. Instead of a simple thank you, the actress shared a deeply personal note about trusting instincts, honouring oneself and living life with authenticity. “Lean in to your essence, no matter what. My most meaningful moments have come when I did what my instinct told me to, even when it’s totally illogical or unproductive. And every single time I did something otherwise, only I know how it backfired. Honour yourself. This life is a short sail across the river, cherish the breeze and the current,” Sobhita Dhulipala had commented.

Cloudflare to cut over 1,100 jobs amid AI-led restructuring



New Delhi: US-based connectivity cloud company Cloudflare has announced that it plans to cut more than 1,100 jobs globally as the company restructures its operations around the growing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), according to an internal memo sent to employees by the company.The company said that its internal use of AI has surged by more than 600 per cent over the last three months, with employees across engineering, finance, human resources and marketing increasingly relying on AI agents to carry out day-to-day tasks.

Cloudflare described the move as part of a broader organisational overhaul aimed at adapting to the ‘agentic AI

era’, rather than a conventional cost-cutting exercise or a performance-driven layoff programme. “This decision is not a reflection of the individual work or talent of those leaving us,” the company said in the memo.“We are reimagining every internal process, team and role across the company.” The company further added that all employees would be informed directly about how the restructuring affects them, with notices being sent to both official and personal email addresses for impacted workers.

Cloudflare said the severance packages for departing employees would include full base pay through the end of 2026, continued healthcare support in the US through the end of the year and additional equity vesting benefits through August 15.The company noted that employees who had not yet completed their one-year vesting cliff would receive prorated equity vesting as part of the separation package.According to the memo, the company intends to complete the restructuring exercise in a single phase to avoid prolonged uncertainty and repeated rounds of layoffs. Cloudflare said it was reshaping its organisational structure to remain competitive as AI rapidly transforms business workflows and operating models across the technology industry. The company stated that its transformation strategy is aimed at making the organisation ‘faster and more innovative’ as it continues investing in AI-driven products and services.

Gold rises nearly 2 pc during week amid geopolitical tensions and volatile crude prices

New Delhi: Gold prices rose 1.83 per cent during the week over heightened geopolitical uncertainty and volatile crude prices.On Friday, MCX gold June futures gained 0.04 per cent while MCX silver May futures surged 1.34 per cent. Currently gold futures stand at Rs 1,52,589, while silver futures at Rs 2,61,999 per kg.The price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold was at Rs 1,51,078 on Friday up from Rs 1,48,357 seen on Monday market opening, according to data published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA).Precious metals continued to rise for four consecutive sessions as optimism over a potential US-Iran peace agreement and a softer US dollar outweighed a stronger-than-expected US jobs report.US jobs data showed that employment rose more than forecast in April while the unemployment rate held at 4.3 per cent, underscoring resilience in the labour market and reinforcing expectations that the Federal Reserve may keep interest rates higher for

longer.Central banks maintaining interest rates higher for longer, could pressure non-yielding assets like gold.In international markets, Comex gold climbed about \$50 to a session high of \$4,760 per troy ounce, posting a weekly gain near 1.5 per cent. Market participants said the prospect of easing regional tensions and a weaker dollar supported demand for non-yielding bullion.Gold and silver have fallen nearly 10 per cent since the US-Iran conflict began on February 28.The broader safe-haven structure remains intact, though the pace of the rally has moderated as the dollar steadies and broader risk sentiment shows tentative signs of improvement, market participants said.Despite commodities flow disruption in the Strait of Hormuz dominating the macro narrative, markets are also entering a phase of technical consolidation following the sharp swings witnessed in recent weeks, analysts said.Precious metals are witnessing mixed price action, near Rs 1,50,000–Rs 1,48,000, analysts said.

The mystery around the strangers who sneaked into IPL’s dugout



GNS News Agency, May 15

‘If your b*#@&s can’t join their two hands, then what can I do?’ This was the South African captain Hansie Cronje explaining to bookie Sanjeev Chawla why he couldn’t deliver on their match-fixing deal after a game in the infamous 2000 India-South Africa series. It was that ODI where Herschelle Gibbs was to score below 20 but ended up hitting much more. Hansie, to save face, was blaming the Indian fielders for dropping catches. He was implying that Gibbs had done his bit and had he been caught, the match would take the course the syndicate had decided. Neither knew Delhi Police were tapping their phones.

This was a few years back, when a group of Express reporters, working on Chawla’s profile after he was forced to return to India from London, had been invited by Srivastava to his home. It was early evening. The frame of the relaxed ex-cop, sitting in the living room that had some signs of a child’s recent birthday, was endearing. Bright lights, balloons and buntings weren’t the ideal backdrop for a chat about cricket’s ugly chapter. His words would get embedded in the mind. In the years to come, it would be a seed of doubt that would instantly germinate at the sight of a pro-fielder dropping a catch that even an amateur could hold blindfolded. This season, the IPL has presented that worrying sight way too often. Dropped catches are as old as the game, even the sharpest spill sitters. But when the BCCI secretary flags the presence of unauthorized persons in team hotels, franchise buses and even the dugout, the memories of the evening with Mr Srivastava are refreshed. “There are unauthorised persons travelling in the team bus. There are unauthorised persons in team hotels, and there are some unauthorised persons in the dugout area... Some people have been spotted in places where they are not supposed to be,” BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told this newspaper. He added that norms have been in place since 2008 but “people are becoming casual” and there will be no leniency for violations. The IPL has reached the business end, the play-offs are round the corner. How long have these illegal trespassers been around? Why were they allowed and what were they up to? Such questions aren’t healthy for a reputed league, the IPL — world cricket’s biggest show and the crown jewel of Indian cricket. Cricket in general and IPL specifically is a sport of small margins,

many uncertainties and countless possibilities. Here a genuine error can easily be confused for some grand dubious design. Exasperation, disbelief, instant derision, a smirk and a quick comment on the integrity of the game, and the players follow. More so when an official says that the house rules have not been followed.

In these days of no-holds-barred batting and throwing caution to the wind, a thin line separates the sublime from the stupid and also the scandalous. One minute you could be the batsman with the high backlift, graceful swing and immaculate timing. The next moment, if you miss the ball, you could be a wildly swinging careless batsman prone to throwing the wicket. More so, when you know the league hasn’t been squeaky clean. Bowlers too have it tough. It’s a few millimetres that distinguish the perfect wide outside off yorker dot ball and a glaring wide. Missing this tight target more than once starts the whispers. Again, more so when you know that the gate-keepers have been lax and teams have been too casual in following the norm and guidelines.

Every major cricket controversy that brought serious disrepute to the game has had the role of those who snuck into the forbidden zones. The 2013 spot-fixing IPL scandal had bookies sharing the hotel room with the players. This is from the police chargesheet. Back in the day, the teammates of those facing fixing charges spoke of them regularly in mixed company at odd hours. Most would look the other way or be cynical about the state of affairs. Some would even be in awe of their playboy image. The whip didn’t crack, till it was too late. And within a few years, it was once again an open house. Businessmen and women, agents and hangers-on were back in the hotel lobby. There were luxury cars waiting outside, ready to take to the temptations with possible booby traps. A few years back, the ICC made Zimbabwe’s Brendan Taylor’s hearing about his match-fixing case public. The story goes that Taylor would meet an Indian businessman, who would offer him the world. A place in the Afghanistan league and subsequently \$15,000 for fixing games. A month later, the businessman funded Taylor’s three nights and four days trip to India. This time he wanted Taylor to do what they wanted in a T20 tournament. The Zimbabwean player said he had initially said no to the offer but what made him change his mind was a compromising video of him that the businessman had shot. He also mentions an evening of cocaine consumption. The rare BCCI acknowledgement of undeserving and uncredited persons strolling around the dugout is serious. Hansie’s ‘If your bastards can’t join their two hands, then what can I do?’ is a loaded line. It is an indictment of those greasy palms but not fair on those with genuine butter fingers. Such doubts aren’t good for the IPL — it is optics and perception that decide the reputation and legacy of an event.

‘I will not talk about that’: Novak Djokovic refuses to discuss injury issues after shock Italian Open loss

GNS News Agency, May 15

Novak Djokovic’s return to the court after a two-month injury lay-off ended in a dismal Italian Open defeat to a 20-year-old whom he had considered to be like playing a mirror two years ago. At the 2024 Australian Open, Djokovic had quashed Dino Prizmic in four sets in the opening round. On Friday, the young Croatian had the number over his idol, defeating the 24-time Grand Slam champion 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 at the clay-court event. Making his first appearance since the Indian Wells fourth-round defeat to Jack Draper in March, Djokovic appeared on court with a visibly strapped right shoulder. While that did not stop him from breezing through the first set, the former world no. 1’s energy dropped considerably thereafter. Djokovic admitted that he is not competing at the desired standards as he gears up for the French Open in two weeks, revealing that he was carrying one ailment or the other at tournaments during this stage of his career.

“It’s not an ideal preparation, to be honest. I don’t recall the last time I had, in the last couple years, a preparation where I didn’t have any kind of physical issues or health issues coming into the tournament. There’s always something. Kind of a new reality that I have to deal with,” he said.

Djokovic appeared under duress during the Rome outing as he clenched his stomach and even appeared to spit or vomit during the second set. The defeat was a first for the 38-year-old in the opening round in the tournament in 19 appearances. He declined to open up about his physi-



cal concerns and also remained unclear about his condition ahead of the year’s second Slam at Roland Garros, starting May 24. “I hope you understand, I will not talk about that,” he told reporters. “I want to congratulate Dino. Deservedly the winner today,” Djokovic said, before turning his attention to his one-and-done outing in Rome. “Yeah, came in to have a match or more. Unfortunately, only a match. It’s all right. I’m pleased at least that I fought till the end. I want to thank the crowd. It was incredible once again. I mean, the support and love that I’ve been getting, it’s something I don’t take for granted.” The three-time French Open champion said he will enter this year’s event without any further match practice, having previously finished runners-up at the Australian Open in January.

‘Eighteen years, it hurts’: DC rue poor form of Axar, Kuldeep as IPL 2026 exit looms with KKR defeat

Delhi Capitals director of cricket Venugopala Rao has endured a lean run with the franchise as a player a decade ago. It was the Daredevils back then, when Rao was part of a squad that bagged the wooden spoon twice between 2011 and 2013. A stinging eight-wicket loss to the Kolkata Knight Riders on Friday, a fifth in succession at home, put the Capitals all but out of Playoffs contention, extending the wait for the elusive title by another season. “I think today also, when we got a good start, we couldn’t capitalise. In this kind of tournament, you can’t miss those patches. Eighteen years, obviously, it hurts. Seriously, when you look back, when I played during my days, I always wanted to win from the Daredevils’ time to now. It’s a learning process for me. Coming into the administration part, I’m still learning a lot of things,” said Rao, who took over the role with the franchise last year. While a third consecutive batting collapse at the Feroz Shah Kotla grounds has pushed Delhi down to the eighth spot with seven losses, Rao could not single out a specific problem that needs immediate attention. The DC batters struggled to sustain momentum yet again batting first, ending at 142 for eight, 13 runs short of their previous outing against the Chennai Super Kings earlier this week. The batters once again ceded control within the first 11 overs, losing half the side before the KKR bowlers choked them through the second half. “Matters turned from bad to worse as Kolkata romped home on the back of a whirlwind Finn Allen century that punished the Delhi bowlers with 15 boundaries. Allen was batting on 42 off 26 deliveries when he was dropped by Tristan Stubbs at long-on. The Kiwi batter soon pressed into overdrive, smashing 58 in his next 21 balls with nine maximums. “I think three departments failed today. After getting a good start, after seven or eight overs, we were in a good position, one wicket or something down. Then later on, in the next six to seven overs, we couldn’t get a boundary. Not only batting, but also in bowling or fielding. I think the whole tournament, we couldn’t win those small, small areas,” Rao said.

The indifferent form of captain Axar and wrist-spinner



While a third consecutive batting collapse has pushed Delhi down to the eighth spot with seven losses, Rao could not single out a specific problem that needs immediate attention.

Kuldeep Yadav have exemplified DC’s recent rut. Axar has had a woeful batting season – scoring only 44 runs at 6.28 – contributing 11 off 22 balls on Friday night. Meanwhile, Kuldeep has struggled for bowling rhythm, running wicketless in six of the 10 innings this edition, including figures of none for 41 in three overs against KKR. While Rao backed the World Cup-winning stars for a turnaround, he rued the minimal contribution from the seniors in the latest defeat. “With players like him [Kuldeep] and Axar, if both are in good form together, it strengthens the bowling group a lot,” he added. “We always want a captain, a person like him, who has been in the two World Cup-winning squads, coming into this tournament [in form]. Somewhere, I think, he lost his form and that hurt us.” “When you look back at today’s opposition, some of the seniors couldn’t perform. So, we need to face the music,” admitted Rao.

‘One game at a time’: KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane on chances of play-offs after win vs DC



With their eight-wicket win over hosts Delhi Capitals on Friday night, Kolkata Knight Riders scored their fourth consecutive win of this year’s IPL. The Ajinkya Rahane side had just one point after six matches this season and had lost five matches out of the six matches. Friday’s win meant that the Kolkata team now has nine points from ten games and are still in contention to make it to the play-offs. With the team having xx games left and the chance to make it to the play-offs, skipper Rahane shared how the team is taking one game at a time. “One game at a time,” Rahane said at the end of the post match presentation when asked about how the team is looking towards their chance to qualify for the play-offs after four consecutive wins.

After they bundled out Delhi Capitals to a total of 142 for 8 in 20 overs, the Kolkata side chased the target in 14.1 overs with Finn Allen hitting his maiden IPL hundred with his 47-ball knock of 100 runs. In the Capital’s innings, Kolkata spinner Anukul Roy took two wickets including the wicket of Pathum Nissanka and Tristan Stubbs apart from Sunil Narine taking one wicket for 17 runs in his quota of four overs. Rahane praised Allen’s breezy knock as well his bowlers apart from the team’s fielding. “I think first of all, let me just say I’m really happy for Finn Allen. He was struggling for four five games and had been working really hard, but the way he batted tonight was fantastic. But I want to praise our bowlers again. We did well because of them and they have been doing it so consistently especially in the middle overs and death overs. Our spinners Sunil (Narine)

, Varun (Chakravarthy), Anukul Roy have been fantastic. Fielding wise, we are working really hard. And our fielding coach has been really strict with us and that’s been helping us. The result you have seen in our catching and fielding, the credit goes to the fielding coach,” said Rahane.

With his one wicket, Sunil Narine now has ten wickets in nine matches this IPL with six wickets out of those ten wickets coming in the last four matches won by the Kolkata side. When asked about what conversation he has with a bowler like Sunil Narine, Rahane shared how he leaves Narine alone and how he is lucky to have spinners like Narine and Varun Chakravarthy in his side. “I think I’ll just leave him alone. As a captain, I am so lucky to have Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy in our side. You don’t have to tell them too much. I mean Sunil, he is learning every day. I mean even in the practice sessions, he is there so attentive and trying to learn something or other from other players too. Sharing his experience with every one That’s what helps me on the field. Whenever I tell him Sunny you have to bowl, come and bowl. He is always ready to do that,” shared Rahane. Out of the four wins, the Kolkata side has bowled first in three matches with their bowling unit making sure that they didn’t not give away more than 165 runs. Against Sunrisers Hyderabad last week, Sunil Narine gave away only one run in the super over before Rinku Singh hit the winning runs in the Super Over. Rahane praised his bowling unit and credited bowling coaches Tim Southee and Dwayne Bravo for working ‘really hard’ with the bowlers. “It’s all about staying in the moment. What we discuss in the dugout and practice sessions, it’s always about being in the moment. We have been playing very good cricket in the first five games. Those crucial moments in this format are very important. If you are attentive, if you are proactive then being in the moment, that’s what helped us. I want to credit our bowling coaches Tim Southee and Dwayne Bravo. They have been working really hard with our bowlers. It’s been fantastic. I am very happy for Anukul Roy, who had a fantastic domestic season. Kartik Tyagi has been very good. He has been very clear in his mindset and is a very confident guy. Yeah the two guys have bene very good. Overall as a bowling unit, we are doing really well,” said Rahane.

India one win away from FIFA U17 Women’s World Cup qualification

India have made history in the AFC Under-17 Women’s Asian Cup by thrashing Lebanon 4-0 and reaching the quarterfinals of the tournament for the first time. In the process, they have now brought themselves within one win of qualifying for the 2026 FIFA U17 Women’s World Cup. Pritika Barman (7’, 85’), Alva Devi Sanjam (36’), and Joya (72’) were on target in India’s win over Lebanon at the Suzhou Taihu Football Sports Centre.

Their place in the quarterfinals was then confirmed after the Philippines and Chinese Taipei failed to win their final head-to-head Group C match by a margin of 12 goals or more. India, led by former Italian forward Pamela Conti, thus went through to the quarterfinals as the second-bast ranked team among those that finish third in their respective groups. The only team that finished above them in this bracket was Thailand. Placed in Group B, India lost 2-0 to Australia in their opening match and 3-0 to Japan in their second game. This meant that they finished the group stage with three points in three games.

India now face China in the quarterfinal of the tournament at 5pm IST on May 11 at the Suzhou Sports Centre Stadium. The tournament serves as a qualifier for the FIFA U17 Women’s World Cup, with all four semi-finalists earning spots in the group stage of the marquee tournament set to be hosted in Morocco from October 17 to November 7. India on Friday made only one change from their last game, with Anushka Kumari replacing Pearl Fernandes. Pritika’s opening goal came after she controlled a long ball from right back Divyani Linda perfectly, dribbled past a Lebanon defender and put it past goalkeeper Marie Joe Chebly in the seventh minute. Pritika made a menace of herself for the Lebanon defender throughout the opening stages, even coming close to scoring a second goal in the 16th minute. It was Alva Devi Sanjam who then doubled India’s lead in the



36th minute. Redima Devi Chingkhayum threaded a pass towards Alva at the edge of the box and the latter surged past her marker before slotting the ball into the back of the net with a calm finish.

India resumed the second half with the same attacking intensity and continued to push Lebanon deeper into their own half. The Young Tigresses controlled possession for long spells and looked dangerous whenever they advanced through the flanks. Their dominance was rewarded through a moment of individual brilliance from Joya. Receiving the ball on the left wing, the substitute displayed excellent close control before cutting inside, skipping past two defenders and curling a fine right-footed strike into the net to make it 3-0. India sealed an outstanding performance with Pritika completing her brace. Pritika revealed that she had visualised scoring the night before stepping onto the pitch. “It feels really good. I scored two goals, and we played really well. We had to win this match, so everyone gave their absolute best. Because we gave our best, we played very well and scored goals,” said the 16-year-old.

Finn Allen slams maiden IPL century as Kolkata Knight Riders thrash Delhi Capitals by 8 wickets

Delhi Capitals (DC) vs Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) IPL 2026: Finn Allen slammed his maiden IPL century as he guided Kolkata Knight Riders to their 4th straight win of the season, handing a 8-wicket thrashing to the Delhi Capitals. Allen took 47 balls to reach his 100 as he got to his milestone with a big six in an innings studded with 5 fours and 10 maximums. Pathum Nissanka started well for Delhi with 50 but the hosts lost wickets in a bunch before Ashutosh Sharma played a 39-run cameo in the end to save their blushes.

Kolkata Knight Riders won the toss and opted to bowl first vs the Delhi Capitals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi on Friday. Kolkata will play with the same team while Delhi made two changes with Vipraj Nigam and Mukesh Kumar coming in for Natarajan and most likely Kuldeep Yadav. Axar Patel’s DC have imploded by inexplicable means, losing four games on the bounce at home in less than a month. Having shot themselves in the foot, Delhi can only hope to get up to 14 points with wins in all the remaining matches. With tactical blips and the captain’s poor



batting form hampering the team, even a well-rounded bowling attack have not helped Delhi’s cause this season. Not far from that are KKR who have struggled for rhythm but have attained some balance on the back of their quality spin attack, finding feet again. In Sunil Narine, Varun Chakaravarthy, and Anukul Roy, Delhi have to confront a stern test on weary pitches at home.

India confirms five medals at Asian Under-17 Boxing Championships in Tashkent



Hyderabad: India’s young boxing contingent delivered a stellar performance at the Asian Under-17 Boxing Championships in Tashkent, with five boxers advancing to the

semifinals and confirming at least five medals for the country. In the quarterfinals, Yash Yadav (50kg) secured a hard-fought 4-1 victory over Kubanychbek Bolushov of Kyrgyzstan. Nivesh Pal (54kg) continued India’s dominance, registering a unanimous 5-0 win against Shingen Kanai of Japan to book his place in the semifinals.

In the 70kg category, Naman Kumar produced a commanding performance, defeating Ruzibek Miravotov of Tajikistan by a 5-0 decision. Lakshay Phogat (75kg) also impressed, securing a clinical 5-0 victory over Cheng-En Li of Chinese Taipei to progress to the last four. In other results, Karung Albertson (60kg) went down 0-5 against Emir Mukhit of Kazakhstan. Ranveer (66kg) suffered a 0-5 defeat against Islam Suleimanogly of Kazakhstan.

Sai Pallavi miscast in Ek Din? Even Aamir Khan hasn't gotten his own roles right



Wide-eyed, mouth agape, brows arching in conflicting directions, and a voice calibrated to a cartoonish pitch. These alone capture Aamir Khan's last two performances. The characters could scarcely be more disparate, the settings poles apart, the films themselves worlds away. Yet Aamir's tonal signature remains parochial. Whether embodying human disability in Laal Singh Chaddha or affirming that difference is no deficiency in Sitaare Zameen Par, his delivery borders on buffoonery, undermining the very humanity he intends to convey. Why this sudden critique of his performances? Why not. Recently, Sai Pallavi, in her Bollywood debut with the Aamir-backed Ek Din, confessed on his YouTube channel that perhaps she had been miscast, saying, "I think somebody else was meant to do this film." It makes you wonder, the superstar, hailed as the "thinking Khan," seems increasingly at odds with his own portrayals. The precision he demands from others often eludes him in his own embodiment.

The casting story of Laal Singh Chaddha is arguably more revealing than the film itself. On multiple occasions, Aamir Khan has revealed that it was not he, but his son Junaid Khan, whom he had envisioned to helm the role. In a conversation with Jio Hotstar, Aamir explained that when Junaid returned to India after completing his acting training in Los Angeles, he was curious to see how his son had evolved as an actor. So he decided to test him as an actor.

Recounting the early stages, Aamir said, "I loved the script of Forrest Gump. We were very excited. At that time, Junaid had just completed his acting course in LA. He had returned with experience, and I thought, let me see what he has learned." He asked director Advait Chandan to shoot select scenes with Junaid, not simply to assess him, but

also to gauge Chandan's ability to manage a project of that scale. "He shot about twenty minutes of film, two or three difficult scenes we selected. When I saw it for the first time, I was shocked, Junaid was so good." Aamir then screened the footage for family and industry insiders. "I showed it to my family, to Mansoor. He said, 'Aamir, you should take Junaid, you should not do this film. He is Laal.' I showed it to others in the industry to be sure, and almost everyone agreed: he was perfect for the role." By then, Aamir Khan was convinced. "At that point, I was certain we should take Junaid as Laal Singh Chaddha because he was doing exceptionally well." Yet, for multiple reasons, Aamir ultimately chose to play the role himself. He admitted, however, that Junaid's performance influenced his own: "The honest truth is, when I finally did the film, I kept referring to Junaid, how he would have done it, and I think that unsettled my performance. If I hadn't seen him, it wouldn't have mattered." What is perhaps most intriguing is Aamir Khan's own admission after Laal Singh Chaddha's failure. He confessed that his performance had gone astray and promised to avoid the same mistake in his next, Sitaare Zameen Par. On Rhea Chakraborty's podcast, he had said, "My performance in Laal Singh Chaddha was pitched too high. Unlike the original, where Tom Hanks carried the film effortlessly, my performance let it down. By my reading, it was not good. I hope to do better next time."

In the same chat, he went on to praise Sitaare Zameen Par, calling it "a great film." But the underlying flaw remained: the familiar tropes, gaping eyes, buffoonish body language, an overly elevated pitch, persisted. Across the board, viewers sensed the same dissonance: the film could have offered effortless entertainment, but Aamir's casting once again undermined it, leaving the story heavier, less natural, and oddly distorted by its own intended charm. If we look further back, a pattern in Aamir Khan's performances emerges. Even in films like Thugs of Hindostan, Secret Superstar, PK, (one of his dual roles in) Dhoom 3, or even Ghajini, he consistently seems to favour exaggeration over genuine earnestness. There's a method to his madness which is simply an intentional tilt towards caricature. You can almost see the effort, the craft being consciously deployed, rather than the character living organically. The most revealing moment came last year, when an audition tape surfaced showing Aamir giving a shot at the character of Ravi Kishan in his ex-wife, Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies. Watching the clip, everything that has gone wrong in his portrayals becomes clear. His interpretation of a foul-mouthed, chest-thumping cop was almost painful to witness, a study in overemphasis that bordered on the absurd. Yet, the smart part of the story is that both Kiran and Aamir himself recognized the superficiality. He should not be cast.

Like Alia Bhatt, Ranbir Kapoor was made to travel in economy class as a child: 'Trips were budgeted'

Riddhima Kapoor Sahni has become the latest member of the Kapoor family to step into the world of showbiz. Born to legendary actors Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Kapoor, Riddhima married businessman Bharat Sahni and spent much of her life focusing on her entrepreneurial journey. After staying away from the camera for decades, Riddhima made her screen debut with Fabulous Lives vs Bollywood Wives, backed by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. More recently, she appeared alongside her mother Neetu in Dadi Ki Shaadi. Despite growing up amid fame and glamour, Riddhima revealed that she and her brother, Ranbir Kapoor, were raised in a grounded and disciplined manner, without special privileges associated with being star kids. Speaking to Soha Ali Khan on her podcast All About Her, Riddhima shared that their parents treated both siblings equally and ensured they had a normal childhood. "There was no difference between us when we were growing up. We grew up in a very loving home. Of course, there was discipline, but it was a very normal upbringing. We did everything ourselves. It wasn't like we came from a star family," she said.

Neetu echoed the sentiment, recalling how she and Rishi consciously avoided spoiling their children despite their celebrity status. She explained that both Riddhima and Ranbir travelled like ordinary children, often carpooling to school instead of having personal drivers. They were given limited pocket money and were taught the importance of financial discipline from an early age.

"They were very normal children. They would carpool for school. They didn't have a driver. They only got a fixed amount of money to spend. Even when they travelled overseas, they flew economy class, stayed with friends, and

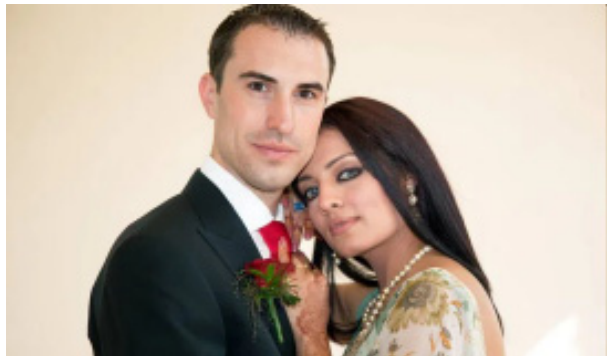


shared apartments. My husband was very particular that they should understand the value of money," Neetu said. She further revealed that Rishi Kapoor discouraged extravagant spending on their daughter. "He never let me buy her anything too expensive. He used to say she would never value things that her husband would buy her. They travelled and lived like any normal children," she added. Riddhima also mentioned that even family vacations were carefully budgeted. Much like Ranbir, even Alia was made to travel in economy class during her childhood. Her mother Soni Razdan previously shared in the book Raising Stars: The Challenges and Joys of Being A Bollywood Parent, "Once, we were travelling to Dubai and could not afford three business-class tickets. I told my children, 'I will travel first class, and you guys travel economy.' They made a face." She added, "My logic was you have not earned enough to travel in business class as yet. Once you earn enough t

Mumbai police register FIR against actress Celina Jaitley's husband Peter Haag

Mumbai: The Mumbai Police has acted on the serious allegations of domestic violence levelled by actress Celina Jaitley against her husband Peter Haag. The long-arm of the law has registered an FIR against Peter, who is an Austrian national. The complaint, filed by the actress, has led to criminal proceedings under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023. As per the officials, the FIR has been registered under Sections 85, 115(2), 351(2), and 352 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which deal with allegations related to cruelty, causing harm, intimidation, and sustained harassment. The case is also linked to ongoing proceedings under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

This comes a few days after the actress shared a heartbreaking video of herself visiting her son's grave amid her legal battle. The actress shared that she wasn't allowed to meet her kids except for Shamsher, who passed away sometime ago. The Mumbai Police have also issued a Look Out Circular (LOC) against Peter Haag. Sources indicate that the move was prompted due to alleged non-cooperation with the ongoing investigation. An LOC is generally issued in cases where authorities believe an accused individual may evade questioning or leave the country during the course of a probe. So far, neither Peter nor his legal rep-



resentatives have issued any public statement regarding the allegations. Mumbai Police are reportedly continuing to record statements and collect relevant material connected to the complaint. For unversed, actress Celina Jaitley, the actress married Austrian entrepreneur and hotelier Peter in 2010, and they became parents to twin boys in 2012. She gave birth to a second set of twins in 2017, but one of them died due to a heart condition. In November 2025, Celina filed a case against Peter under the Domestic Violence Act, alleging that he had subjected her to continuous domestic violence.

Celina Jaitley files FIR against husband Peter Haag over alleged abuse and harassment, police issue lookout notice



Celina Jaitley has initiated criminal proceedings against her husband, Peter Haag, by filing a First Information Report (FIR) at Versova Police Station. The FIR, registered on Friday by the Mumbai Police, accuses Haag of cruelty, physical assault, criminal intimidation, and sustained harassment. The case has been filed under Sections 85, 115(2), 351(2), and 352 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023. The latest legal action marks a significant escalation in the ongoing dispute between the couple, which has already seen proceedings under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. According to reports by ANI, Mumbai Police have also issued a Look Out Circular against Haag after alleging that he failed to cooperate with the ongoing investigation. Jaitley had already been in the spotlight over

the past several months due to another personal battle involving her brother, who has reportedly been detained in the UAE for security-related reasons. However, the actor once again made headlines after approaching the Judicial Magistrate First Class court in Andheri, Mumbai, last year with allegations of domestic violence against Haag.

According to court documents, Jaitley sought interim and ex parte relief under Section 23 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. She reportedly sought damages amounting to Rs 50 crore, along with additional compensation for what she described as the loss of income opportunities and property-related claims. The case was verified by the court, and a legal notice was issued to Haag in December last year.

In her complaint, Jaitley alleged that Haag systematically restricted her professional opportunities and prevented her from working under various pretexts, thereby depriving her of financial independence and personal dignity. She further claimed that during a period of intense emotional vulnerability — following the death of her newborn child and the loss of both her parents within a short span — Haag pressured her into transferring ownership of her Mumbai residence to his name. The actor has also accused her husband of subjecting her to prolonged emotional, physical, sexual, verbal, and financial abuse throughout their marriage. According to her allegations, the situation eventually became so severe that she was compelled to leave their home in Austria and return to India without her children. Since then, she claims she has been denied meaningful access to them. Recently, Jaitley shared an emotional video from Austria in which she stated that the only place she was able to visit freely was the resting site of her late son, Shamsher. She also alleged that her three surviving children remained inaccessible to her despite repeated efforts. Celina Jaitley married Peter Haag in 2010 in Mumbai in a Hindu ceremony attended by close friends and family members. The couple are parents to three children — Viraj, Winston, and Arthur.

Riteish Deshmukh debunks Raja Shivaji budget claims of Rs 100 cr: 'Never asked about Sholay's budget'

Riteish Deshmukh's Raja Shivaji released on the big screen on May 1, and audiences responded in an enthusiastic manner, which was evident from the film's box office response. The film performed particularly well in its Marathi version, clearly surpassing its Hindi counterpart. As of now, the film has grossed Rs 66.38 crore. Amid this success, there has been speculation that the film's budget was around Rs 100 crore. Riteish has now opened up and addressed these claims. In a conversation with Hindustan Times, he said, "About the figures floating around regarding Raja Shivaji's budget, only the producers know the real numbers. The last thing we need to do as filmmakers is to discuss the budget of a film because it doesn't affect anything." He further explained, "Why does the budget matter? If someone asks me, I ask them, 'How much are you paying for a ticket to watch it?' They say 'Rs 100' or 'Rs 250-300', and I reply, 'That's the budget.' We should stop talking about it. Let it be magical, just go and experience the film."

Reflecting on his own experiences as a child, Riteish added, "When I went to watch Amitabh Bachchan ji's films like Sholay, I never thought, 'What's the budget of this film?' I just wanted to enjoy the big-screen entertainment. We never knew how much films collected. Unfortunately, that's the game today, people wonder how much actors charge for films. It's our mistake because we feed these numbers. Those who think this is fine, it's okay. We have made seven films in Marathi so far, and we have never revealed their budgets."

In a chat with Zoom, Riteish praised the strong performance of the Marathi version, saying, "Regional cinema is important. It needs to be supported, and I'm glad that people have gone out to watch the film in large numbers. I'm not taking this as a personal victory, please don't get me wrong. I'm speaking only as part of the Marathi film ecosystem."

Remarkably Bright Creatures review: Sally Field-powered movie chooses charm, sentiment over complexity

Remarkably Bright Creatures review: The film begins with a giant Pacific octopus, named Marcellus (voiced by Alfred Molina), narrating how he misses the quiet of the bottom of the sea. Now, housed at an aquarium in Sowell Bay, a sea-side small-town, the aging octopus forms an unlikely bond with the cleaning lady Tova (Sally Field) who comes in the evening, after the crowd of day-time visitors leave. Drawing on his immense wisdom and sensitivity— that's something Marcellus humble brags about — he is aware of the grief that Tova, an elderly widow, carries in her heart and is resolute on healing her.

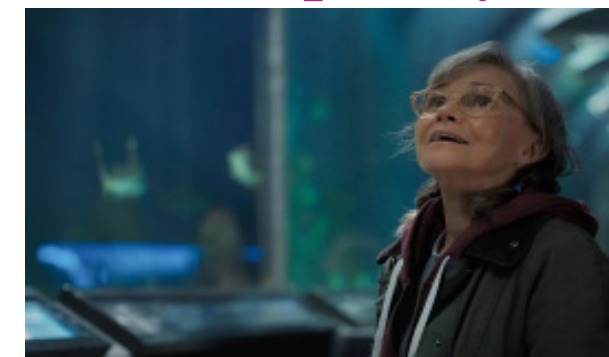
The premise might sound improbable but since Marcellus is the narrator, it is easier for viewers to go with his perspective. When a young man, Cameron (Lewis Pullman), comes to the town in search of his father, they form a triangle of friendship. All three of them are struggling with heartache — Marcellus, who was rescued by humans, misses his home in the deep sea; Tova is coping with the loss of her husband and son; and Cameron is looking for his father, whom he has never met.

The setting of the sea-side town is charming with old neighbours and friends interested in each other's affairs. Still, Tova finds it difficult to open up to them. She finds it easier to connect with the eight-legged creature at the aquarium, who keeps escaping his glass enclosure. Later on, she shares her story and the feeling of guilt that she carried over her son's death with Cameron, a musician desperate for funds to keep his band afloat. Tova and Cameron share a deeper connection than they are aware of. However, Marcellus, with his infinite wisdom, seems to



There was a figure for the highest-grossing first day, and Raja Shivaji has opened almost two and a half times that, which is huge for a Marathi film. This shows that Marathi films can achieve these numbers. I hope another film comes soon and breaks this record." He continued, "Unless records are broken and commercial boundaries are pushed, the industry will not grow. I'm not here thinking, 'Oh, my film set a record; it should never be broken.' No, please. I hope the next film breaks this record because that is the biggest victory for Raja Shivaji, setting a benchmark for the industry." Produced by Jio Studios and Mumbai Film Company, Raja Shivaji is based on the life of Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Empire.

The film stars Riteish Deshmukh alongside Sanjay Dutt, Abhishek Bachchan, Vidya Balan, Mahesh Manjrekar, Sachin Khedekar, Bhagyashree, Fardeen Khan, Jitendra Joshi, Boman Irani, Amol Gupte, and Genelia Deshmukh. Salman Khan also makes a cameo appearance.



know about it and works towards making them realise it.

Based on the bestselling 2022 novel by American author Shelby Van Pelt by the same name, Remarkably Bright Creatures is as much a sugary and sentimental tale as it is a moving account of love and grief. However, the two-time Academy Award-winning actor Field (Lincoln, Forrest Gump) lends her emotional heft and artistic range to make this whimsical yet profound live-action drama relatable. Together, Field and Pullman make the friendship between an elderly woman and a wayward musician, who lives in a van, believable. They encourage each other to go on dates and explore life. The movie, shot in the Vancouver neighbourhood of Deep Cove, has a picture-postcard quality to it. That has a soothing quality even when the film delves to darker subjects. Somehow, the picturesque setting makes the themes of grief and healing through new and renewed connections convincing.