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Telangana launches portal under Hyderabad Industrial Land Transformation Policy

Hyderabad: The State government operationalised the Hyderabad Industrial Lands Transformation Policy (HILTP) by issuing detailed implementation guidelines through GOMs. 81 issued on Friday.

Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Saturday formally launched the dedicated online portal for receiving applications from eligible industrial units seeking to avail benefits under the policy.

Mango orchard catches on fire in Manakondur

Karimnagar: A mango orchard caught fire in Chikkuduvanipalli of Manakondur mandal on Saturday. An electric short circuit is suspected to be the reason for the fire accident.

Flames broke out when two high-tension electric wires passing beside the mango orchard came into contact with each other. Later, the fire spread to the mango trees, resulting in damage to the trees as well as the mangoes.

Modi, Rubio discuss bilateral ties, West Asia crisis; Trump invites PM to White House

New Delhi, May 23

Looking to repair strained ties, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Saturday said the US relationship with India is "incredibly important" and promised "more exciting and new announcements" in the coming months to strengthen ties.

Rubio was speaking at the opening of a new annex building at the US Embassy here this afternoon, and said the US-India relationship is the "cornerstone" of the US approach to the Indo-Pacific. "The relationship with India is an incredibly important one, and it's the reason why I'm here on this visit — to reaffirm those ties and build upon them."

"In the months ahead, we're going to have even more exciting and new announcements about the development and the strengthening of the relationship between the two countries," Rubio added. He was speaking at the embassy shortly before calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for more than an hour. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval were present at the meeting.

India and the US will continue to work closely for the global good, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, after Rubio briefed him on the West Asia crisis and bilateral cooperation in defence, strategic technologies, trade and energy security.

Rubio, who met Modi shortly after landing in New Delhi, invited the Prime Minister on behalf of President Donald Trump to visit the White House in the "near future", according to US Ambassador Sergio Gor.

The US Secretary of State's four-day India trip is largely seen as an attempt to recalibrate bilateral relations that have faced headwinds since mid-last year.

After the meeting, Modi posted on X: "Happy to receive the US Secretary of State, Mr Marco Rubio. We discussed sustained progress in the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and issues related to regional and global peace and security. India and the United States will continue to work closely for the global good."

At the meeting, Rubio reportedly pitched supplying crude oil from the US. New Delhi is facing an energy crisis after the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and on-and-off sanctions on purchasing Russian crude. Rubio arrived in India the same day state-owned oil marketing firms raised fuel prices for the third time since May 15 to offset losses from buying costly fuel and selling it cheaper to consumers.

Rubio had arrived in Kolkata on Saturday morning and visited Missionaries of Charity, the organisation once run by Mother Teresa. Its licence to receive donations under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) was first revoked and then restored in 2022.

On the Quad meeting scheduled for May 26, Rubio said, "We wanted to do it here, not just because of our commitment to that structure, but as a tangible sign of what an important role India plays for the United States and in our posture and approach to the Indo-Pacific."

He added that the relationship between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Modi anchors the partnership. "It's a personal relationship. The connection between them, and I think that's incredibly important."

He described Trump and Modi as "two very serious leaders who are focused not just on the short term, but on the long term, and so I think that is important to note because it's a key part of the foundation of the relationship between our countries."



"And in just the past year, we've seen this partnership deepen in ways that don't often make headlines or are not high-profile, but are important, real, tangible, and enduring," Rubio said, adding that commercial ties have been expanded. "There have been USD 20 billion in investments from Indian companies in the United States. We've deepened the security partnership through military exercises in the Indo-Pacific."

US Ambassador Sergio Gor added, "The relationship is on solid footing. There is incredible potential ahead."

US State Department Spokesperson Tommy Pigott, referring to Rubio's meeting with Modi, said the Secretary of State underscored the strategic importance of the US-India partnership, the strong personal ties between the US President and Prime Minister Modi, as well as the profound economic and commercial opportunities for the two sides.

"The Secretary and the Prime Minister discussed the current situation in the Middle East. The Secretary emphasised that the US will not let Iran hold the global energy market hostage and affirmed that US energy products have the potential to diversify India's energy supply," Pigott said.

Modi and Rubio also reflected upon bilateral achievements including significant investments that advance the President and the Prime Minister's "Mission 500" to double trade by 2030, he said.

According to an Indian readout, Rubio briefed PM Modi on the "sustained progress in bilateral cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including defence, strategic technologies, trade and investment, energy security, connectivity, education and people-to-people ties".

The US Secretary of State shared the US perspective on various regional and global issues, including the situation in West Asia, it said.

PM Modi reaffirmed India's consistent support for peace efforts and reiterated the call for peaceful resolution of the conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, it said.

The readout from the Prime Minister's Office said Modi requested Secretary Rubio to convey his warm greetings to President Trump and said that he looked forward to their continued exchanges.

Pigott said the Secretary of State shared his appreciation for India hosting the upcoming Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting and looked forward to advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region alongside Australia, India, and Japan.

Heatwave Claims 16 Lives In Telangana

Hyderabad, May 23

Telangana Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy on Saturday said 16 people died due to heatwave conditions prevailing in the state during the current summer. Reddy, who held a meeting with officials on the situation arising out of the heatwave, said the 16 deaths took place in seven districts of the state.

Quoting reports received from district Collectors, he said four persons died in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, followed by three each in Warangal Urban, Karimnagar and Nizamabad and one each in Jogulamba Gadwal, Ranga Reddy and Suryapet.

The government would provide an ex-gratia of Rs four lakh each to the kin of the deceased persons, he said, according to an official release.

The revenue minister directed officials to identify villages recording very high temperatures and send alerts about the heat through media, social media and other means to those villages.

He said drinking water, butter milk, and ORS packets should be made available at bus stations, markets, major roads and places where workers work in large numbers. Steps should be taken to prevent loss of life due to the heat, he said.

The minister urged that senior citizens, pregnant women, children and unhealthy people should not venture out of their homes between 11 AM and 4 PM.



He instructed district Collectors to specially monitor heatwave conditions and government employees from mandal to village level should be on the field as part of heat-relief measures.

Along with human life, the administration should arrange drinking water for animals and birds in the villages, he said.

Citing reports from the Met department, Reddy said Karimnagar, Peddapally, Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahabubnagar, Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy district would witness severe heat conditions till May 26. He urged the district Collectors to take measures to provide relief to the people.

Two murders shake Telangana; raise law and order concerns

Two brutal murders in Suryapet and Hyderabad have shaken Telangana, raising concerns over law and order. A BRS worker was hacked to death in Suryapet, while a city advocate was allegedly killed in a planned attack in Hyderabad, triggering political allegations

Hyderabad, May 23

Two instances of horrific crimes in Suryapet and Hyderabad have shaken the State, with questions being raised about the efficacy of the law and order machinery in Telangana.

In the first instance, a BRS worker, Chintalapati Madhu (42), was hacked to death and his body was dismembered into three pieces and dumped near a canal in Suryapet. Gunny bags containing the remains were found on Saturday morning.

Chintalapati Madhu was attacked with axes and sickles, leaving his face completely disfigured. Police said that they have found some evidence in the case.

Political rivalry is suspected to be the reason behind the ghastly murder. BRS legislator and former min-

ister linked to disputes over Waqf Board lands.

Police officials said the footage circulating on social media appears to show the vehicle deliberately targeting the advocate.

Secunderabad DCP Rakshitha Krishna Murthy told reporters that the preliminary investigation indicates the possible role of a land mafia allegedly involved in disputes concerning Waqf properties in Malakpet. Police said Moinuddin had been dealing with several sensitive matters related to the protection of Waqf lands and had opposed alleged encroachments.

Police sources said two persons connected to the land dispute are under suspicion and are being questioned as part of the investigation. Officials added that complaints had previously been lodged against some individuals for allegedly threatening lawyers connected to property disputes.

Special police teams have been formed to trace the suspects. Investigators are examining CCTV footage from nearby areas and collecting further evidence to establish the sequence of events.

Meanwhile, Khaja Moinuddin's son, Farhan, has accused a Congress leader of being behind the attack.

Speaking to media persons, Farhan claimed that his father had been fighting for several decades to protect Waqf Board properties and had filed multiple legal cases alleging encroachment of those lands.

He also claimed that their office had been attacked on earlier occasions and that Saturday's incident was the sixth attack on his father.

Stating that his father's death was not an accident but a planned murder, Farhan appealed to the state government to provide protection to him and his family.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Jagadish Reddy alleged that incidents of lawlessness had increased after the Congress came to power and alleged that police stations were functioning under the influence of Congress leaders.

He further alleged that BRS leaders in Suryapet were being summoned to police stations, humiliated in front of Congress activists and subjected to harassment. According to him, Congress leaders were instigating attacks and then filing cases in advance to shield themselves.



ister G Jagadish Reddy accused Congress party workers of engineering the murder. He also expressed suspicion over the role of some police officials in the incident.

The second incident that shook the State capital was the killing of a city-based advocate Khaja Moinuddin who was run over by a speeding SUV near his residence at Shanti Nagar in Masab Tank on Saturday morning.

According to police, the incident took place under Nampally police station limits when Moinuddin was about to get into his car outside his residence. An unidentified vehicle allegedly came at high speed and hit him from behind before fleeing the spot.

Initially treated as a hit-and-run case, the investigation later took a different turn after police examined CCTV footage and other evidence. Investigators now suspect the incident may have been a planned attack

Petrol, diesel prices hiked again in Hyderabad amid global crude surge

Fuel prices were hiked again across the country on Saturday, with petrol and diesel rates rising by 87 paise and 91 paise respectively.

In Hyderabad, petrol now costs Rs 112.81 per litre and diesel Rs 100.94, marking the third hike in 10 days. Tourist Destinations

Hyderabad: With crude oil prices soaring amid conflict in West Asia, the Central government has once again hiked the petrol and diesel rates on Saturday.

The petrol prices went up by 87 paise and diesel prices hiked by 91 paise. This is the third such hike in the last 10 days.

With this hike, a litre of petrol now costs Rs. 112.81, while diesel is priced at 100.94 per litre, in Hyderabad.

Before the hike, petrol was priced Rs. 111.77 per litre and diesel Rs.99.89 per litre in Hyderabad.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Policymakers must do a careful balancing act

THE rupee's sharp fall in recent months — it has depreciated by about 6% since the Iran war began in late February — reflects vulnerabilities in India's import sector. While currency woes are not unusual for emerging economies, the present decline appears far more worrisome because it is unfolding amid geopolitical instability, rising crude oil prices, persistent inflation and slowing global growth. Together, these pressures have created a fragile environment in which the rupee's weakness could trigger wider economic disruptions.

India imports more than 88% of its crude oil requirements, along with essential commodities such as edible oils and fertilisers. As the rupee slides against the dollar, these goods have become costlier. Rising fuel prices, in particular, are having a ripple effect on transport, food and household expenses. The depreciation is also keeping corporates and policymakers on tenterhooks. Indian companies with foreign currency borrowings are facing higher repayment obligations, while widening trade deficits are putting additional pressure on the current account deficit. Persistent foreign portfolio outflows have worsened the situation, as global investors move funds to safer US assets amid uncertainty. Although the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has intervened through forex reserves to curb volatility, such measures can only moderate the pace of decline. Arvind Panagariya, Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, has argued that allowing the rupee to depreciate naturally could help correct trade imbalances over time. He has urged the RBI to look past specific exchange rate milestones (such as Rs 100 per dollar) when navigating currency fluctuations triggered by global supply disruptions.

Comprehensive Development Possible Only Under Congress Rule: MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy



“----Foundation Laid for Development Works Worth Rs 60 Lakhs in Bollikunta” Hanamkonda, May 23 (Indian Chronicle) : “Parakala MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy stated that true and inclusive development is possible only under the tenure of a Congress-led people's government. “On Saturday, MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy—accompanied by the Collectors of Hanamkonda and Warangal districts, Chahat Bajpai and Dr. Satya Sharada, along with the former Mayor of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation—laid the foundation stone for various development works worth Rs 60 lakhs in Bollikunta village, located within the 17th Division of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) limits. These development works include projects such as junction improvements, the construction of CC roads, and the installation of underground drainage systems. “Speaking at a meeting organized on this occasion, the MLA affirmed that the Congress government is committed to the comprehensive development of urban areas. He noted that the Chief Minister is prioritizing the strengthening of civic infrastructure in every colony by allocating substantial funds for development programs. “He clarified that welfare schemes are being implemented without regard for political affiliations. He emphasized that the government's primary objective is to ensure that every family achieves economic progress. Criticizing the administration of the previous BRS government, he alleged that, under the guise of development, they had pushed the state into a deep quagmire of debt. Subsequently, the MLA participated in the housewarming ceremonies of the Indiramma houses. On this occasion, he honored the beneficiaries with shawls and joined their family members in the celebrations.

Dasoju Sravan opposes centralised grocery procurement for hostels

Hyderabad: BRS MLC Dasoju Sravan on Saturday slammed the Congress government's decision to centralise the procurement of groceries and essential commodities for SC, ST, BC, Minority and welfare residential schools and hostels. Alleging that the move was aimed at facilitating a large-scale scam, Sravan claimed that nearly Rs 100 crore could be siphoned off through commissions under the centralised tender system. He addressed an open letter to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy raising these concerns.

The BRS leader demanded that the government immediately withdraw the centralised grocery tender notification and restore the earlier district-level procurement system through District Procurement Committees (DPCs), which he described as transparent and accountable. Sravan questioned the rationale behind sidelining District Collectors from the procurement process. He pointed out that IAS officers routinely handle major responsibilities such as land acquisition, irrigation projects, elections and the Public Distribution System. “Are District Collectors not capable of procuring quality red gram and cooking oil for hostels within their own districts?” he asked. He alleged that decentralised procurement was being scrapped because it would deny “centralised kickbacks” to influential persons in Hyderabad. According to him, the powers of Collector-led DPCs were deliberately weakened to favour a centralised system.

Development Works Worth 64 Lakh Underway in Uppal's Sheshasai Nagar

Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Inspects Underground Drainage Works



““UPPAL, MAY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “Development works are progressing rapidly in Uppal Division. Former Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy is personally monitoring the ongoing projects on a regular basis. “As part of this, Rajitha visited Sheshasai Nagar Colony on Saturday and inspected the

underground drainage development works being undertaken at a cost of 64 lakh along with local residents. “Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said, “New drainage construction works are being carried out in Sheshasai Nagar and Mallikarjun Nagar colonies to permanently resolve drainage issues. During the rainy season, residents will no longer face sewage water overflowing onto the roads. Soon after the underground drainage works are completed, CC road works worth 764 lakh will also be taken up. We have clearly instructed officials not to compromise on quality. Development of every colony in Uppal is our main objective. “Residents of the colony expressed gratitude to Rajitha for taking steps to resolve the long-pending drainage problems. “Sheshasai Nagar Colony President Achchana Srinivas, Narsayya, Rakesh Naik, Mohan Reddy, Venkateswara Rao, Narasimha Reddy, Srinivas Reddy, Pawan Kumar, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Poojari Hanumanthu, Venugopal Reddy, Viplav Reddy, Hanumanthu, Chari, Naveen, Vanka Madhav, Shrivani, Vamsi, Mounika, Anusha, Bhaskar, Tummal Devender and several colony residents participated in the programme.

Rare 'SMA Syndrome' Successfully Treated at CARE Hospitals



“Hyderabad, May 23 (Indian Chronicle): CARE Hospitals announced that doctors at its Malakpet facility successfully treated a rare case of Superior Mesenteric Artery (SMA) Syndrome. According to a statement issued on Saturday by CARE Hospitals Chief Operating Officer Praveen Kumar Edla, a 14-year-old boy, Shiva Durga Reddy from Hayathnagar, had been suffering from severe vomiting and digestive problems for the past five months. Despite undergoing tests at several hospitals, the exact cause of his condition could not be identified. “He was later examined at CARE Hospitals under the supervision of Dr. Bhoopati Rajendra Prasad, where doctors diagnosed him with the rare Superior Mesenteric Artery (SMA) Syndrome after re-evaluating his CECT scan. The medical team performed a laparoscopic duodenojejunostomy surgery, which was successful. The boy was discharged within three days after the operation. Doctors stated that he has now made a full recovery and is leading a normal life.

GHMC Workers' Demands: CITU Calls for Massive Participation in June 5 Dharna at MMC Tarnaka Head Office

“UPPAL, MAY 23 (Indian Chronicle): CITU Uppal Circle Secretary J. Venkanna has called upon GHMC workers to make the dharna programme scheduled on June 5 at the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC) Head Office in Tarnaka a grand success in support of various pending demands of municipal workers. “As part of the campaign, CITU Uppal Circle Secretary J. Venkanna and senior CITU leader S. Nagaraju distributed pamphlets among GHMC workers at Chiluka Nagar on Saturday and appealed to workers to participate in large numbers in the protest. “Speaking on the occasion, the leaders demanded that all municipal workers be regularized and that a minimum wage of Rs. 26,000 be implemented. They also urged the government to oppose the implementation of the four labour codes introduced by the Central Government. “The leaders demanded that workers employed in all three corporations be paid wages on par with those being paid in GHMC without delay. They also sought the introduction of an insurance scheme of Rs. 25 lakh for municipal workers who die in accidents while on duty. “Among the other demands raised were: “Employment for one family member if workers above 60 years are removed from service. “Retirement benefits of Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 15 lakh



for workers without legal heirs. “Rs. 30,000 towards funeral expenses for deceased workers. “Implementation of weekly offs, festival holidays, Sunday holidays, and an 8-hour work system. “Promotions for SAFA workers, jawans, and work inspectors in all three corporations. “Priority allocation of double-bedroom and Indiramma houses to municipal workers. “Changes in the biometric attendance system, with attendance to be taken at work locations itself. They stated that the June 5 dharna is being organized to press for the implementation of these demands. GHMC workers including Vimala, Vinod and others participated in the programme.

Telangana Activists JAC Founder Chairman Nalla Radhakrishna Extends Support to Centering Contractors' Strike

“Massive Public Meeting With 1,000 Workers to Be Held Soon”

““UPPAL, MAY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Telangana Activists JAC Founder Chairman Nalla Radhakrishna on Saturday extended his full support to the ongoing strike by centering contractors, which has been continuing for the past ten days over their unresolved issues. He attended the protest programme held in Chiluka Nagar Division as the chief guest and assured the workers of his solidarity in their fight. “Speaking on the occasion, Nalla Radhakrishna announced that a massive public meeting with nearly 1,000 centering contractors and centering workers from Uppal constituency would soon be organized to highlight their problems and demand solutions from the authorities. “He further stated that he would meet Uppal MLA Bhandari Lakshma Reddy, Uppal Congress Party in-charge M. Parameshwar Reddy, and BJP leaders to discuss the issues faced by the centering contractors and seek their intervention for an early resolution. “The programme was presided over by Centering Contractors Chiluka Nagar President Paidipala Srinivas. Among those who attended



as guests were BSA State Coordinator Vishnanna, Dait Associations JAC Convener Malkari Ashok Babu, Christian JAC Convener Pastor B. Arogyam, Pastor Bhaskar, and others.

Soil Mafia Allegedly Operating Freely in Gollagudem Gram Panchayat

Khammam, Tallada, May 23 Indian chronicle: ““Illegal soil excavation and sale activities are reportedly increasing in Gollagudem Gram Panchayat under Tallada mandal, raising serious concerns among villagers. “According to local reports, a prominent individual from the village has allegedly been excavating soil from a stream located beside his farmland without obtaining any government permissions. The excavated soil is reportedly being sold within the village for 200 to 300 per tractor trip. “When journalists questioned him about the alleged illegal activity, he reportedly responded aggressively, saying, “Do whatever you want. Write whatever you like, “and behaved rudely toward the media personnel. “Reporters further asked whether he had obtained any official permissions for the soil excavation, but instead of providing clarification, he allegedly continued to behave in a hostile manner. “Villagers have urged the



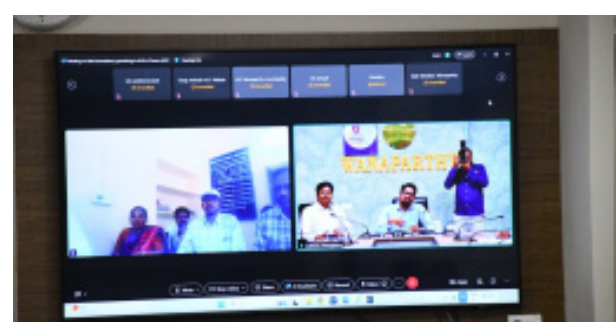
concerned authorities to immediately intervene and take strict action against those involved in the alleged soil mafia activities. “When journalists sought clarification from the GPO and the village secretary regarding permissions for the excavation, both reportedly stated that no one had approached them or obtained any permission related to soil digging activities. “Locals expressed concern that the village administration itself appears unaware of what is happening in the area. Residents are now demanding that mandal-level authorities respond promptly and increase monitoring in the villages to prevent further illegal activities.

Scapia Raises \$63 Million in Funding Round



“Hyderabad, May 23 (Indian Chronicle): Scapia, one of India's leading travel-fintech companies, has raised \$63 million in a funding round led by General Catalyst, according to a statement released on Saturday by Scapia founder and CEO Anil Goteti. Speaking alongside Neeraj Arora, investor Sakshi Chopra, and Vikram Vaidyanathan, Goteti said the new funding would help Scapia expand its reach to millions of users across India and accelerate its AI-first approach in product and team development. He added that, compared to last year, flight bookings on the platform grew by 5 to 6 times, while hotel bookings increased eightfold. The company also recorded significant growth in bookings from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities across the country.

*Collector Directs Completion of Census 2027 House Listing by June 9



““Wanaparthy correspondent, May 23 (India Chronicle): ““District Collector Adarsh Surabhi has directed officials to complete the Census 2027 house listing process within the stipulated deadline of June 9 without leaving out a single house. “Speaking during a video conference held at the Collectorate conference hall on Saturday with charge officers, additional charge officers, and supervisors, the Collector stressed the need to speed up the survey process through effective coordination with enumerators. “He instructed officials to immediately address field-level issues faced by enumerators and ensure that the survey is carried out smoothly without any obstacles. “Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Kheemya Naik, Science Officer Srinivasulu, and other officials participated in the meeting.

Chilkanagar Division Leaders Extend Birthday Wishes to Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy



UPPAL, MAY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Leaders of the Congress Party from Chilkanagar Division met Telangana Roads, Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and conveyed birthday greetings to him. “Under the leadership of Chilkanagar Division Congress Party General Secretary Nallavelli Mahender Mudiraj, the leaders met the minister, cut a cake, and extended their best wishes on his birthday. On the occasion, they presented a bouquet to the minister and wished him good health and a long life. “Speaking on the occasion, Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that the party would recognize and provide suitable positions to leaders who work sincerely for the party. “Leaders including Orsu Raju, Bodapatla Kumar, Shiva, Karthik, Asif, Sai, Venkatesh and others participated in the program.

Public spaces in Hyderabad get a colourful civic makeover

Hyderabad: The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has carried out wall painting activities at more than 10 prominent public locations across various circles to beautify public places with artistic expressions. A press release said the GHMC aimed to transform dull and neglected walls into vibrant spaces carrying social awareness messages and artistic expressions.

Make Effective Use of Free Medical Camps: Dr. Anita Reddy



at the Lord Old Age Home near Kakatiya University. Medical examinations were conducted for elderly residents and staff members, and medicines were distributed free of cost. On the occasion, noted physician Dr. Kantham Lakshminarayana offered valuable health guidance to the elderly. He advised them to maintain personal and environmental hygiene, consume leafy vegetables and protein-rich food, and avoid spicy food considering age-related health concerns. He further cautioned against taking medicines without proper medical consultation. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Anita Reddy urged the public to take full advantage of the free medical camps being organised by the institution.

She stressed that health issues among senior citizens should never be neglected and recommended seeking immediate medical attention whenever necessary. She also advised people to drink plenty of water to combat the intense summer heat. Later, an awareness programme on consumer rights was conducted, during which participants were educated on how to utilise Consumer Protection Laws in cases of medical negligence and fraud. Dr. Kantham Lakshminarayana, Dr. Anita Reddy, organisation representatives Nagarani Naresh, Mamatha, Chemist Ravi, old age home staff and others participated in the programme.

Free Medical Camp Conducted at Old Age Home Hanamkonda, May 23 (Indian Chronicle) : Emphasising the importance of health precautions during the summer season, Dr. K. Anita Reddy advised people to stay well-hydrated and immediately consult a doctor in case of any health discomfort. A free medical camp was organised on Saturday under the aegis of Anurag Society and World Wise Consumer Rights and Protection Organisation, under the leadership of National Vice Chairperson, Advisor, and Kakatiya University Governing Body Member Dr. Anita Reddy. The camp was conducted with the support of Sri Ganapathi Sachidananda Swamy Trust

BJP Extends Support to Bereaved Family



Financial Assistance of ₹10,000 Provided to Deceased's Family Narsampet, May 23 (Indian Chronicle) : Leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party stated

that the party is fulfilling its promise made during the elections to stand by every family facing hardship. On the occasion of the tenth-day funeral rites of Sangepu Rajendra Prasad, a resident of Ward No. 28 under the Narsampet Municipality, Ward Councillor Juluri Roja Rani visited the bereaved family on Saturday and extended financial assistance of ₹10,000. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders said the gesture was not merely financial support, but an effort to provide reassurance and moral strength to a family in distress. They emphasized that standing beside families during difficult times is a collective social responsibility. Ward members Tabeti Kranthi Kumar, Sangepu Ramesh, Bharat, Srinu, student leader Mogilicherla Sandeep, BJP constituency leader Juluri Manish Goud, BJYM secretary Chiluvuru Anvesh, ward youth members Sangepu Teja and Sai Tarun, along with family members and local residents, participated in the programme.

Kuchipudi Dance Performance Enthralls Audience at Uppal Mini Shilparamam



Uppal, May 23 (Indian Chronicle): As part of the weekend cultural programs at Uppal Mini Shilparamam, a captivating Kuchipudi dance performance was presented on Saturday evening by the disciples of Rani Priya. The troupe performed various classical dance pieces including Garuda Gamana, Ramayana Shabdham, Aigiri Nandini, Brahmamokkate, Om Sharvani, Shiva Tarangam, Ganesha Pancharatna, Bhavamulona, Oka Parikokapari, and Chandrachooda, mesmerizing the audience with their graceful presentations. The performers included Advika, Yashvika, Shanvi, Aarushi, Parnika, Arya, Sindhuja, Varshita, Manji, Meghana, Neha, Tanvika, and Siri

Sudheeksha, among others, who won appreciation from the spectators with their talent and expressions.

Uppal MLA Demands One Tola Gold Along With Kalyana Lakshmi, Shaadi Mubarak Cheques

MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and MRO Distribute Welfare Cheques to Beneficiaries Uppal, May 23 (Indian Chronicle): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that the State Government should provide one tola of gold along with the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak financial assistance cheques to eligible beneficiaries. He urged the government to extend these additional benefits to poor families. The MLA participated as the chief guest in the cheque distribution programme held at VNR Gardens, where 233 beneficiaries from Uppal Mandal received Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak cheques. Speaking on the occasion, Bandari Lakshma Reddy said the cheque distribution process should be conducted transparently, in line with the directions of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. He added that along with the existing financial assistance of Rs. 1,16,000, beneficiaries should also be provided one tola of gold. Uppal MRO Pool Singh Chauhan said that the State Government is committed to the welfare of the poor and assured that eligible beneficiaries would continue to receive the benefits under the Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes. The programme was attended by Uppal



RI M. Ashwini Goud, Junior Assistants M. Anantha Ramulu, P. Venkanna, M. Aliveelu, Operator Sunitha, Attenders Satyanarayana, VRA Swami, revenue staff, BRS party leaders, workers, and others.

DCP Inspects Security Arrangements at Kommala Cattle Market



Inspection of Business Operations; Key Directives Issued on Case Resolution and Public Safety Geesugonda, May 23 (Indian Chronicle) : East Zone DCP Ankit Kumar and Mamnoor ACP Venkatesh advised traders and staff to remain vigilant during financial transactions and to immediately alert the police if they observe any suspicious individuals or incidents. Visiting the Kommala Cattle Market on Saturday, the officials thoroughly inspected the ongoing business activities and reviewed the overall security arrangements within the market premises. While interacting with traders and market staff, they emphasized the importance of remaining alert and adhering to safety precautions to ensure that business operations proceed safely and smoothly. The officials also reviewed mar-



ket management practices and the current security status, subsequently issuing several operational and precautionary guidelines. Subsequently, the officials visited the Geesugonda Police Station and conducted a comprehensive review of complaints registered within the station's jurisdiction, the progress of investigations, case resolutions, and arrest records. They directed the police personnel to expedite the investigation of pending cases and to ensure that complainants receive timely justice. Officials instructed the staff to strengthen effective policing measures and to exercise utmost vigilance in maintaining law and order in the region. Mamnoor ACP Venkatesh, Geesugonda CI D. Visweswar, SI Anil, and other police personnel participated in this event.

Committees to Review Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Land Values Updates by May 25

Indian Chronicle, Asifabad, May 23: CCLA Commissioner Lokesh Kumar directed officials to ensure complete transparency in the process of revising the values of agricultural and non-agricultural lands across the state. The Commissioner conducted a video conference from the CCLA office in Hyderabad on Saturday with District Collectors, Additional Collectors, Revenue Divisional Officers, and Sub-Collectors of all districts. Addressing the officials, he instructed them to complete the registration of revised land value details for agricultural and non-agricultural lands by May 25. He stated that in urban areas, committees would function under the chairmanship of the Additional Collector (Revenue), with ZP CEOs and Municipal Commissioners as members. In rural areas, Revenue Divisional Officers would serve as chairpersons, while Tahsildars and Mandal Parishad officials would act as members. He further directed officials to conduct committee meetings before May 25 to finalise the revised land values. District Collector K Haritha participated in the video conference held at the Integrated Collectorate Conference Hall along with District Revenue Officer Dasari Venu and Asifabad RDO Lokeshwar



Rao. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said the district administration is taking all necessary steps to ensure that the land valuation revision process is carried out transparently. She added that meetings of urban and rural committees would be organised at the Collectorate before May 25. Officials from various departments participated in the video conference.

Unemployed Youth Advised to Explore Career Opportunities Through Job Fairs



competitions were conducted to mark National Sports Day, she added. During the programme, appointment letters were distributed to the 11 selected candidates who secured jobs through the employment mela. Participants and winners of the sports competitions were also honoured with shields and appreciation certificates. District Youth and Sports Officer Ashfaq Ahmed, District Industrial Manager Ashok, physical education teachers, sportspersons, and others participated in the programme.



Indian Chronicle, Asifabad, May 23: District Collector K Haritha urged unemployed youth in the district to make effective use of job melas to improve their employment opportunities. The Collector participated in the Youth Festival programme organised by the Youth and Sports Department at the Integrated Meeting Hall on Saturday as part of the Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika 99-day programme. Addressing the gathering, the Collector said several corporate companies are offering attractive salary packages and encouraged unemployed youth to actively participate in job fairs. She stated that 11 unemployed youth from Asifabad district were selected during the job mela conducted at Adilabad on May 5. She further said that various programmes were organised from May 18 to May 23 as part of the Youth Festival celebrations. On May 21, sports

Security Tightened for Chief Minister's June 2 Tour in Kothari

SP Nitika Pant Inspects Helipad and Event Preparations Indian Chronicle, Kerameri, May 23: In view of the proposed visit of Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on June 2, district officials inspected the arrangements at Kothari village under Kerameri mandal on Saturday. District Superintendent of Police Nitika Pant and Additional Collector Yuvaraj Marmat, along with concerned department officials, visited Kothaguda village to review preparations for the programme. During the inspection, officials examined the venue for the inauguration of Indiramma houses and reviewed security arrangements, vehicle parking facilities, and traffic management plans. The officials also inspected the proposed helipad area and instructed authorities to ensure all security measures are implemented as per protocol. They directed departments to work in coordination to avoid inconvenience to the public by ensuring proper parking arrangements, road repairs, drinking water supply, electricity facilities, barricading, and traffic diversion measures. Officials stressed that all departments should remain alert to ensure the successful conduct of the Chief Minister's visit. Asifabad DSP Ashok and officials from the police, revenue, panchayat raj, and R&B departments also participated in the inspection.

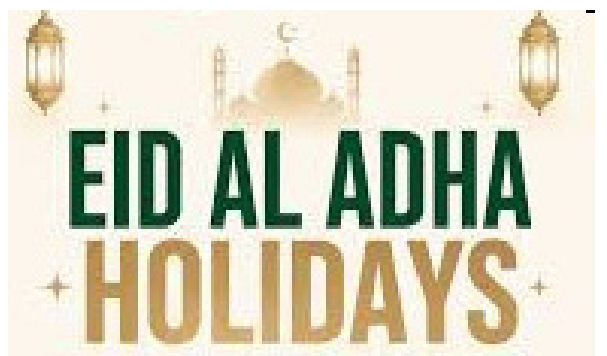
Green Peace Environment & Water Harvesting Foundation Founder Meets Rajya Sabha MP Anil Kumar Yadav



Uppal, May 23 (Indian Chronicle): Green Peace Environment & Water Harvesting Foundation Founder and President Bairi Srinivas Goud met Congress Party Greater Hyderabad youth leader and Rajya Sabha Member M. Anil Kumar Yadav at his office in the New MLA Quarters. Speaking on the occasion, Rajya Sabha MP M. Anil Kumar Yadav said that greenery and environmental protection are the need of the hour. He called upon people to actively participate in Vanamahotsavam by planting saplings and protecting the environment, stating that such efforts would lay a strong foundation for future generations. The MP also appreciated the initiatives and efforts being undertaken by Bairi Srinivas Goud towards environmental conservation and water harvesting awareness.

Telangana Government Reschedules Bakrid Holiday to May 28

Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, Hyderabad, May 23: The Government of Telangana has officially revised the holiday date for Bakrid (Eid-ul-Adha). The holiday, which was earlier declared for May 27, 2026 (Wednesday), has now been shifted to May 28, 2026 (Thursday). The decision was issued through G.O.Rt. No. 718 dated May 22, 2026. According to the government, the change was made based on the moon sighting for Eid-ul-Adha. As per the revised order, the holiday will apply to state government offices, banks, and certain educational institutions across Telangana on May 28, 2026.



Collector Haritha Calls for Strict Action Against Ganja Cultivation



“Indian Chronicle, Asifabad, May 23: District Collector K Haritha directed officials to work in coordination to prevent illegal ganja cultivation and drug trafficking in the district. She instructed authorities to take strict action against those involved in the cultivation, transportation, and consumption of ganja. The Collector chaired a review meeting with officials of various departments at the Integrated Collectorate meeting hall on Saturday. Additional SP (Admin) Chittaranjan and Asifabad Revenue Divisional Officer Lokeshwar Rao also participated in the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed transport officials to conduct intensive checks on vehicles entering the district

from the neighbouring states of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. She instructed excise officials to collect samples of toddy being sold at toddy compounds and ensure the installation of CCTV cameras at such premises. The Collector further directed officials to conduct strict inspections of pan shops located within a 100-metre radius of schools. She said government welfare schemes should be cancelled for those found cultivating ganja illegally. Forest department officials were instructed to prevent ganja cultivation in forest areas. Medical shops should also be inspected regularly, and details of persons purchasing high-dose intoxicating medicines should be collected, she said. Authorities were also asked to monitor suspicious persons at bus stands and railway stations. Collector Haritha expressed concern that ganja addiction is damaging public health and financially ruining families. She stressed the need for extensive awareness programmes in villages to educate people about the harmful effects of drug abuse. Awareness campaigns should also be conducted among auto drivers and vehicle operators regarding the legal and social consequences of transporting ganja illegally. She called upon all departments and citizens to work collectively towards preventing ganja cultivation and illegal trafficking in the district. Officials from various departments participated in the meeting.

RTC DM Inspects Long-Pending Sirpur (T) Bus Stand Issue

“Indian Chronicle, Sirpur (T), May 23: Responding to the long-pending bus stand issue in Sirpur (T) mandal headquarters, RTC District Manager Rajasekhar conducted a field inspection on Saturday. Along with local representatives, police personnel, panchayat officials, and ward members, he visited the existing temporary bus stand area and reviewed the prevailing conditions. During the inspection, RTC staff immediately cleared wild plants and bushes that were causing inconvenience for buses and passengers. Officials were instructed to make temporary arrangements to ensure smooth transportation services and passenger safety. However, while the works were in progress, a local resident, Gaddala Praveen, objected, claiming that the land belongs to Gaddala Sujatha under a private patta. In response, RTC DM Rajasekhar, local leader Oddeti Nannaiah, police personnel, and panchayat authorities clarified that the land had been allocated for the construction of a bus stand. Despite the explanation, the landowners did



not agree, leading to tension at the site. RTC DM Rajasekhar stated that a detailed report on the issue would be submitted to higher authorities. He assured that steps would be taken to resolve the land dispute permanently and provide a full-fledged bus stand facility for the public at the earliest.

Fire Accident at Konapuram Paddy Procurement Centre



“Municipal Chairman Palakurthi Sarangapani Acts Swiftly to Save Grain Stocks” (Indian Chronicle): A major fire broke out at the paddy procurement centre in Konapuram under Wardhannapet town limits. However, prompt action by Municipal Chairman Palakurthi Sarangapani helped prevent extensive damage

and safeguarded the grain stocks. Following information provided by 12th Division Councillor Tirupelli Vani Kumaraswamy, the chairman immediately responded to the situation. As fire personnel were unavailable in Wardhannapet at the time, arrangements were swiftly made to bring fire services from Warangal to the accident site. The fire crew managed to bring the blaze under control in time. Notably, Chairman Sarangapani was at a hospital in Hanumakonda accompanying his mother for medical examinations when he received information about the fire. Despite being occupied with personal matters, he continuously monitored the situation and coordinated rescue measures through municipal staff and officials. With the support of municipal employee Angothu Srinu, the fire personnel from Warangal — Venkanna (FF), Kumaraswamy (FFT), Prasad (FF), Karunakar (HG), and Wajith (HG) — were guided to the procurement centre without delay, enabling quick firefighting operations. Farmers and local residents expressed gratitude to the chairman for his timely intervention, stating that the swift response helped save large quantities of stored grain. Town residents also appreciated his commitment towards public service, noting that he consistently treats people’s issues as his own and works tirelessly to resolve them without delay.

Discharge Duties Responsibly: Warangal CP Sunpreet Singh



---Promotion Insignia Presented to Head Constables (Warangal, May 23 (Indian Chronicle) : Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh stated that

while promotions within the Police Department are a matter of pride, they also bring with them increased responsibilities. On Saturday, B. Rajender Prasad and K. Ramanachari—recently promoted Head Constables belonging to the City Armed Reserve Wing of the Warangal Police Commissionerate—paid a courtesy visit to the Police Commissioner and presented him with a sapling. Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner urged them to uphold the dignity of the department and to discharge their duties with the utmost efficiency, dedication, and a strong sense of responsibility. He remarked that discipline, commitment, and sincerity in service would pave the way for greater achievements and higher positions in the future. Subsequently, the Commissioner personally affixed the promotion insignia onto the uniforms of the newly promoted Head Constables and extended his heartfelt congratulations to them.

The Birth of Komatireddy Venkat Reddy is a Boon to the Poor People of Telangana:

PCC General Secretary and Former Bhuvanagiri Market Committee Chairman, Pothnak Pramod Kumar

“Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau – Indian Chronicle – May 23): On the occasion of the birthday of Komatireddy Venkat Reddy—Telangana State Minister for Roads & Buildings and Cinematography—a fruit distribution program for the poor and patients was organized at the Area Hospital in the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district headquarters. The event was held under the supervision of Padigela Renuka Pradeep, the former Councillor of Ward No. 23. PCC General Secretary Pothnak Pramod Kumar attended the program as the chief guest and distributed fruits and bread to the beneficiaries. Speaking on this occasion, it was remarked that the birth of Komatireddy Venkat Reddy is a true boon for the poor. Over the past 35 years—spanning both the united Andhra Pradesh and the united Nalgonda district—he rose steadily through the ranks, beginning as a Youth Congress leader. Within the sphere of state politics, he demonstrated unparalleled dedication to the cause of achieving a separate Telangana state; he undertook a hunger strike unto death, risking his very life, and even resigned

from his post as a State Minister to further this cause—actions that earned him renown as the “Telangana Venkanna.” On this birthday of Venkanna—who serves as a beacon of hope for poor and middle-class students, youth, and underprivileged communities, assuring them, “I am here for you”—heartfelt birthday wishes were conveyed on behalf of the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. It was wished that, with the blessings of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, he continues to scale greater heights and prospers with longevity, good health, and abundant wealth. Through the Prateek Reddy Foundation, Venkanna has been rendering immense service by facilitating education and guidance, thereby helping many reach the pinnacle of success. Participating in this program were Town Seva Dal President Dakuri Prakash, along with Congress Party leaders Gas Chinna, Pokala Nagaraju, Chinnagari Balaram, Nuvvula Raju, Masood, Jangiti Varun, Dasari Madhu, Manikanta Sai, Madhava Reddy, Siddhu, Bhaskar, and others.

Sports Essential for a Healthy Life: Khammam Collector Divakar TS



“Government aims to create opportunities for youth talent” (Provisional offer letters handed over to 618 candidates selected in Job Mela) (Success comes only when we step out of our comfort zone) (District Collector participated in Youth and Sports program under 99-Day Praja Palana Pragathi Plan) (Khammam, May 23 Indian chronicle: Khammam District Collector Divakar TS stated that sports are essential for leading a healthy life. As part of the 99-Day Praja Palana Pragathi Plan, a program on youth and sports was organized on Saturday at the Collectorate meeting hall. District Collector Divakar TS participated in the event along with Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja. During the event, provisional offer letters were distributed to 618 candidates selected under the “Udyoga Sadhana – Connecting Talent with Opportunities” Job Mela program. In addition, 72 young athletes who won medals at the CM Cup-2026 state-level competitions were felicitated. Officials stated that a total of 433 athletes from the district secured medals in various categories. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that in the past, sports did not receive much encouragement in families. However, today young sportspersons like Sania Mirza and Tilak Varma are inspiring many youth by excelling in sports. He noted that youth are now proving their talent not only in cricket but also in many other sports. He expressed pride over Indian athletes winning medals in athletics at recent Olympics competitions. The Collector said the world is changing rapidly and referred to renowned investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, who amassed enormous wealth but passed



away at a relatively young age due to health complications. Recalling Jhunjhunwala’s statement that he invested everywhere except in his health, the Collector emphasized that health is more important than wealth and sports play a key role in maintaining good health. He added that sports provide not only physical fitness but also mental well-being. The Collector further said that Khammam district has always remained ahead in sports, with good infrastructure and coaching facilities available. He advised athletes to treat their body like a temple, maintain proper nutrition, and pay special attention to injury management in order to sustain long careers in sports. He encouraged youth to recognize and fully utilize their individual talents, whether in academics, music, dance, or sports.

Addressing the selected candidates, he said getting a job is only the first step. He stressed that one can achieve greater success by stepping out of the comfort zone and working hard. He cited examples of individuals who started with small jobs and later rose to prominent positions through dedication and perseverance. Additional Collector Dr. P. Sreeja congratulated the youth selected in the Job Mela and appreciated the achievement of selecting 618 candidates. She also extended special congratulations to the CM Cup state-level medal winners. She expressed hope that every success would become a milestone in life and inspire the youth to achieve greater heights in the future. DYSO Sunil Reddy, District Employment Officer N. Madhavi, coaches, athletes, students, and other officials participated in the program.

Sathupalli MLA Dr. Matta Ragamayi Dayanand Visits Employment Guarantee Workers in Vemsuru



“Khammam Sathupalli, May 23 Indian chronicle: Dr. Matta Ragamayi Dayanand visited Vemsuru village and met nearly 200 employment guarantee scheme workers at the village tank area. Accompanied by village Sarpanch Fakruddin, the Vemsuru MRO, and MPDO officials, the MLA personally visited the worksite where the labourers were engaged and interacted with them to understand their problems. She discussed the issues with officials and directed them toward resolving the concerns raised by the workers. During the interaction, MLA Ragamayi Dayanand explained various welfare schemes being implemented by the Telangana State Congress government under Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, and ministers Tummala Nageswara Rao and Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy. The MLA inquired about the working conditions, health-related issues, and banking/pay-



ment problems faced by the employment guarantee workers. She distributed medical kits, buttermilk packets, and personally served tiffin to the workers. She also stated that the Congress government would soon provide benefits under the second phase of Indiramma housing schemes and new pension allocations. Later, the MLA visited the residence of Morampudi Bhaskar Rao in Vemsuru village and enquired about the health condition of his wife. Several leaders and officials participated in the programme, including Sathupalli AMC Chairman Doma Anand, village Sarpanch Fakruddin, MRO and MPDO officials, Khammam District Congress Party Secretary Somireddy, Vemsuru village Deputy Sarpanch, senior leader Duggirala Ashok, Vemsuru Mandal Congress Party President Chandrasekhar Reddy, Kandukuru Society Chairman Gorla Sanjeeva Reddy, Congress leaders, ward members, party workers, women, youth, villagers, and employment guarantee workers.

Khammam Poet Ramesh Featured in “America Bharati



Special Edition (Khammam, May 23) (Indian chronicle: An article written by Khammam poet and government teacher Katukojwala Ramesh has been featured

in the April 2026 special edition of “America Bharati,” released as part of the 19th anniversary celebrations of the American Telugu Association (ATA). ATA organizers informed Ramesh about the publication on Friday. The prestigious three-day celebrations focusing on Telugu culture and traditions are scheduled to be held from July 31 to August 2 under the banner of the American Telugu Association in the United States. As part of the celebrations, the special edition “America Bharati” was released in advance. Ramesh’s article, titled “Telangana Identity in Folk Literature,” was published in the magazine. In the article, he explained the significance, origin, and cultural importance of Bathukamma songs. The magazine also carried details about poet Ramesh, which has been welcomed and appreciated by literary organizations and teachers’ associations.

Bengal gets Rs 3,000 crore Central aid, Ayushman Bharat card rollout from July: Suwendu



GNS News Agency, May 23

More than six crore beneficiaries currently covered under the West Bengal Government's Swasthya Sathi scheme will now be brought under the Centre's Ayushman Bharat health insurance programme from July. Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced Adhikari made the announcement after a more than one-hour meeting with the Union Health Ministry virtually from Nabanna. The meeting was attended by Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and senior officials from the Centre and the state government.

The Bengal chief minister also stated the Centre has approved Rs 3,000 crore to strengthen West Bengal's healthcare infrastructure, of which the first instalment of Rs 500 crore had already been released. Of the total allocation, Rs 2,103 crore will be spent under the National Health Mission and Rs 976 crore under Ayushman Bharat, he said. While addressing a press conference, Adhikari said, "Enrolment for Ayushman Bharat has already begun. We believe we will be able to issue Ayushman Bharat cards by July. Beneficiaries will be able to avail themselves of this scheme across India. We are hopeful that we will now be able to bring more than 6 crore cardholders associated with Swasthya Sathi into Ayushman Bharat. More people will be able to join later."

Launching a sharp attack on the previous government, Adhikari alleged that it had failed to cooperate with the Centre on healthcare initiatives. "The previous government not only did not cooperate with the Centre in the health sector, but it also opposed it. As a result, millions and millions of people were deprived," he said, adding that his government was preparing a roadmap for a "revolutionary change" in the state's healthcare sector. Adhikari said those who want

to avail of the Ayushman Bharat and those who have not been associated with Swasthya Sathi so far will also be eligible for the Central scheme. He said that the state would sign the Ayushman Arogya Mandir agreement with the Centre in Delhi during the first week of June. "Nearly 1 crore residents of West Bengal who are living in other states will also receive these healthcare benefits. Adhikari also announced the launch of a cervical cancer vaccination programme in the state from May 30. More than seven lakh vaccine doses are expected to be administered to girls aged 14 to 15. "I myself will be present at the Bidhannagar Sub-Divisional Hospital that day to launch this project," he said. On the same day, the state will also host a workshop under the Centre's "TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan". The Bengal chief minister further announced a major expansion of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras in the state. At present, West Bengal has 170 such outlets, a number that will be increased to 474 by including block-level health centres, sub-divisional hospitals, and district hospitals. Highlighting challenges in the state's healthcare sector, Adhikari said mortality rates among children under five and newborns remained high in districts such as Kolkata, Murshidabad, East Burdwan, Birbhum, and Malda. He also said leprosy infection rates in Birbhum, Bankura, Jhargram, West Burdwan, Purulia, and North Dinajpur were above the national average.

Special infrastructure and treatment measures were being planned for these districts, he said. Adhikari claimed that monthly medicine expenses for chronic illnesses such as diabetes or high blood pressure, which currently average around Rs 2,000, could drop to nearly Rs 200 at these government-supported pharmacies. Discounts under the Amrit Pharmacy scheme would also continue, he added. Adhikari further said the state's current National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) score stood at 53 per cent, below the national average of 58-59 per cent, and the government aimed to raise it to 100 per cent within the current financial year. To address staff shortages in hospitals, he said the recruitment process for doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers would be completed within the next three months under a "fully transparent policy". The government also said work was being expedited to establish medical colleges in Kalimpong, Alipurduar, and South Dinajpur, in line with the goal of setting up one medical college in every district. A proposal for another medical college aimed at strengthening healthcare infrastructure in Asansol and North Bengal would soon be sent to the Centre, officials added.

West Bengal caps school bag weight at 10% body weight, restricts homework

GNS News Agency, May 23

The days of carrying heavy bags to schools are finally over in West Bengal, as the newly elected BJP government in the state on Friday issued guidelines capping the school bag weight at 10 per cent of a child's body weight. The guidelines mandate all schools to display this weight chart on their notice boards and within their classrooms. Furthermore, the regular use of weighing machines within school premises to monitor bag weights has been made mandatory. According to sources from the state education department, the Paschim Banga Samagra Shiksha Mission (PBSSM) has circulated the guidelines following communication from the Union Ministry of Education (MoE) regarding the implementation of the School Bag Policy, 2020. Instructions have been passed on to all district education officers, as well as inspectors of primary and secondary schools across the state, to ensure that guidelines are strictly adhered to. According to experts, the step is being taken in the interest of the child's physical and mental development.

To reduce the burden of school bags, significant changes are being introduced concerning textbooks and notebooks. Students in Classes 1 and 2 will be required to maintain only one notebook for classwork. Students from Classes 3 to 5 will be allowed to take two notebooks, with one of them permitted to remain at school, while those in higher grades will have to use thin notebooks instead of heavy, hardbound registers. Changes have also been proposed to the daily class schedule. At the primary level, it is recommended that only two subjects be taught per day, with consecutive classes—often referred to as "block periods"—for the same subject to minimize the need for carrying multiple textbooks. Additionally, schools are encouraged to promote the sharing of textbooks among classmates seated next to each other. To prevent accidents on staircases, the use of wheeled bags or trolley bags has been strictly prohibited. The notice also states, "Teachers should



give advance notice of any textbook that will not be needed in class so that students can leave it at home. Reference books should not be allowed in school bags, especially for primary classes. Wheeled bags are not recommended, as they can injure children on stairs." Also strict regulations regarding homework are being introduced to reduce mental stress among students. Students in the first and second grades are not to be assigned any homework. For grades three through five, homework assignments are capped at a maximum of two hours per week; for grades six through eight, the limit is one hour per day. Even for students in higher grades, homework assignments must not exceed two hours per day. Teachers have been instructed to exercise strict vigilance to ensure that homework assignments are creative in nature and do not merely encourage rote memorisation. In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, these new state guidelines also place significant emphasis on observing "bagless days". On designated days throughout the academic year, students will attend school without any bags and participate in activities such as quizzes, sports, arts and crafts, or educational excursions. A 10-day internship programme has been proposed for students from Classes 6 to 8, during which they will learn various vocational skills from local artisans.

Liquor party, old rivalry, body in gunny bags: Mystery shrouds BRS leader's murder in Telangana's Suryapet



GNS News Agency, May 23

A 42-year-old village-level Bharat Rashtra Samithi leader accused in a 2018 murder case was found killed, cut into pieces and dumped in gunny bags in Telangana's Suryapet, police said. The body of Chintalapati Madhu was found in his native village, Yerikaram, where he and his wife Mounika had served as sarpanchs between 2014 and 2020.

Police said Madhu's body was cut into three parts and dumped in three bags near a canal, where it was discovered early Saturday morning. Madhu and his father were accused in the 2018 murder of former BRS sarpanch M Ravinder, and police are also probing the possibility of a revenge killing. In 2008, another sarpanch, O Venkanna, was murdered in the same village. "We suspect political faction rivalry behind the murder. There were skirmishes between political leaders jostling for power in the village. The body has been sent for post-mortem," an official said. Police suspect the assailants were known to Madhu, who left home Friday saying he had to get his mobile phone repaired before attending a meeting. Teams have been formed to identify who he was with earlier in the evening. Police said

Madhu and his wife, who have two daughters, had moved from Yerikaram to Suryapet after political rivalry in the village repeatedly turned violent. K Narasimha and other senior officers visited the spot to oversee the investigation. Judging from the injuries, police suspect axes and sickles were used in the attack, while a knife was used to disfigure Madhu's face beyond recognition. "We have found evidence that there was a liquor party at the house of another leader in the neighbouring village of Tallaganda, and Madhu was there. Some of his rivals were present too. Whatever happened, it was at that house. The occupants have fled now," an official said. As tensions escalated after the murder, heavy police deployment was made in the village to prevent any flare-up.

Honda launches New Honda City MMC at Green Honda dealership

Hyderabad: Honda Cars launched the New Honda City MMC at its dealership Green Honda amid enthusiasm and celebrations. The latest edition of Honda's iconic sedan combines sophisticated styling, advanced technology, enhanced comfort and superior performance, with prices starting at Rs 11,99,900 (ex-showroom). The New Honda City MMC features a host of premium upgrades, including the Blade-Eye Signature LED Lighting System, Signature Bi-LED Projector Headlamps with Integrated Split LED DRLs and Turn Signals, Signature Matrix-Mesh Black Painted Front Upper Grille and R16 Steel Wheels with Silver Trim Covers.

Probe incomplete, reports pending: Punjab Police miss 90-day chargesheet deadline in border outpost murders



GNS News Agency, May 23

The police in Punjab's Gurdaspur have sought an extension to complete the investigation into the February killing of two policemen at a border check post in a village, citing 13 pending investigative tasks as the reason for the delay. Meanwhile, the mother of one of the accused, who was shot dead in an encounter, has filed an application in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), Gurdaspur, levelling allegations against the police. In the application filed before the Gurdaspur District Session Court on May 20, the Additional Public Prosecutor said the chargesheet cannot be filed within the prescribed 90-day window. "The following investigative points are still pending: to determine which gang/organisation the accused are connected to. The FSL (Forensic Science Lab) report on the electronic documents seized from the accused is still pending. In the said case, there is a large amount of electronic data which requires considerable time to examine. It must be established that the accused are linked with other states outside Punjab," the APP said.

The application also stated that the alleged funding of crores of rupees in the case must be traced, and that its source and the manner in which it was arranged need to be ascertained. It must also be determined whether the accused committed unlawful activities at the behest of individuals or groups based in other states. The bank account details of all the accused are still pending collection. While one accused is yet to be arrested, and the linkage between the arrested accused and the absconding accused is still

under investigation, it added. Information regarding the accused's social media, email, and Instagram accounts has also not yet been gathered. "This investigation application has been read by me personally and independently, and in my opinion, the investigation of this case cannot be completed within 90 days. Therefore, it is appropriate to extend the remaining investigation by 90 days," the APP added. The bodies of policemen, Gurnam Singh and Ashok Kumar, were found at the border check post in Adian village near the Pakistan border on February 22. The police arrested the main accused, Ranjit Singh, and Dilawar Singh alias Dil, on February 24. The accused were booked under Section 103 of the BNS, Sections 25, 27, and 54-59 of the Arms Act, and multiple serious sections of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) 1967, including Sections 13, 14, 16, 17, 18-B, 19, 20, 35, 40, and 43. However, on February 25, Ranjit Singh was killed in an alleged police encounter after he allegedly attempted to flee. Meanwhile, the family of Ranjit Singh has accused senior police officers of threatening witnesses, tampering with evidence, and deliberately flouting two court orders to derail the judicial inquiry into his death.

In her application, Ranjit's mother, Sukhjinder Kaur, alleged that witnesses Chandanjit Singh and Surjit Kaur are being continuously threatened, with the threat that they and their family members will be implicated in false cases. It further alleges that Inspector Gurmeet Singh, the main officer who led Ranjit Singh's encounter, conspired to falsely implicate witness Harwinder Singh in a criminal case, a matter already brought to the notice of the Gurdaspur sessions judge. The application also alleges that senior police officers are now attempting to falsely connect other bomb blasts, arms, and terror-related cases to Ranjit Singh's killing in order to justify the encounter and influence the judicial proceedings of the inquiry court. "The police are threatening them that they will be implicated in the same case if they don't turn hostile," human rights activist and lawyer Sarabjit Singh Verka claimed. A senior Gurdaspur police officer denied the allegations. "There is no truth in such allegations. The police are doing their job professionally," the police officer said. So far, the police have arrested three women, two key accused, Inderjit Singh alias Sahu and Sarvan Singh alias Billy, and another accused, Sukhshinder Singh alias Heera.

UP Congress chief Ajay Rai faces FIR over alleged remarks against PM Modi, viral video under probe

Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Rai, Ajay Rai, Narendra Modi, Varanasi, Lucknow news, Uttar Pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs Vandana Singh, Additional Superintendent of Police, Mahoba, said the investigation would proceed in accordance with due process. A day after Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Rai allegedly made derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the police in Mahoba Saturday registered an FIR against Rai and several others on charges of promoting enmity between groups. While the video of the purported remarks has been widely circulated on social media, Rai dismissed it as fake.

The case was registered at the Kotwali Nagar Police Station on a complaint filed by Neeraj Rawat, who described himself as a social worker and political activist. In his complaint, Rawat alleged that Rai made insulting and abusive remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which he claimed fuelled caste tensions and triggered public outrage. Mahoba resident Brajraj Ahirwar, along with his supporters, organised an event Friday at Raj Kumar Ahirwar's house in Samad Nagar without obtaining administrative permission. Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee chief Rai had been invited to attend the programme. According to the complaint, Rai arrived at the



venue in Samad Nagar with a convoy of 15 to 16 vehicles and around 25 to 30 supporters. The vehicles were allegedly parked chaotically on a public road, disrupting traffic and obstructing pedestrian and vehicular movement. Rawat said officers were reportedly diverted from their regular duties to manage the situation and maintain law and order. Vandana Singh, Additional Superintendent of Police, Mahoba, said the investigation would proceed in accordance with due process and that the video of the incident would be sent for forensic examination.

Why a city surrounded by 4 massive dams is running dry this summer

GNS News Agency, May 23

Every summer, as the mercury rises, so does the desperation in large parts of Pune. Taps run dry, tankers line up in colonies, and thousands of citizens are left scrambling for their most basic need—drinking water. And this is the situation in a city that draws from four dams. The irony runs deep. Pune is among the fastest-growing cities in the country, yet its water supply system is struggling to keep pace. The challenge before the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) is stark: how to ensure equitable and sufficient water to a swelling population, when its sources are stretched, its infrastructure is aging, and its hands are tied by an outdated government quota.

A city that has outgrown its sanctioned water share The PMC area has expanded fourfold in the last 40 years—from 125 sq km in 1987 to 508 sq km in 2021 after three expansions. The population, which was at 70 lakh in 2021, has grown to an estimated 77.76 lakh in 2025-26, putting enormous pressure on the civic body. Going by the government norm of 135 litres per day per capita, Pune needs 21.03 TMC of water per year. But the state water resource department, which owns the dams, has sanctioned only 16.36 TMC—refusing to recognise the city's rising population. The PMC has been continuously pressing for an increased quota, but instead faces a penalty of Rs 147 crore per year for drawing beyond the sanctioned limit. The dues have now mounted to Rs 1,020 crore, which the civic body has been contesting.

4 dams and a fifth in the pipeline Pune draws water from a chain of dams—Khadakwasla, Panshet, Varasgaon, and Temghar—upstream of the Mutha River. In recent years, it has also started drawing from the Bhama Ashked dam to address shortages in specific areas. The civic body has sought permission to draw an additional 5 TMC from the Mulshi dam, receiving an in-principle nod from the state government. However, no official communication has been issued to the PMC to begin drawing from Mulshi. "There is no issue of water shortage for Pune city as ample water is available in the dams," said an officer of the state water resource department, while acknowledging that water supply to rural parts of Pune has reduced due to higher urban consumption. "Industrial growth also has an impact on the water situation," the officer added.

A significant part of Pune's water problem is internal—an estimated 32 per cent of water is lost due to leakages in the supply system. The PMC is installing meters across the city to verify the exact extent of these losses. The ongoing 24x7 water supply project, which involves laying new



pipelines and constructing overhead water tanks across the city, is aimed at reducing water loss while ensuring equitable supply to all. The civic body claims to have completed 85 per cent of the work in the old city area.

After the last expansion of civic limits with the merger of 32 villages, PMC has undertaken a Rs 446 crore project for setting up a water treatment plant and pipeline network for seven villages, while preparing Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for 25 others. Of these 25 villages, a water supply scheme costing Rs 890 crore has been proposed for 12 villages affected by Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), which currently receive only chlorinated but untreated raw water. The plan includes a 200 MLD water treatment plant, a 71 km main transmission line, and 390 km of distribution lines to benefit 7.78 lakh people by 2052. An additional Rs 1,156 crore is estimated for water supply schemes in the remaining 13 villages. The increasing demand with the city's expansion has forced the PMC to implement schemes in phases due to the massive investment required, leaving mostly suburban areas dependent on tankers in the lurch. The PMC runs its own tanker fleet, but it is far too small to meet city-wide demand. Private tankers fill the gap across most localities—entirely beyond the control of the PMC or any other authority. These tankers draw water from whatever source is available—wells or borewells, many of which are polluted. The city has 23 small water bodies, but no data exists on the total number of wells and borewells being tapped. The PMC has been urging citizens to get tanker water tested before use to avoid waterborne infections. The PMC currently supplies water to 80 per cent of Narhe village; the remaining 20 per cent lacks network infrastructure. In newly merged villages—Holkarwadi, Handewadi, Autadewadi, Vadachiwadi, Undri, and Pisoli—the old pipeline network is insufficient, and the PMC deploys 210 tankers every day to meet demand.

23-yr-old Indian-origin politician becomes UK's youngest Indian-origin Mayor



GNS News Agency, May 23

London: 23-year-old politician representing a local council in eastern England has created history by becoming the youngest Indian-origin Mayor in the United Kingdom. Tushar Kumar, a former student of Political Science from King's College London, took charge as the Mayor of Elstree and Borehamwood at a ceremony last week. The Labour councillor joined the Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council in 2023 and previously served in the role of Deputy Mayor. "An incredible honour to officially become the Mayor of Elstree and Borehamwood last night and, at 23 years old, the youngest ever Indian-origin Mayor in the history of the United Kingdom," said Kumar, in a statement following the ceremony.

"I am truly humbled by the trust placed in me and incredibly grateful for all the support, kindness and encouragement I have received throughout this journey. Thank you to everyone who attended the Mayor Making Ceremony at Fairway Hall and to all those who have supported me over the years from residents, community organisations and fellow councillors, to my family and friends who have always believed in me," he said. He expressed gratitude to his predecessor, outgoing mayor Dan Ozarow, for his service and guidance during his previous tenure as Deputy Mayor and welcomed Councillor Linda Smith as his new

Deputy.

"I look forward to working closely together over the coming year serving our community. As Mayor, I want to focus on being present within the community, supporting local organisations and charities, and inspiring more young people to get involved in public service and community life. It is the privilege of a lifetime to serve the town I love," he added. As one of the youngest councillors to be elected while still a student in London, Kumar believes that "real change starts at the community level". "Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council gave me a platform to listen, represent and act - making a difference where it truly matters, close to home," he said. Kumar credits the Civic Leadership Academy of King's College London for helping improve his confidence and public speaking skills. He also gained experience with the University Officers' Training Corps during his time as a student of politics at the London institution. "My time at King's has played a significant role in shaping my values and commitment to public service and I hope my story might inspire other students to see leadership and local impact as paths worth pursuing," said Kumar.

"I have built experience across policy, education, and research, including roles as a Policy Advisor at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and a Research Analyst for a national LGBTQ+ charity. I am passionate about youth empowerment and education, which led me to support literacy initiatives through Bookmark Reading Charity. "I enjoy volunteering, organising inclusive community events, and championing access to public services," he added. Kumar has chosen WD6 Food Support as the focus charity for his mayoral term, a voluntary network helping the needy residents of the community. The role of a local council Mayor is steeped in tradition and ceremony as a high representative of the area, bearing the official "chains of office". The many engagements undertaken by the Mayor act as a link between the various groups and organisations in the town. They can share the views and concerns of the community with the council and also take the council's message out into the community.

Canada confirms first hantavirus case

GNS News Agency, May 23

Ottawa: The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has confirmed a case of hantavirus in a cruise passenger currently isolating in British Columbia following laboratory testing. PHAC said in a statement on Sunday that samples from British Columbia were sent to the agency's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg for confirmatory testing. According to the agency, one individual's sample was confirmed positive for hantavirus on Saturday. A second individual, a travelling partner of the confirmed case, was confirmed negative, Xinhua news agency reported. No additional cases have been identified so far. PHAC said all high-risk contacts are isolating and will continue to be closely monitored by local public health authorities, adding that the overall risk to the general population in Canada remains low at this time.



Dutch government announced earlier that the hantavirus-hit cruise ship MV Hondius is expected to arrive at the Port of Rotterdam next Monday, with most crew members set to undergo a six-week quarantine in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. "Rotterdam has been designated in the Netherlands as the port for the handling of infectious diseases in shipping," according to a letter sent to parliament on Friday (local time) and signed by Sophie Hermans, Dutch minister of health, welfare and sport, and Tom Berendsen, the country's foreign minister. According to Oceanwide Expeditions, the Dutch operator of the vessel, there are currently 27 people on board, including 25 crew members and two medical personnel. The group consists of 17 Filipinos, four Dutch nationals, four Ukrainians, one Russian, and one Polish national.

The outbreak occurred aboard the polar expedition cruise ship MV Hondius and has resulted in three deaths so far. The incubation period for hantavirus generally ranges from one to eight weeks. Earlier, health authorities in Canada's British Columbia province announced that a Canadian cruise passenger currently in isolation has tested presumptive positive for hantavirus Bonnie Henry, a provincial health officer, said the patient began developing mild symptoms, including fever and headache, two days ago and was taken to a local hospital. The presumptive positive result came back on Friday and the person is currently being treated in isolation as a positive patient. Meanwhile, the

Iran war fuels US inflation fears

Washington: Rising fuel prices and growing economic anxiety linked to the Iran conflict are beginning to create political problems for President Donald Trump and Republicans ahead of the US midterm elections, according to media. Senior administration officials and Republican allies defended Trump's handling of the Iran crisis, while Democrats accused the White House of triggering economic pain through a prolonged conflict in the Gulf region. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer acknowledged on CBS News on Sunday that that Americans were facing rising fuel costs as the war continued.



shipments pass, remains central to global concerns over energy markets and inflation. Rising oil prices and prolonged instability in the region could place additional pressure on inflation, shipping costs and economic growth across energy-dependent economies, including India.

"Gas is at an average of \$4.51 a gallon," CBS News said during the interview, citing data showing Americans had spent \$45 billion more on fuel since the conflict began compared to a year earlier. Greer defended the administration's position by saying that preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons remained the White House's top priority. "We know that no one wants to see higher gas prices," he said. "At the same time, the President is balancing foreign policy considerations." He added: "We don't want our children or grandchildren to inherit a world where Iran has a nuclear weapon." The economic impact of the conflict also was discussed on CNN where former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg blamed the Trump administration for rising costs across the American economy. "Buttigieg said the administration's actions had caused 'everything from diesel to fertiliser to mortgages' to become more expensive." He also accused the administration of making ordinary travel unaffordable. "More and more Americans cannot afford a road trip, because of the explosion in diesel prices and gas prices caused directly by the Iran war," Buttigieg said.

On ABC News, Trump himself defended his focus on Iran's nuclear programme even as fuel prices rose. "I don't think about Americans' financial situation," Trump said during remarks highlighted by the programme. "I think about one thing, we cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon." The comments quickly became a point of attack for the Democrats. Representative Hakeem Jeffries accused Trump of dragging the country into a "reckless and costly war of choice" during ABC's coverage of the President Trump's China summit. On CNN, Democratic Congressman Jake Auchincloss said Americans were directly linking higher prices to Trump's foreign policy. "Prices go up," Auchincloss said, referring to both the China trade conflict and the Iran war. Republicans pushed back, insisting the economic pain would be temporary. Former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said on CNN that Americans understood the broader national security stakes. "There's a bigger existential threat that Iran poses to our safety," Spicer added. Republican Congressman Buddy Carter predicted fuel prices would eventually fall once the conflict stabilised. "As soon as this conflict is over, I can assure you gas prices are going to go down," Carter said. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a large portion of the world's oil

Jannik Sinner wins Italian Open, joins Djokovic with Career Golden Masters

Rome: Jannik Sinner continued to soar higher and higher as he became the first Italian champion at the Italian Open since Adriano Panatta in 1976 when he defeated Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 to win his sixth consecutive ATP Masters 1000 title in Rome on Sunday.

With a comprehensive win in one hour and 44 minutes, the World No. 1 also joined Novak Djokovic as just the second player to complete the Career Golden Masters in series history, having now captured all nine ATP Masters 1000 titles. Djokovic achieved the feat in 2018 after winning Cincinnati. "I think this year was the 50th year since an Italian won and I am really, really happy," Sinner said in his on-court interview. "There was a lot of tension on both sides; it was not perfect tennis from both of us, but I am really happy. [It has been] an incredible past two and a half months. I try to put myself in the best possible position every time and do the best I can. Not every day is simple, but I am really, really happy." Egged on by a packed crowd, Sinner recovered from a slow start to secure his 10th Masters 1000 crown and first in Rome. After weathering an early wave of Ruud aggression, the Italian gradually imposed himself with relentless depth and precision from the baseline to take control of the final and triumph. The 24-year-old raised his arms aloft after sealing victory, soaking in the atmosphere before embracing his team court-side. It has been a testing last few days for the home favourite as he had faced question marks over his physical conditioning heading into the final after the 24-year-old's demanding semifinal win against Daniil Medvedev.

How Trump's crypto venture and Iran's top exchange tapped into the same industry networks



LONDON - When customers of Iran's largest crypto exchange needed to move billions of dollars, networks created by two of the industry's biggest players served as conduits. And from the early stages of President Donald Trump's flagship digital currency venture, the same two players lent credibility to the startup.

According to data analysed by Reuters, Iran's Nobitex exchange has processed at least \$2.3 billion since 2023 on Tron and BNB Chain, blockchains established respectively under crypto billionaires Justin Sun and Changpeng Zhao. Users of Tron and BNB Chain pay fees to use the blockchains, which serve as secure, tamper-resistant record keepers. Iranian money has kept moving through those two digital ledgers during the U.S. and Israeli war against the Islamic Republic. Sun and Binance, the crypto exchange owned by Zhao, are both prominent backers of World Liberty Financial, the crypto firm co-founded by Trump and his family. There's no suggestion that the Trump family knew of Nobitex's use of Tron and BNB Chain.

Still, the Iran transactions highlight the potentially conflicted position in which the Trumps' sprawling business interests have placed the U.S. presidency. The family-owned Trump Organization real-estate empire, for example, continues to pursue foreign deals. The use of the blockchains by institutions in a country the United States is at war with is a "dramatic irony," said John Reed Stark, a former chief of the Securities and Exchange Commission's Office of Internet Enforcement. "The entities doing crypto financing through these platforms are the very ones that the president is trying to defeat in the war."

Iran's central bank has used Nobitex to process funds, as has the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Both the bank and the IRGC are under Western sanctions. WANA/Nazanin Tabatabaee The administration denies that Trump's businesses pose any conflict of interest. "Reuters' bizarre attempts to link President Trump to Iran's banking system are totally laughable," said Anna Kelly, a White House spokeswoman. She referred Reuters to World Liberty for further questions. A spokeswoman for World Liberty said the company has no relationship with Nobitex and follows U.S. law. "World Liberty does not own, operate, or control Tron in any way, and has no authority over transactions conducted on it," she said. Nobitex, which is used extensively by sanctioned Iranian institutions and ordinary citizens, has processed more than \$2 billion on Tron since January 1, 2023, according to a Reuters breakdown of public blockchain data from crypto analytics firm Arkham. Since 2023, Nobitex also has processed at least \$317 million on BNB Chain, a blockchain formerly known as Binance Smart Chain that was developed by Binance, the world's biggest crypto exchange. Justin Sun, the founder of Tron seen in this 2025 photo, was a prominent backer of the Trump family's World Liberty Financial crypto venture. The two are now trading lawsuits. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu

Reuters is reporting the data from Arkham, which did not respond to a request for comment, for the first time. Since the Iran war started in February, crypto worth at least \$22.6 million has moved through Nobitex on BNB Chain, and at least \$550,000 has moved via Tron. Reuters reported on May 1 that Nobitex is controlled by two brothers from a powerful Iranian family that has close ties to the new supreme leader. Under the brothers' leadership, the exchange has grown from a startup into a central node of a parallel Iranian financial system used to evade Western sanctions. Reuters found that its users have included Iran's central bank and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, known as the IRGC. About \$7.8 billion in crypto flowed between Nobitex and the Binance exchange between 2018 and 2022, Reuters reported in 2022. About three-quarters of the Iranian funds that passed through Binance were in Tron's cryptocurrency. Nobitex encouraged clients to use Tron's crypto to trade anonymously without "endangering assets due to sanctions," Reuters reported. Four crypto analysts, including two specialists in Iran's use of digital assets, reviewed Reuters' calculation that Nobitex has handled at least \$2.3 billion in transactions via BNB Chain and Tron. All said it was sound. One of the Iran specialists, independent researcher and investigator Rich Sanders, said the true volume was likely significantly higher because flows are visible only for wallet addresses known to be owned by Nobitex. The Iranian company has publicly said it switches addresses to make tracing and intercepting transfers harder.

Presented with a detailed summary of this article, spokespeople for both Binance and BNB Chain told Reuters that Binance neither operates nor controls BNB Chain. "BNB Chain is a public, permissionless blockchain maintained by an independent global community of validators," BNB Chain spokeswoman Ana Nicoara said in a statement to Reuters. "It is not an exchange, not a company, and not Binance." The Binance spokesperson said the firm was "an initial contributor and incubator" of BNB Chain and provided early operational support. The operations and intellectual property of the BNB Chain website, which is the primary interface for users and developers of the blockchain, were transferred to a company called BNB Chain Technology Holding Limited in 2023, the spokesperson added. Corporate records from Abu Dhabi, however, document ongoing ties between Binance and BNB Chain Technology. The filings, reviewed by Reuters, show that Zhao, the Binance founder and majority shareholder, is BNB Chain Technology's only listed shareholder. Binance founder Changpeng Zhao, seen arriving for sentencing in 2024 after being convicted on federal charges, was later pardoned by President Donald Trump. Binance was a prominent backer of the Trump family's flagship digital currency venture. REUTERS/Deborah Bloom Relations between Tron's founder Sun and World Liberty have recently turned sour. Sun in April sued World Liberty, accusing it of extortion for allegedly pressuring him to invest in its stablecoin. World Liberty countersued in early May, alleging defamation.

Asked about Nobitex's use of Tron, a spokeswoman for Tron said it is a technology provider and unable to "monitor and investigate every user and every transaction" or prevent their trading. Nonetheless, Sun helped create an initiative that works with law enforcement, the spokeswoman said, without offering details. The initiative has frozen "hun-

dreds of millions" in funds, including those "tied to sanctioned entities and terror financing," she said. In statements to Reuters, Nobitex denied having direct Iranian government connections or assisting the state, and said that any illicit funds moving through the exchange did so without management approval or awareness.

The U.S. Treasury Department, Iran's government and its central bank did not respond to requests for comment about the ties between Binance, Tron and illicit Iranian funds. A BANK'S CHAIN Crypto exchanges such as Binance are platforms where people buy, sell or trade digital assets. Blockchains such as BNB Chain and Tron are public ledgers that record transactions and the digital "wallets" used to make them. Some exchanges, like Binance, have launched blockchains and issued their own digital tokens. Like other blockchains, Tron and BNB Chain host a variety of crypto tokens, from coins issued by Tron and Binance themselves to stablecoins such as tether whose value is pegged to other assets. The Iran-linked transactions make up a small fraction of these networks' overall volume.

Iran's central bank bought more than \$500 million of tether via Tron between November 2024 and June 2025, according to a report by blockchain analysis company Elliptic and two Iran specialists. Tron is owned by a prominent backer of the crypto company co-founded by President Trump and his family, World Liberty Financial. REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/illustration Sanders and the other Iran crypto specialist, who requested anonymity, said that among those to use Tron and BNB Chain was the Central Bank of Iran. The United States sanctioned the central bank in 2019 for allegedly providing billions of dollars to the IRGC and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The central bank bought more than \$500 million of tether via Tron between November 2024 and June 2025, according to a report in January by blockchain analysis company Elliptic and the two Iran specialists. In the first six months of last year, around \$347 million of the total was sent to Nobitex using Tron, Elliptic told Reuters. The central bank also converted the tether to different coins and used other blockchains - including BNB Chain - to cover its tracks, the Iran specialists said. Some of that crypto was converted back to tether and routed to Nobitex and other exchanges, Sanders and the other Iran specialist added.

Since its founding in 2018, Nobitex has processed between tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars in transactions linked to sanctioned groups including Iran's central bank and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to estimates by crypto analysts looking at sanctioned wallets. It is unclear whether Tron and BNB Chain were aware their networks were used by the central bank and Nobitex, which has not been specifically sanctioned. Doing business with Iranian entities falls under general Western sanctions. Reuters could not determine why the United States has not sanctioned Nobitex.

Tether, the company which issues the stablecoin by the same name, said it had frozen multiple wallet addresses associated with Nobitex at the request of Israel. Israel's National Bureau for Counter Terror Financing did not respond to a request for comment. Tether said crypto exchanges and platforms are responsible for compliance in trading on secondary markets.

A CRYPTO-FRIENDLY WHITE HOUSE Trump's return to the White House in January 2025 - and his embrace of crypto - shaped the fortunes of the president's family, Sun and Zhao. Members of the Trump family have launched a string of crypto businesses, including World Liberty, that generated hundreds of millions of dollars in income in 2025, Reuters reported last year.

As World Liberty struggled to attract investors after its launch in October 2024, Sun, the founder of Tron, invested tens of millions of dollars in World Liberty's WLF tokens, lending momentum to the fledgling company.

In early 2025, an Abu Dhabi investment firm, MGX, bought a \$2 billion stake in Binance. Soon after, World Liberty announced the purchase would be made in its USD1 stablecoin. Binance's acceptance of the World Liberty Financial stablecoin gave credibility to the newly launched token and was cited by World Liberty as evidence of "extraordinary, worldwide demand" for USD1. MGX's acquisition could also yield millions of dollars annually for the Trumps, according to the Reuters report last year.

MGX has said it chose USD1 after evaluating several stablecoins, and that Binance had requested the use of crypto in the transaction. In October 2025, Trump pardoned Zhao, the founder and former CEO of Binance, wiping away his federal conviction for failing to maintain an effective anti-money-laundering program. Lawyers for Binance and Zhao, who has retained his majority stake in the company, have said there was no connection between the use of USD1 and the pardon.

This screen capture shows World Liberty Financial's website. Iran's Nobitex exchange has processed at least \$2.3 billion through Tron and BNB Chain, blockchain ledgers created by backers of the Trump family's World Liberty Financial. Since taking office, Trump has launched a suite of crypto-friendly policies and U.S. regulators have paused enforcement actions against crypto companies and moguls. The Securities and Exchange Commission settled a lawsuit against Sun for alleged fraud in March for \$10 million without Sun admitting any wrongdoing.

Sun's current portfolio of 4 billion WLF tokens is worth roughly \$266 million, according to Reuters calculations based on the latest WLF price. Sun has also invested in Trump's meme coin and has used his crypto platforms to boost USD1, World Liberty's second cryptocurrency. For its part, Binance has continued to support USD1, enabling the token's trading with other crypto coins and incentivising users to hold it. Arkham data shows Binance now holds \$3.8 billion of the Trump token. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. Reporting by Tom Wilson and Gavin Finch. Design by John Emmons. Edited by Lori Hinnant and Michael Williams. Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tab Tom Wilson covers investigative stories across finance and business.

Cisco to cut under 4,000 jobs amid AI-led restructuring

New Delhi: Cisco, a global technology conglomerate, has announced plans to cut fewer than 4,000 jobs globally as part of a restructuring exercise aimed at sharpening its focus on artificial intelligence (AI) and other high-growth technology areas. The layoffs that will affect less than 5 per cent of the company's global workforce were disclosed by CEO Chuck Robbins and the Executive Leadership Team in an internal memo issued alongside the company's third-quarter FY26 earnings.

Maharashtra MLC elections: Voting for 17 seats on June 18, counting on June 22



GNS News Agency, May 23

The Election Commission Monday announced the schedule for elections to 17 seats of the Maharashtra Legislative Council. Polling will be held on June 18, and counting will be conducted on June 22. In addition to polling for 16 MLC seats to be elected from local bodies, a bypoll for the Nagpur local authorities' constituency will be held. This seat fell vacant following the resignation of Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule, who was elected to the Legislative Assembly during the 2024 state polls. While the newly

elected members for the 16 standard seats will serve a full six-year tenure, the candidate winning the Nagpur bypoll will hold office for the remainder of the current term, which ends on January 1, 2028.

Under guidelines laid down by the Election Commission, a local authority's constituency can go to the polls only if at least 75 per cent of its underlying local self-government bodies (such as municipal corporations, councils, and zilla parishads) are actively functioning. Furthermore, at least 75 per cent of the total electors within those bodies must be legally in office. Due to delayed municipal and civic elections across the state over the last few years, this necessary statutory requirement had not been fulfilled. Following the completion of the long-delayed civic body elections, the ECI confirmed that the 75 per cent operational threshold has finally been crossed across the relevant regions, paving the way for the poll notification. According to the official schedule released by the poll panel, the formal gazette notification for the MLC elections will be issued on May 25. The last date for candidates to file their nomination papers is June 1, after which scrutiny of the submissions will begin. Candidates who wish to withdraw from multi-cornered contests will have until June 4 to officially take back their nominations.

Why Pune Porsche crash trial has far-reaching implications, prosecutor explains

GNS News Agency, May 23

Two years after the Pune Porsche crash claimed two lives, Special Public Prosecutor Shishir Hiray told The Indian Express Monday that the prosecution has overcome repeated "attempts by the defence to delay the framing of charges". Stating that the trial may begin soon, Hiray asserted that the case carries "far-reaching implications" as it would set an example that attempts to "subvert the judicial process" will not be tolerated. At 2.30 am on May 19, 2024, the lives of two young IT engineers – Aneesh Awadhya and Ashwini Koshta, both 24 and both from Madhya Pradesh – ended abruptly when a speeding Porsche, allegedly driven by an inebriated 17-and-a-half-year-old from an influential Pune realtor family, rammed into their motorcycle at Kalyani Nagar junction. What the police investigation unraveled after that was alleged cover-ups, bribery, abuse of power, and tampering with blood samples at the Sassoon General Hospital, orchestrated by the minor's parents and doctors at the government-run facility.

As the investigation had unfolded, the police had arrested the minor's 51-year-old realtor father and 50-year-old mother; Dr Ajay Taware, then head of the forensic medicine of Sassoon hospital; Dr Shrihari Halnor, then casualty medical officer of Sassoon; Atul Ghatkamble, a staffer at the hospital's morgue; and Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad, who allegedly acted as middlemen between the minor's father and the doctors. These accused have been charged with tampering with evidence, forgery, criminal conspiracy, and corruption for the swapping of blood samples. The Pune police have also arrested and charged a 37-year-old man who had given his blood to be swapped with that of a minor co-passenger, along with the father of that co-passenger. The 52-year-old father of another minor co-passenger was also arrested earlier for giving his own blood sample to be swapped with his son. Among these 10 accused, except Ghatkamble, all have been granted bail. The then minor driver has been arraigned at the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), where he faces charges of culpable homicide, among others. The Pune JJB had, on July 15 last year, rejected the city police's plea to try the then minor accused driver as an adult. Speaking to The Indian Express, Hiray said, "We have maintained that this is an important case because a systematic fraud has been committed against the judicial administration system. In this way, they tried to show that money and unethical means can be used to secure favourable results. And that is why the trial will have far-reaching implications. The trial will send a strong message that attempts to subvert the judicial process will not be tolerated." On the current status of the case, Hiray said, "Except Ghatkamble, all accused have been granted bail by the Supreme Court over a period of time. Ghatkamble's bail plea is pending before the high court. One of the accused in the case – whose blood sample was



swapped with that of a minor co-passenger – had moved the high court challenging the process of framing charges."

"Prior to that, during the arguments on framing of charges in a Pune court, the lawyers for this accused came with a claim that the prosecution had not provided them with copies of the CCTV footage, even though the footage had already been submitted to the court and could have been obtained from there. After the court ruled on this issue, they further argued that while there were 53 CCTV cameras at Sassoon Hospital, the prosecution had submitted footage from only three cameras, despite the fact that the prosecution was relying solely on those three clips as evidence," he added. Hiray further said that the defence lawyer sought nearly half a dozen adjournments from the court, which clearly reflected an intention to delay the proceedings. "I strongly suspect that the accused who filed these applications was merely being used as a pawn by the other accused, who actually wanted to stall the process. This is because the applications filed by this one accused were repeatedly cited by lawyers representing the other accused while seeking delays in the framing of charges. I, therefore, argued before the court that this one accused could be kept aside until the matter was decided and that charges could meanwhile be framed against the remaining accused," he remarked. "So after the Pune court rejected this application by the defence, the accused moved the high court. The high court recently ruled... that such an application cannot stop the lower court from framing the charges. So, we are at the stage where charges can be framed very soon – provided no new hurdle is created by the defence," Hiray said, adding that the framing of charges will mark the beginning of the trial. "I have to stress that the prosecution has opened the case before the sessions court in a very timely manner. We provided a witness list on time and submitted proposed charges at the earliest. Meanwhile, the prosecution has also filed an appeal before the Sessions court challenging the order of the JJB, which had rejected the police's plea to try the accused minor driver in the Porsche crash case as an adult," the special public prosecutor concluded.

Rail staff checking empty train find woman's headless body and murder mystery

GNS News Agency, May 23

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation after a woman's body was discovered inside a trunk in a sleeper coach of a train at Lucknow's Gomtinagar station, with efforts underway to identify the victim. (ANI screengrab) Police have registered a case and launched an investigation after a woman's body was discovered inside a trunk in a sleeper coach of a train at Lucknow's Gomtinagar station, with efforts underway to identify the victim. (ANI screengrab) In a chilling discovery, railway staff at Gomtinagar station in Lucknow have found a woman's headless torso and limbs in a sleeper coach on a train that arrived at the station after originating at Chhapra in Bihar. The body parts, police have said, appear to be of a woman in the 25-30 year age group. Police have registered a case and are trying to identify her. The shocking discovery was made on the Chhapra-Gomti Nagar Express that travels from Bihar to Lucknow via Gorakhpur. Once passengers had deboarded the train, the railway staff started a routine check of the compartments. They found a trunk and a bag near a washroom in one of the sleeper coaches. Railways SP Rohit Mishra said, "The railway staff informed the stationmaster, and the railway police were also alerted. We reached the spot. When the box and the bag were opened, a woman's headless torso was found. It had been packed in a polythene bag and put into the box."



footage from the stations in an attempt to identify the people who loaded the trunk and the bag onto the train. Police said the woman's legs, severed below the knees, and her hands, cut below the elbows, had been packed in polythene bags. These were then neatly arranged inside a cotton bag. Officials noted there were no visible bloodstains on the bag, suggesting deliberate efforts to carefully pack and conceal the remains. Clothes had been placed over the polythene bags, seemingly to disguise the contents and prevent detection by passengers or railway staff.

India's hotel investments surge nearly 70 pc in 2025:

New Delhi: India's hospitality sector saw exceptional momentum in 2025 with hotel investments of about \$567 million across 28 transactions, up 67 per cent from the prior year, a report said on Monday.

The report from commercial real estate services firm JLL said institutional capital and private equity accounted for 35 per cent of transaction volume. It further highlighted that high net-worth individuals and family offices followed at 27 per cent, and listed hotel companies stood at 25 per cent, reflecting a sophisticated diversification of capital sources.

From Rs 13,725 to RS 16,249/sq ft: How Gurgaon's SPR real estate boom is turning it into city's next premium hub



GNS News Agency, May 23

Not too long ago, Gurgaon's Southern Peripheral Road (SPR) was largely viewed as a connector corridor easing traffic between Golf Course Extension Road, Sohna Road and NH-48. Today, the 16-km stretch is fast evolving into one of NCR's most closely watched residential markets. Wide roads, upcoming metro connectivity, elevated corridors and big township developments are reshaping the belt into what many in the real estate industry are calling Gurgaon's next major luxury and mid-premium housing destination. A recent report by Square Yards suggests that the shift is already being reflected in prices. Average residential values along the corridor rose 18.4 per cent over the past year, reaching Rs 16,249 per square foot in the first quarter of 2026, up from Rs 13,725 a year earlier. The report, titled "SPR Gurugram: From Infrastructure Corridor to Premium Residential Destination", shows that the pricing spectrum across the corridor is also becoming more defined: Entry-level premium projects: Rs 13,500 – Rs 16,300 per sq ft; mid-segment projects: Rs 15,000 – Rs 21,000 per sq ft; and Luxury developments: Up to Rs 27,000 per sq ft. The report further flags that proposed circle rate revisions could push property prices on SPR up by as much as 45% in the coming years. A Market Dominated by Large Developers One of SPR's defining characteristics is the dominance of organised, large-scale developers rather than fragmented standalone projects. The report notes that nearly 75% of the residential inventory along the corridor is controlled by a handful of major developers, signalling strong institutional confidence in the market. Some of the biggest players shaping SPR include: M3M India with 213 acres and over 9,500 units across projects such as M3M Antalya

Hills and M3M Golf Hills Tata Housing with 188 acres, including Tata Primanti and Tata Intellion Edge DLF with 158 acres and projects like DLF Privana North and South; the company recently acquired a 29-acre parcel near Golf Course Extension Road for 7825 crore. Signature Global developing 80 acres with projects including Tonino Lamborghini Residences and Cloverdale Godrej Properties with projects such as Godrej 101 and Godrej Aria. Luxury-focused developers are also strengthening their footprint. Smart World Developers is developing Trump Residences on the corridor, while Sobha Limited is expanding its presence with premium housing projects. Infrastructure is Driving the Boom Unlike many urban growth corridors that expand in a fragmented manner, SPR's rise is being directly fuelled by large-scale infrastructure upgrades aimed at improving mobility and liveability. Among the key projects in the pipeline are: A Rs 755-crore elevated corridor connecting Vatika Chowk to NH-4A proposed 36-km metro corridor from Sector 56 to Pachgaon, estimated to cost Rs 8,500 crore. A master stormwater drainage project between Vatika Chowk and NH-48, expected by June 2022. Dust mitigation and road improvement initiatives across the corridor. The Haryana government has also earmarked Rs 2,000 crore in its 2025-26 budget to upgrade SPR infrastructure, with the larger goal of transforming the belt into "Cyber City 2.0". Beyond Housing: SPR's Mixed-Use Future While residential development currently dominates the market, SPR is gradually evolving into a broader mixed-use ecosystem.

The rise of commercial projects, offices, retail centres, healthcare facilities and educational institutions is expected to improve live-work convenience and strengthen rental demand over time. Rahul Purohit, Co-Founder and Chief Business Officer at Square Yards, said the corridor's price appreciation reflects "a highly structured and demand-driven residential market where infrastructure creation is directly translating into buyer confidence and end-user absorption." He added that organised development, disciplined supply and growing demand for integrated urban communities are helping SPR emerge as one of NCR's most resilient real estate corridors. Echoing a similar view, Pradeep Aggarwal, Chairman of Signature Global, said the area's transformation is being driven by "infrastructure readiness, planned urban expansion and high-quality organised development," making it increasingly attractive for both homebuyers and long-term investors.

Carpooling to using Metro, virtual meetings: Delhi Police joins austerity drive



rationally feasible.

On VIP and VVIP carcades Security units have additionally been instructed to rationalise the size of VIP and VVIP carcades while maintaining necessary security and protocol standards. District DCPs and Unit Heads will regularly monitor fuel consumption records, vehicle logbooks, and deployment patterns to identify and investigate abnormal usage. The order, approved by the Commissioner of Police on Saturday, calls for immediate implementation of practical fuel-saving measures and stricter monitoring of official transport. Supervisory officers have been instructed to ensure full compliance so that the department contributes effectively to the national effort toward energy conservation and fiscal discipline. To further reduce operational costs, officers have been advised to consolidate duties and plan routes efficiently so multiple tasks within the same area can be completed in a single trip. The order also calls for greater sensitisation among officers and staff regarding disciplined and environment-conscious practices. Special focus has been placed on vehicle maintenance to improve fuel efficiency. All official vehicles are to undergo timely servicing, tyre pressure checks, engine tuning, and preventive maintenance to avoid fuel wastage caused by poor upkeep. Unit heads have been tasked with ensuring that vehicles due for servicing are not overused. Apart from fuel conservation, the directive includes broader cost-saving initiatives such as reducing expenditure under domestic travel expenses, optimising manpower deployment, and prioritizing Made-in-India products for both official procurement and personal use. The order has also stressed the importance of electricity conservation. Staff members have been instructed to switch off unnecessary lights and fans and maintain air conditioners within the recommended temperature range of 24-26 d

Carpool, hold virtual meetings for routine reviews, use public transport: Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golcha has issued a comprehensive directive to rationalise government vehicle usage and reduce unnecessary expenditure across all police units and offices. This comes in response to the prevailing international situation and the appeal made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for austerity measures and fuel conservation. Under the new measures: The force has been ordered to pool all "dak" motorcycles and other two-wheelers at police stations and units and use them strictly for essential official duties. Investigating Officers and staff travelling to the same court or office have been directed to share vehicles wherever possible to reduce duplicate movement.

-Opt for virtual meetings for routine reviews, coordination conferences, and inter-unit discussions in order to minimise avoidable travel. -Personnel posted in offices connected through Metro or public transport networks, especially at Police Headquarters, are being encouraged to use public transportation for regular commuting whenever op-

Celiac disease affects 1 in 120 children in UT: PGI doctors

Celiac disease — a chronic autoimmune disorder triggered by gluten consumption — may be affecting nearly one in every 120 children in Chandigarh, doctors at PGIMER have said, warning that the condition often remains undiagnosed due to increasingly subtle symptoms. The observations were shared on Friday during a special awareness and patient education programme organised by the Division of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Hepatology at PGIMER to mark Celiac Disease Awareness Day.

Addressing children, parents and caregivers, Sadhna Lal, head of the division, said celiac disease was no longer merely a medical condition but a "lifelong lifestyle transformation" requiring strict dietary discipline and active family support. Highlighting the rising burden of the disease in North India, Lal said Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan reported a higher prevalence because of genetic susceptibility and wheat-heavy diets. "Research conducted by PGIMER through school-based screening in Chandigarh found that nearly one in every 120 children may have celiac disease, making it an important public health concern." Doctors said the disease behaves "like an iceberg", where visible symptoms represent only a fraction of the actual burden. While loose motions and severe growth failure were once considered hallmark symptoms, the clinical profile has now changed considerably.

"Today, many children present with normal growth but may have unexplained anaemia, mild abdominal discomfort or very subtle symptoms. Many cases remain undetected for years while silent intestinal damage continues," Lal said. She also stressed that diagnosis should not be based on symptoms alone and requires confirmation through anti-TTG antibody blood tests, followed by endoscopy and intestinal biopsy where required. According to specialists, the only effective treatment remains a strict lifelong gluten-free diet. Even minor dietary lapses can trigger intestinal damage and long-term complications. Parents were advised to rely on home-cooked gluten-free meals using



grains such as jowar, bajra, ragi, maize and pulses, while avoiding processed foods because of contamination risks. Lal said the PGIMER's research suggested that the children exclusively breastfed for at least six months tended to have milder disease manifestations. "Children with celiac disease can lead completely normal and fulfilling lives. The focus should remain on education, sports, hobbies and overall personality development." The programme included interactive sessions on safe food practices, dietary counselling and ways to maintain gluten-free diets at schools and social gatherings.

Stock markets open sharply lower as oil prices surge

Mumbai: Domestic equity markets opened sharply lower on Monday, with benchmark indices declining 1 per cent in morning trade amid elevated crude oil prices and rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia following the conflict between the US and Iran. Sensex declined as much as 892 points or 1.18 per cent to hit an intraday low of 74,345 in early trade, while Nifty slipped 272 points or 1.15 per cent to 23,371.

He drank 5 litres of water in Delhi's heat. Hours later, he was in the ICU: Doctor explains why



swelling can rapidly become life-threatening. The earliest symptoms are often deceptively mild — headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea and confusion. These are easily mistaken for heat exhaustion or simple overwork. As sodium levels continue to fall, symptoms can escalate dramatically. Drowsiness deepens into altered consciousness. Seizures may occur. In severe cases, patients can slip into coma. What makes hyponatremia especially dangerous during Indian summers is that it often affects young, otherwise healthy individuals who underestimate the seriousness of their symptoms. Outdoor workers, delivery personnel, field executives, traffic police officers and construction workers are particularly vulnerable. The other extreme: Hyponatremia

Hyponatremia develops when water loss exceeds replacement. This typically occurs when someone exposed to intense heat sweats profusely but fails to drink enough fluids. As body water content drops, sodium becomes increasingly concentrated in the blood. Unlike hyponatremia, which causes cells to swell, hyponatremia causes cells to shrink as water is drawn out of them. The brain is again particularly sensitive to this shift. The symptoms often begin with intense thirst and dryness of the mouth, but can progress to irritability, restlessness, muscle twitching, confusion and seizures. In severe cases, hyponatremia can cause permanent neurological damage. Thus, summer heat presents a paradoxical challenge: drinking too little water can be dangerous, but drinking large amounts of plain water without electrolyte replacement can be equally hazardous. Potassium: The often-overlooked casualty. While sodium tends to dominate discussions around heat-related illness, potassium deserves equal attention. Potassium is indispensable for muscle function and electrical conduction within the heart. Even minor disturbances can have profound consequences. Heavy sweating, coupled with skipped meals and poor nutritional intake, can lead to hypokalaemia — low blood potassium. This often manifests as muscle weakness, painful cramps, profound fatigue and, in serious cases, disturbances in heart rhythm. The danger is amplified in those who are already nutritionally depleted or those experiencing vomiting due to heat illness. Conversely, severe dehydration can compromise kidney function, impairing the body's ability to excrete potassium. This may result in hyperkalaemia, a potentially lethal condition that can trigger sudden cardiac arrest. The balance is extraordinarily delicate. The lesson from the young executive's ordeal is simple but vital: hydration is not just about water. The body requires replacement of both fluid and dissolved salts. Oral rehydration solutions, buttermilk with a pinch of salt, coconut water, lemon water with salt and sugar, and electrolyte-rich foods can help restore what sweating takes away. Equally important is regular food intake. Timing also matters. Outdoor exertion during the fiercest afternoon hours should be minimised wherever possible. Frequent shaded breaks and early recognition of warning symptoms can prevent progression to medical emergency. The image of heatstroke as a dramatic collapse under the blazing sun is outdated. Increasingly, the danger lies in quieter, less visible disturbances unfolding at the cellular level — electrolyte shifts that begin with mild dizziness and end, if ignored, in neurological crisis. The 25-year-old executive recovered because he reached medical care in time. Many may not, so sip electrolyte-infused water every half hour.

This 25-year-old marketing executive mostly spends his day criss-crossing the city on his motorcycle, moving from one client meeting to another, braving the furnace-like midday heat. Like many young professionals, he believed he was doing the right thing by drinking water constantly. He stopped frequently to refill his bottle, consuming nearly five litres through the day. What he did not do was eat. A rushed morning meant he skipped breakfast and his lunch break was lost in back-to-back meetings. He consumed no fruit, no electrolyte drink, no oral rehydration solution — only plain water. That proved costly. By evening, he began to feel strangely light-headed. Nausea followed. He dismissed it as exhaustion. He pushed on, determined to finish his final appointments. Within hours, his speech became sluggish. He grew unusually drowsy and disoriented. Alarmed colleagues rushed him to our emergency department. Blood investigations revealed that his sodium level had plummeted to 124 mEq/L, far below the normal range of 135 to 145 mEq/L. The diagnosis was acute hyponatremia — a dangerous fall in blood sodium caused by excessive salt loss through sweating, worsened by overconsumption of plain water.

His case is far from isolated. Across India, where summer temperatures are now routinely touching 44 to 47 degrees Celsius, hospitals are seeing a rise in heat-related electrolyte disturbances that often masquerade initially as simple fatigue. Sweating is the body's primary cooling mechanism. As sweat evaporates from the skin, it dissipates heat and helps regulate body temperature. Yet sweat is not merely water. It carries with it sodium, chloride, potassium and other essential electrolytes — charged minerals that regulate nerve impulses, muscle contractions, fluid balance and heart rhythm. Under normal conditions, these losses are modest and easily replenished through regular food and drink. But under prolonged exposure to extreme heat, particularly when coupled with physical exertion, the losses can become significant. The problem deepens when hydration is approached incorrectly. In India, the common advice during summer is to "drink a lot of water." While well-intentioned, this message is incomplete. Water alone cannot replace the electrolytes being lost. In fact, when consumed excessively without adequate salt intake, it can dilute sodium levels in the bloodstream, creating precisely the kind of dangerous imbalance seen in the young executive's case. You need electrolyte-infused water.

The hidden danger of low sodium Sodium is crucial because it regulates the movement of water into and out of cells, particularly in the brain. When sodium levels drop too low, water shifts into cells, causing them to swell. In the brain, where the skull leaves no room for expansion, this

Can your fatty liver be the result of using microwave-safe boxes and bottled water?

Have you been heating and reheating food in the black plastic boxes that come with your takeouts, which advertise they are microwave-safe? Or drink only bottled mineral water at work, wondering if the office RO is clean enough or not? Or using plastic utensils, cutting boards and cooking with non-stick cookware? All of these may be contributing to your fatty liver, according to a new study by the University of Plymouth. The plastic from containers, wrappers and liners breaks down in the body into smaller particles called microplastics and nanoplastics, which the body absorbs. Once ingested, they pass into the digestive system, interacting with gut enzymes and microbes. And according to the research published in the journal 'Nature Reviews Gastroenterology and Hepatology,' since the liver serves as the body's primary filter for everything consumed, these particles often become trapped there. In the process, they may actively harm the liver by inducing inflammation and stress, which can exacerbate existing liver conditions and lead to scarring of tissue. Tiny plastic particles are also dangerous as they attract bacteria, antibiotic-resistant genes, and cancer-causing chemicals directly into the liver. Additionally, plastics may exacerbate liver failure when combined with a high-fat diet or alcohol.

What are microplastics?

Microplastics are extremely small plastic fragments, usually less than five millimetres in size, while nanoplastics are even tinier and invisible to the naked eye. They are formed when larger plastic products such as bottles, food packaging, synthetic fabrics and kitchen containers gradually break down through heat, sunlight, friction and repeated use. Several studies over the past decade have found these particles almost everywhere — in drinking water, sea salt, fruits and vegetables, seafood, household dust and even the air we breathe. Research has also detected microplastics in human blood, lung tissue, placentas and stool samples, confirming that regular exposure is now unavoidable in modern life.

How do they damage the gut and liver?

The digestive system is the first point of contact. Studies have shown that microplastics can disturb the natural balance of bacteria in the gut. This weakens the intestinal barrier, often described as the body's protective lining, allowing harmful substances to pass into the bloodstream more easily. Once this happens, these particles and the toxins attached to them travel to the liver through the portal vein. Experimental studies suggest they trigger oxidative stress, a process in which harmful molecules damage healthy cells. They can also activate inflammatory pathways that force the liver to work harder to neutralise these threats. Over time, this repeated stress may worsen existing metabolic conditions and accelerate liver injury.

What happens inside the liver after long-term exposure?

Animal studies have shown that prolonged accumulation of microplastics can interfere with the liver's ability to process fats efficiently. This may lead to fat build-up inside liver cells, one of the earliest signs of metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), commonly known as fatty liver. Researchers have also observed that chronic exposure may promote fibrosis, or scarring, which reduces the liver's flexibility and function. In more advanced stages, this can progress to inflammation and permanent



The plastic from containers, wrappers and liners breaks down in the body into smaller particles called microplastics and nanoplastics, which the body absorbs. Once ingested, they pass into the digestive system, interacting with gut enzymes and microbes. And according to the research published in the journal 'Nature Reviews Gastroenterology and Hepatology,' since the liver serves as the body's primary filter for everything consumed, these particles often become trapped there.

tissue damage. While large-scale human studies are still under way, early evidence suggests people already living with obesity, diabetes, poor diet habits or regular alcohol intake may face greater risk because their livers are already under strain.

Why is this especially worrying today?

India is already seeing a sharp rise in fatty liver disease, often linked to sedentary lifestyles, processed foods and increasing rates of obesity and diabetes. The possibility that everyday plastic exposure could act as an additional trigger makes this a growing public health concern.

How can you reduce microplastic exposure in food?

Complete avoidance is nearly impossible, but reducing exposure is. The first step is to avoid heating food in plastic containers, even if labelled microwave-safe, as heat increases the release of plastic particles. Glass, ceramic or stainless steel are safer alternatives for cooking, reheating and storage. Cut down on bottled water where safe filtered water is available, as several international studies have found bottled water contains significantly higher levels of microplastic contamination. Reduce the use of plastic chopping boards and heavily scratched non-stick cookware, as wear and tear increases particle shedding. Choosing fresh, minimally packaged food over ultra-processed packaged options can also help lower intake.

What are doctors seeing in practice?

At present, microplastics are not a diagnosed cause of fatty liver in clinical settings. However, there is a steady rise in fatty liver cases even among younger and non-alcoholic individuals. While lifestyle remains the dominant factor, there is growing curiosity about whether environmental exposures like microplastics are playing a supporting role. This is an evolving area. It is not yet part of routine diagnosis or treatment guidelines, but it is firmly on the research radar.

Dengue is spreading fast: Can cutting-edge science outsmart it at last?



From decoding the virus cell by cell to predicting severe illness before symptoms escalate, scientists are deploying breakthrough technologies to study dengue like never before. Tools such as single-cell sequencing — akin to a microscopic detective tracking what happens inside each infected cell — and advanced protein biomarker analysis, which scans thousands of biological signals in a single blood test, are set to transform how dengue is understood, diagnosed and treated. As climate change reshapes the global dengue landscape, COMBAT, an Indo-EU research alliance, is taking on the most complex challenges thrown up by the disease. Bringing together leading scientists from India and Europe, the initiative focusses on decoding the underlying mechanisms of dengue infection to improve vaccine development and transform treatment strategies.

The European arm of the programme is funded by the European Union's HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions, while India's contribution is supported by the Department of Biotechnology under the Ministry of Science and Technology. According to Prof Ujjwal Neogi, who leads the global team at Karolinska Institute, Sweden, COMBAT will help strengthen public health infrastructure and surveillance strategies to tackle the growing risk of dengue outbreaks in both endemic and non-endemic regions. India's role: Advanced genomics meets clinical expertise

The Indian arm is led by Prof Arindam Maitra, along with Dr Sagar Sengupta and Dr Anup Mazumder from BRIC-National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG), Kalyani. The collaboration also includes key scientists and clinicians from the Regional Centre for Biotechnology in Faridabad, the Manipal Institute of Virology in Udipi, Max Hospital in Delhi and Artemis Hospital in Gurugram. Prof Maitra explains that NIBMG studies how a person's genes influence their risk of infections and how diseases develop. "Using advanced tools, the team will try to understand why dengue becomes severe in some people by closely studying genes, body responses and biological markers," he says.

High-resolution microscopy will allow scientists to observe the virus attacking cells in real time, almost like watching a live film of infection. Artificial intelligence will be integrated into biological pipelines, enabling systems to learn from dengue data and rapidly adapt insights to other emerging pathogens. Researchers are also developing organ-on-chip models, which recreate miniature versions of human organs to safely study infection without testing on people. Together, these approaches represent a significant leap forward, offering insights that were not possible just a few years ago. Some of these technologies are also expected

to be installed in Indian institutes. Speeding up vaccines

Alongside research efforts, progress in vaccine development is gaining momentum. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in collaboration with Panacea Biotec, is currently conducting a Phase III trial of DengiAll, a single-dose recombinant dengue vaccine. "The trial spans 20 sites across 19 states and Union Territories and has enrolled more than 10,300 participants," says Dr Naveen Kumar, Director of ICMR-NIV (National Institute of Virology) Pune. At the same time, Takeda's tetravalent dengue vaccine TAK-003, known as Qdenga, has recently received clearance from the Subject Expert Committee under the Drugs Controller General of India for use in individuals aged 4 to 60 years. "This vaccine represents a significant advancement, showing 84.1 percent efficacy against hospitalized dengue cases and offering protection regardless of prior dengue exposure — an advantage over earlier vaccines that required pre-screening," says Prof Neogi. With approval already granted in more than 40 countries and over 10 million doses distributed since 2023, the vaccine demonstrates how strong real-world feasibility could play a crucial role in India's dengue control strategy. In parallel, ICMR-NIV Pune is working on antiviral candidates for dengue and chikungunya, including repurposed drugs, plant-derived compounds and siRNA-based therapies, some of which have advanced to preclinical stages. The institute has also developed multiple diagnostic tools, including point-of-care tests that are available for licensing.

Why dengue vaccines are so hard to develop Despite these advances, developing an effective dengue vaccine remains a complex challenge. One of the biggest obstacles is antibody-dependent enhancement, a phenomenon in which antibodies from a previous dengue infection can actually worsen disease severity if a person is later infected with a different strain. This challenge is compounded by the existence of four distinct dengue serotypes, all of which circulate widely. A successful vaccine must provide balanced and long-lasting protection against all four simultaneously.

Adding to the complexity is the immune system's tendency to prioritise responses to the first strain it encounters. Together, these factors make vaccine design particularly difficult, as any imbalance in immune response could increase the risk of severe disease during subsequent infections. "These immunological barriers demand that vaccines induce equal levels of long-lasting immunity against all four serotypes. The COMBAT project addresses these fundamental challenges by focusing on understanding dengue's underlying disease mechanisms and host-virus interactions, generating crucial insights that can directly inform and improve future vaccine development strategies," says Prof Neogi. Dengue incidence has increased dramatically worldwide over the past two decades, with reported cases rising from around 505,000 in 2000 to 14.6 million in 2024. A global temperature rise of approximately 0.9 degrees Celsius over the past 20 years has expanded the habitat of Aedes mosquitoes into higher latitudes. At the same time, environmental factors such as temperature, rainfall and humidity continue to influence transmission patterns, often with predictable time lags of two to five months. Projections suggest cases could rise by as much as 60 percent by mid-century as more regions become suitable for mosquito transmission.

His BP, cholesterol and blood sugar were normal: Yet a silent sleep disorder caused a heart attack

A 40-year-old startup owner did everything right on paper. His annual health checks were impeccable — normal blood pressure, controlled blood sugar, healthy cholesterol and unremarkable liver and kidney function tests. The only complaint was snoring, brushed aside as a harmless quirk, even a sign of sound sleep. Until one night, when he suffered a heart attack. The diagnosis that followed, obstructive sleep apnea, revealed a risk that he had evaded.

What is sleep apnea? How does it affect the heart?

Sleep apnea is a disorder marked by repeated interruptions in breathing during sleep. In obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), the airway collapses intermittently, preventing airflow despite ongoing breathing efforts. Each pause can last several seconds and recur multiple times an hour, fragmenting sleep, resulting in choking and depriving the body of oxygen. This repeated oxygen deprivation places a significant burden on the cardiovascular system. Oxygen levels can drop sharply during the night, a condition known as nocturnal hypoxemia, even when daytime readings are normal. The heart responds to these episodes with surges in stress hormones, spikes in blood pressure and irregular heart rhythms. Over time, this constant strain damages blood vessels and increases the risk of hypertension, stroke and heart attack. Sleep apnea is now recognised as an independent risk factor, meaning it can harm the heart regardless of other health parameters.

About 25 per cent of people snore, three to four per cent of whom have sleep apnea. Snoring is widespread and often trivialised. Roughly a quarter of adults snore, but only three to four per cent report sleep apnea. The distinction is critical. While not all snorers have OSA, habitual loud snoring, especially when accompanied by choking sounds, pauses in breathing or restless sleep, should not be ignored. It may be the only visible sign of a serious underlying condition.

Why heart attack risk goes up while sleeping

Sleep is meant to be a restorative phase, but in untreated sleep apnea, it becomes a period of repeated physiological stress. Each apnea episode triggers a drop in oxygen levels followed by a sudden arousal response. This leads to abrupt increases in blood pressure and heart rate, placing acute strain on the cardiovascular system. Untreated OSA can double the risk of heart attacks and significantly increase the likelihood of fatal cardiac events during sleep. The heart is repeatedly stressed at night, when it should be recovering. Arrhythmias or irregular heartbeats are more likely, and the combination of oxygen deprivation and pressure surges can precipitate a cardiac event without warning.

What causes sleep apnea

The causes are often a combination of anatomical and lifestyle factors. Excess weight is a leading contributor, as fat deposits around the neck narrow the airway. Structural features such as a thick neck, small jaw or enlarged tonsils can also predispose individuals. Alcohol consumption, smoking and sedative use relax the airway muscles further, increasing the likelihood of collapse during sleep. Age and gender play a role, with higher prevalence in middle-aged men, though risk rises in women after menopause. Prevention begins with recognition. Addressing sleep apnea early can significantly reduce cardiovascular risk. Weight loss remains one of the most effective strategies; even a reduction of 10 to 15 kilograms can lead to marked improvement. Lifestyle adjustments like avoid-



ing alcohol before bedtime, maintaining regular sleep schedules and managing nasal congestion can also help. For many, however, medical intervention is necessary. Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy is the standard treatment for moderate to severe OSA, keeping the airway open and preventing oxygen drops. Treating sleep apnea not only improves sleep quality but also reduces the long-term risk of heart disease, stroke and sudden cardiac events. Quality of sleep is a good indicator. The most telling indicator is how one feels upon waking. Good sleep should leave a person refreshed. Persistent fatigue, morning headaches or a sense of unrefreshing sleep — even without obvious daytime drowsiness — warrants evaluation. Today, diagnosis is more accessible than ever. Home sleep tests and specialised sleep clinics can identify apnea early, allowing timely intervention. The message is clear. When sleep is compromised, the consequences extend far beyond fatigue. In the silence of the night, untreated sleep apnea can quietly push the heart to its limits.

Blue Origin's rocket fails to place BlueBird 7 in correct orbit

Washington: US space transporter Blue Origin placed AST Mobile's BlueBird 7 communications satellite in the wrong orbit, making its direct-to-device operation unviable and forcing the firm to junk the spacecraft. Blue Origin's New Glenn reusable rocket took off majestically from Cape Canaveral in Florida on Sunday morning, and its first stage booster rocket landed on a drone ship hundreds of miles off the coast in the Atlantic. However, the rocket failed to deliver on its primary task of placing the communications satellite in the designated low Earth orbit. "While the satellite separated from the launch vehicle and powered on, the altitude is too low to sustain operations with its onboard thruster technology and will be de-orbited," an AST SpaceMobile post-launch press release said. India's Launch Vehicle Mark-3 launched AST SpaceMobile's BlueBird 6 satellite from ISRO's spaceport at Sriharikota on December 23 last year. Sunday's launch of the New Glenn rocket was its third mission, and the vehicle now remains grounded pending an investigation into the reasons for failure. Blue Origin is one of two companies that NASA has hired to provide landers that are to take astronauts from lunar orbit to the surface of the moon as soon as 2028. SpaceX is the other company hired by NASA for its lunar missions.

Pakistan's economy suffers amid US-Iran war, says PM Shehbaz



GNS News Agency, May 23

Islamabad: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the US-Iran war has dealt a serious blow to Pakistan's economic progress made over the past two years, as he asserted that his government will continue its efforts to help ease tensions between the two warring sides and restore peace in West Asia. Speaking during a Cabinet meeting here, Shehbaz said Pakistan's oil import bill had surged from USD 300 million before the conflict to USD 800 million, placing additional pressure on the economy. He also noted a reduction in petroleum consumption during the current week compared to the previous one. Shehbaz said a task force is monitoring the situation daily, according to an official statement. He said collective efforts are needed to tackle the challenges.

Apprising the Cabinet about the progress made in the US-Iran talks and Pakistan's efforts to ease tensions in the region, Shehbaz said Islamabad made sincere efforts to promote regional stability. He highlighted that marathon talks

between Iran and the US held in Islamabad on April 11 lasted for 21 hours and marked a significant diplomatic breakthrough. Shehbaz said Pakistan made sincere and coordinated efforts for the success of the negotiations, with contributions from Field Marshal Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and other senior officials. As a result of these efforts, he noted, the ceasefire between Iran and the United States was extended and continues to hold. The prime minister informed the cabinet that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Pakistan with his delegation and held multiple rounds of talks, including a two-hour session with him. He said Araghchi assured that Iran would respond positively after consultations with its leadership. "Before the Iranian foreign minister visited Russia, I spoke with him on the phone, in which he assured me that all his meetings in Oman were held with sincerity of intent, and after consultation with his leadership... he will give a positive response soon," he said while talking about Araghchi's whirlwind visits to Islamabad, Muscat and Moscow over the weekend. He expressed hope that the conflict would end soon. Pakistan plans to host a second round of talks between the United States and Iran. The Iranian minister made two brief visits to Pakistan within 48 hours over the weekend, meeting with Field Marshal Munir and PM Shehbaz to discuss the regional situation. Trump on Sunday reiterated that the US and Iranian officials can talk by phone for a peace solution to the conflict. Last week, Trump extended the two-week ceasefire with Iran indefinitely to give Tehran more time to prepare a unified proposal to end the war. The war began when the US and Israel jointly attacked Iran on February 28, killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several top commanders. The retaliation by the Islamic Republic extended the war to the entire Gulf region.

EU kickstarts Mercosur pact to counter US trade hit



GNS News Agency, May 23

BRUSSEL The European Union and South American bloc Mercosur will implement on Friday a contentious free trade agreement that the EU in particular hopes will benefit exporters and calm critics, even if it cannot fully offset the blow from U.S. tariffs. Backers including Germany and Spain say the agreement will help compensate for the hit from U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs and reduce reliance on China for critical minerals. France and other critics argue it will increase imports of cheap beef and sugar and undercut domestic farmers, and environmentalists say it will increase rainforest destruction. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

Either way, economists caution that the economic gains from this pact and others concluded in recent months by the EU will be modest and are unlikely to fully make up for lost U.S. trade. The European Parliament, whose approval is required, voted in January to challenge the agreement in the EU's top court, which could take up to two years to rule, but the European Commission decided to provisionally apply the deal from May 1. Supporters hope the EU's largest ever agreement in terms of tariff reductions, which took 25 years to negotiate, will swiftly benefit EU exporters so that when the EU assembly does vote, perhaps in two years' time, the advantages will be clear. TRUMP PROMPTS TRADE DEAL DASH Alongside Mercosur, the EU has rushed to conclude trade agreements with India, Indonesia, Australia and Mexico since Trump's re-election. The accords help to shore up free trade at a time when

Trump's tariffs and Chinese export curbs on critical minerals undermine a rules-based global order. The European bloc is also hoping the agreements will help offset a decline in exports to the United States of 15% or more and a hit to GDP of some 0.3% this year alone. However, Carsten Brzeski, global head of Macro at ING Research, said it was hard to see the new trade relationships replacing the United States. "Put simply, GDP per capita in the U.S. is by far larger than in these new trading partners," he said. The European Commission has estimated the Mercosur agreement will boost EU GDP by 0.05% in 2040, while the India agreement, which the EU has dubbed the "mother of all deals", could add 0.1% to GDP, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. Those benefits are also at least a decade away, when the deals are fully implemented, whereas pain from Trump's tariffs has been immediate. CHINA ALREADY THERE EU companies will also face fierce competition in these markets, where Chinese rivals have been steadily building a presence for two decades. "The elephant in the room is China," said Lucrezia Reichlin, professor of economics at the London Business School. "And this is not just about tariffs. If you look at what China has done in Asia and in Africa, it has been about investment and the energy transition, too." Maximiliano Mendez-Parra, principal research fellow at ODI Global, said much had changed since he co-authored a report for the European Commission in December 2020 that forecast a 0.1% increase in EU GDP from the EU-Mercosur deal. Since then China has ramped up sales of vehicles and machinery, items that the EU wants to export, Mendez-Parra said. Tariff reductions should help EU companies compete more effectively against often low prices of Chinese goods, but the challenges are increasing. China has already begun the task of offsetting U.S. tariffs, reporting a record trade surplus of nearly \$1.2 trillion in 2025, led by booming exports to non-U.S. markets. Global Trade Alert estimated that U.S. tariffs led to some \$150 billion of Chinese exports being redirected, with ASEAN countries absorbing more than \$70 billion of extra Chinese goods, and sharp increases, too, for Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the Gulf. So, while the EU's trade accords should help, the EU will not offset lost U.S. exports without looking internally. Some 60% of EU exports are from one EU country to another and a more efficient and competitive single market could easily compensate.

Scared and angry British Jews demand more from government after knife attack

LONDON, GNS News Agency, May 23 Scared, angry at the government, and wondering whether they need to leave the country, British Jews in the north London suburb of Golders Green were reeling a day after an attacker stabbed two men in the street. Members of the Jewish community said they were looking for Prime Minister Keir Starmer to show he can address the root causes of increasingly frequent antisemitic attacks and keep them safe. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. "People are really concerned, people are afraid, people are uncomfortable walking in the street, people are blaming obviously the government for not doing anything about what's going on," Shilome Rand, one of the men stabbed on Wednesday, told ITV News. Both victims are in a stable condition. Wednesday's stabbing was the most serious and violent in a spate of recent attacks aimed at Jews in London, and comes less than a year after a deadly attack at a synagogue in Manchester. Starmer, whose wife is Jewish, has pledged more funding for community policing organisations, including the one that helped stop Wednesday's knifeman, and has promised legislation to stop "malign state actors" hiring proxies to conduct attacks. "We must absolutely deal with the root causes of both antisemitism and extremism," Starmer said as he held a meeting with criminal justice agencies. A Jewish News digital front page decried what it called a "Bull\$#@ # Bingo" response, declaring "Jews Bleed. Cue the cliché" above a list of statements of solidarity commonly used by politicians. The local lawmaker and chief of London's police force were both heckled as they spoke to media on Wednesday. "Are the government going to do anything meaningful? Well, let's wait and see. Don't hold your breath," solicitor David Pearl, 69, told Reuters on Thursday morning. He said he wanted to leave Britain but his children did not. "I don't feel safe anymore." Calev Swabel, a 21-year-old intern, said he understood the sentiment. "I love England. I'm a proud British Jew and a Jewish Brit, but it really



does worry me. (That's) something that I've never felt before," he told Reuters. POLITICAL DIMENSION The incident comes ahead of local-government elections on May 7 in which Starmer's Labour Party are expected to suffer heavy losses, in part due to a perception that they have failed to achieve much for the centrists who backed them in July 2024 and also alienated many on the party's traditional left wing. Starmer visited the area on Thursday, where his arrival was greeted by a small group of protesters shouting "shame on you". His opponents have also been quick to go to the scene and amplify the message that the government is not doing enough. The opposition Conservative Party leader, Kemi Badenoch, was there within hours, calling antisemitism a "national emergency". Reform UK Leader Nigel Farage visited on Thursday, saying the interests of British Jews had been overlooked in order not to upset parts of Labour's voter base, drawing a direct line between left-wing anti-Israel protests and rising antisemitism. "There's a feeling that we've been appeasing or pandering a segment of the population for electoral purposes, rather than standing up for what's right," he told reporters. Interior minister Shabana Mahmood acknowledged the intensity and scale of pro-Palestinian protests had put pressure on the Jewish community, but said the government had sought to limit them.

Iran threatens painful response if US resumes attacks, oil prices seesaw

WASHINGTON/DUBAI/ISLAMABAD, GNS News Agency, May 23 Iran said on Thursday that if Washington renewed attacks it would respond with "long and painful strikes" on U.S. positions, complicating U.S. plans for an international coalition to open the Strait of Hormuz. Two months into the war that started with U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran, the vital sea channel remains closed, choking off 20% of the world's supplies of oil and gas. That has sent global energy prices surging and heightened concerns about the risks of an economic downturn.

The Reuters Power Up newsletter provides everything you need to know about the global energy industry. Sign up here. Efforts to resolve the conflict have hit an impasse, with a ceasefire in place since April 8 but Iran still blocking the strait in response to a U.S. naval blockade of Iran's oil exports, the country's economic lifeline. U.S. President Donald Trump is slated to receive a briefing on Thursday on plans for a series of fresh military strikes on Iran in hopes of making Iran more flexible on nuclear issues in negotiations, Axios news site reported late on Wednesday.

That spurred big gains in oil prices, with the benchmark Brent crude contract hitting more than \$126 a barrel at one point, its highest level since March 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It later slipped back to \$113 a barrel. Any U.S. attack on Iran, even if limited, will usher in "long and painful strikes" on U.S. regional positions, a senior Revolutionary Guards official said. "We've seen what happened to your regional bases, we will see the same thing happen to your warships," Aerospace Force Commander Majid Mousavi was quoted by Iranian media as saying. AMAZON REPORTS DAMAGE TO CLOUD SERVICES Brent prices have doubled since the U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran began on February 28, fuelling inflation and sending pump prices to politically painful levels worldwide. As well as blocking almost all but its own shipping through the strait, Iran launched drones and missiles at Israel and U.S. bases, infrastructure and U.S.-linked companies in Gulf states. Amazon AMZN.O on Thursday reported damage to its cloud regions in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates from the conflict and said restoring normal operations could take months. The company did not immediately respond to a Reuters query on when the damage took place and whether it was due to a drone attack or strikes nearby. A new Iranian strike would be a serious escalation given the ceasefire. Tehran warned on Wednesday of "unprecedented military action" against continued U.S. blockading of Iran-linked vessels. The warning, together with the possibility of further U.S. military strikes, signalled more Middle East oil supply disruptions from a conflict that

has killed thousands. Ships and boats in the Strait of Hormuz, Musandam, Oman, tringer Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab Another plan to be shared with Trump involves taking over part of the Strait of Hormuz to reopen it to commercial shipping, the Axios report added, saying such an operation may involve ground forces. In a sign the U.S. was also envisaging a scenario where hostilities cease, the State Department cable invited partner countries to join a new coalition called Maritime Freedom Construct (MFC) to enable ships to navigate the strait. "The MFC constitutes a critical first step in the establishment of a post-conflict maritime security architecture for the Middle East," said the cable, which was due to be delivered orally to partner nations by May 1. France, Britain and other countries have held talks on contributing to such a coalition but said they were only willing to help open the Strait when the conflict ends. Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said in a written message to Iranians that Tehran would eliminate "the enemies' abuses of the waterway" under new management of the strait, indicating that the country intended to maintain its hold over it. JAPAN SPEAKS TO IRAN ABOUT SAFE PASSAGE THROUGH STRAIT Mediator Pakistan was trying to avoid escalation while the two sides exchange messages on a potential deal, a Pakistani source said on Wednesday. Trump has said Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, while Tehran says its nuclear ambitions are peaceful. Iran's latest offer for resolving the war, suspended since April 8 under a ceasefire deal, would set aside discussion of its nuclear program until the conflict is formally ended and shipping issues resolved. That did not meet Trump's demand to tackle the nuclear issue at the outset.

The Pakistani source said the United States had shared "observations" on the Iranian proposal and it was now up to Iran to respond. (The) Iranians asked for time till the end of the week," the source told Reuters. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Tehran should stop playing for time, and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said she had spoken to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to ensure the safe passage of a Japanese-related vessel and all others through the strait. Trump on Tuesday discussed with U.S. oil companies how to mitigate the impact of a possible extension of the U.S. blockade on Iranian ports for months if needed, the White House said on Wednesday. U.S. intelligence agencies, tasked by senior administration officials, are also studying how Iran would respond if Trump were to declare a unilateral victory, two U.S. officials and a person familiar with the matter said this week. Reporting by Reuters bureaus; Writing by Lincoln Feast and Philippa Fletcher; Editing by Neil Fullick and Timothy Heritage

Iranian economic collapse may come too late for Trump



DUBAI, Weeks of conflict have aggravated Iran's dire economic problems, risking calamity after the war, but the Islamic Republic looks able to survive a standoff in the Gulf for now, despite a U.S. blockade that has cut off energy exports. With major fighting paused by an April 8 truce, Iran is locked in a stalemate with the U.S. and Israel, with talks for a lasting ceasefire stalled while Tehran keeps the Strait of Hormuz shut and Washington blockades Iranian Gulf ports. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. Despite bad damage to infrastructure and industries and an oil-export squeeze, Iran has plentiful internal supplies, steady trade with neighbours and only limited signs of immediate stress from state-revenue losses caused by the blockade. If U.S. President Donald Trump expects Iran to blink first in their game of economic chicken, with global inflation rising and midterm elections approaching, he may be waiting a while.

RESISTANCE ECONOMY "I think that they have calculated a longer runway than I think economists or Western policymakers are anticipating," said Sanam Vakil, head of the Middle East programme at the Chatham House thinktank in London, referring to Iran's leaders. Facing what they see as an existential threat to the Islamic Republic, Iran's ruling clerics and Revolutionary Guards are able to use their iron grip on the country to hold out for a sustainable deal from Washington, Vakil said. "They are quite known to use repressive capacity. They're relying on people using their savings," she said, adding that Tehran was falling back on its "resistance economy" approach of relying on internal resources and trading across land borders.

The extent of economic damage from the war - and the likelihood of imminent economic crisis - are hard to gauge given the lack of reliable official data and a partial internet blackout since January. However, Reuters reported this month the situation was so bad that Iranian officials feared new rounds of protests and the country faced disaster unless sanctions were lifted. Vakil said she anticipated a double-digit drop in Iran's GDP this year. The rial currency, which fell by 70% last year, worsening inflation that contributed to mass protests in January, has dropped by 15% over recent days but after stabilising through March is not far off its pre-war value.

There are few other indications of immediate fiscal stress. The authorities have not curbed bank withdrawals, rationed fuel or food staples or delayed state-salary payments. Supermarket shelves remain full and offices and banks have stayed open. Shipping data from April 13 to 25 showed only around 300,000 barrels of oil per day moved out into the Indian Ocean from over 1 million bpd loaded onto tankers during that period. Storage capacity is limited but energy analysts believe Iran may be able to go another two months before curbing production. Iran built up extra revenue through energy sales when sanctions were waived earlier in the war. Limited volumes of oil are being shipped overland, but not enough to replicate the blockaded sea routes. A senior source at Iran's Central Bank told Reuters the country had substantial gold reserves, "tons of it", that it could deploy if needed and that after decades of evading sanctions, Tehran knew how to maintain imports by paying a little more.

"Iran is the largest food importer in the region. But it is

also important to note that Iran is the least food insecure country in the region," said Ishan Bahnu, head agricultural commodities analyst at Kpler. With an expected better-than-usual harvest approaching, the need for wheat imports is reduced, Bahnu said, reducing vulnerability to any extension of the maritime blockade to grain shipments and putting off some foreign currency spending. The U.S. blockade has so far been limited to Gulf ports, not Iran's Chabahar on the Arabian Sea, and has focused on oil tankers, Bahnu said, citing monitored vessel movements. Officials in Turkey, Iraq and Pakistan told Reuters there was no indication of a slump in cross-border trade yet. Russia has also boosted trade across the Caspian this year, shipping 750,000 tons of corn, 180,000 tons of barley and 4,000 tons of wheat across the inland sea from January to March, according to Russian agriculture ministry data, bypassing blockaded Gulf ports. INTENSE ECONOMIC PAIN As Trump's threats of military action increased in January, Iran increased imports to stockpile six months' worth of essentials, the parliament's agriculture commission head Mohammad Javad Asgari said in state media this month. Soon after conflict began, the Central Bank introduced a support package waiving penalties for late payments of small loans and raised bank withdrawal limits to reassure depositors. Still, on the streets of Tehran, the economic pain is intense. Iranian businesses have been crushed by high prices, supply chain disruption and the internet blackout, causing spiralling unemployment. "Rising prices of basic goods, especially products like ours that are directly linked to people's tables definitely put pressure on people," said Abbas Smaealzade, a rice and grain salesman. Smaealzade estimated that his sales had fallen by around 40% since the war began. Mechanic Hossein Amiri said far fewer customers were bringing cars to his workshop compared to before the war. "Our business has basically come to a standstill," he said, warning that things could get far worse. Hanging over the authorities is the fear of another round of mass protests. January's unrest was only quashed by killing thousands of demonstrators in the biggest bout of bloodletting for decades. To avert the impending economic disaster, Iran would need to include sanctions relief in any deal with Washington, Vakil said. "They do need access to their foreign currency abroad that is housed in banks around the world, but also a degree of sanctions relief. They need to ramp up oil sales, but also be able to trade properly," she said.

King Charles III hails US-UK bonds in Congress speech

Washington: King Charles III acknowledged "times of great uncertainty" as he expressed gratitude to the American people and marked the 250th anniversary of independence from Britain in a speech to the US Congress that highlighted the bonds between the two countries at a time of Charles is only the second British monarch to address a joint session of Congress. His mother, Queen Elizabeth II, delivered a similar speech in 1991 highlighting the historic ties between both countries and the importance of their democratic values. The king picked up on those themes during his remarks on Tuesday, which were delivered in a far different environment than when his mother spoke to the same chamber in the US Capitol. President Donald Trump is in open conflict with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer over the war in Iran. Many of the lawmakers in the room were at the White House Correspondents' Dinner on Saturday, which was disrupted by a shooting that authorities have described as an attempted assassination against Trump. "Let me say with unshakeable resolve," Charles said. "Such acts of violence will never succeed." The king began his day at the White House, where he and Trump greeted each other warmly during a ceremony on the South Lawn. Appearing under gray, drizzly skies, Trump quipped that it was a "beautiful British day" before shifting his focus to the shared history of the US and UK.

India Inc's foreign borrowings halve YoY in March, down 30% in FY26



Foreign borrowings of Indian companies halved in March compared to the final month of 2024-25, with the amount borrowed from abroad in all of 2025-26 down 30% from the previous year as the rupee's rapid weakening and rising overseas interest rates made taking on domestic debt more attractive. According to latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data released on Thursday, India Inc's external commercial borrowings (ECBs) were down 51% year-on-year in March at \$5.43 billion. In March 2025, external commercial borrowings had surged to an over five-year high of \$11.04 billion, powered by large deals struck by the likes of JSW Steel, JSW NEO Energy, and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing, among others.

"The external environment today is not conducive to ECBs given the volatile nature of the currency. This may make ECBs less attractive. Besides, it does not look like that the interest rates will be lowered any further by global central banks at least in the next 3 months given the rather fragile nature of the world economy and the threat of inflation looming across countries," Bank of Baroda economists said in a note. Foreign borrowings typically are higher in the last month of the financial year as companies try to exhaust any available limits, said Divyaj Chadha, Partner at Singhania & Co. Borrowing from abroad is usually cheaper than from Indian financial institutions. Experts also said that the increase in foreign borrowings in March could be linked to the raising of the borrowing limit by the RBI in February from \$750 million to \$1 billion.

"The enhancement of borrowing limits under the automatic route, relaxation of certain maturity and pricing constraints, and broadening of operational flexibility collectively signalled a more facilitative regulatory posture toward off-

shore borrowings," said Tushar Kumar, a Supreme Court advocate specialising in corporate and commercial contracts. In 2025-26 as a whole, Indian companies borrowed just under \$43 billion from abroad, down 30% from \$61 billion in 2024-25. These include borrowings through foreign-currency-denominated routes such as ECBs, foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs), and rupee-denominated bonds (RDBs). In the last two years, only February 2026 saw Indian companies raising money from abroad through rupee-denominated bonds, amounting to Rs 318 crore (\$35 million). February had seen a reversal in the country's capital flows fortunes, with net Foreign Direct Investment recording an inflow after a gap of six months and rising to a near-four-year high of \$4.62 billion after India and the US agreed to an interim trade deal that reduced the reciprocal tariff from 25% to 18% and eliminated the penal tariff of 25%. Foreign Portfolio Investors also net purchased Indian stocks and bonds, helping the rupee appreciate by 1.1% against the US dollar. However, that was before the war in West Asia began. Since then, the rupee has slumped by 5.2%.

The Indian Express has learnt that the RBI internally discussed further relaxing external borrowing regulations and providing hedging benefits and discounts to borrowers using this route amid the ongoing West Asia war. However, these proposals did not take final shape. The RBI did not respond to a query on these discussions. Going ahead, market participants expect the risk appetite of corporates to remain subdued as long as geopolitical uncertainties remain. "...structurally, the environment is weak because the hedging costs are very high, so the all-in borrowing cost in India is very high.

As long as there's volatility, the hedging rates will remain high," said Sanjay Agarwal, Senior Director at CareEdge Ratings. Hedging is done by companies, usually via derivative contracts, to reduce losses from fluctuations in the exchange rate. When the rupee weakens, a dollar loan becomes more expensive for the Indian company to pay back as more rupees are required for each dollar. "...companies have lined up a lot of deals for fundraising, but then they are not going ahead (because of the uncertainties). So definitely investor appetite would be there at a certain price, but people are not biting the bullet because of the cost," the head of treasury at a non-banking financial company said.

SEC, Adanis move for consent judgments in Adani Green Bond issue

US Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, Gautam Adani, Adani Green Bond issue, Adani Green Bond, Sagar Adani, Adani Green Energy Ltd, Indian express business, business news, current affairs In addition, the final judgments, if approved by the court, would order Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani to pay civil monetary penalties of \$6 million and \$12 million, respectively, SEC said.

The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has sought the entry of final consent judgments against Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani, whom it had earlier accused of making false and misleading statements linked to a 2021 bond offering by Adani Green Energy Ltd. According to SEC, without admitting or denying the allegations in the complaint, Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani each consented to the entry of final judgments, subject to court approval, that would permanently enjoin each from violating the US laws.

In addition, the final judgments, if approved by the court, would order Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani to pay civil monetary penalties of \$6 million and \$12 million, respectively, SEC said. The SEC's complaint, filed on November 20, 2024, alleged that Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani, respectively the founder and Executive Director of Adani Green, orchestrated a scheme to pay or promise to pay the equivalent of hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes to



Indian government officials in exchange for commitments to purchase energy at above-market rates, thereby benefiting Adani Green, SEC said. SEC said the complaint alleged that in September 2021, while the bribery scheme was ongoing, the defendants falsely touted Adani Green's compliance with anti-bribery principles and laws in connection with a \$750 million bond offering, which raised more than \$175 million from US investors. According to the complaint, Adani Green's offering materials contained statements about its anti-corruption and anti-bribery efforts that were materially false or misleading in light of the bribery scheme, SEC said.

No vaccine, no cure: What the WHO Ebola health emergency means for Indians



The World Health Organization (WHO) has now declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern" (PHEIC). Considering this is the highest level of global health alert issued by WHO, we asked experts all about the outbreak, which involves the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, considered dangerous because there are no approved vaccines or specific treatments available for a cure. As WHO officials have urged countries to strengthen surveillance, testing, and emergency response systems, should India be worried?

The outbreak has affected eastern Congo, especially the Ituri province, and Uganda. Dr Aniket Mule, Consultant Internal Medicine, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, noted that Ebola is a "rare but very serious viral infection" that can cause high fever, weakness, vomiting, diarrhea, and in severe cases, bleeding and organ failure. "The recent concern comes from new outbreaks reported in parts of Africa, especially Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This has led global health authorities to closely watch the situation. One reason experts are particularly focused is that the current outbreak involves a strain for which there is no widely approved vaccine available," said Dr Mule.

How does Ebola spread? Can it spread like Covid-19?

Ebola does not spread through the air like Covid-19. "It mainly spreads through direct contact with the blood, body fluids, or contaminated items of an infected person. Family members caring for patients and healthcare workers face higher risks if they do not follow proper precautions," said Dr Mule. The virus can also spread during unsafe burial practices that involve direct contact with infected bodies. Since transmission requires close physical contact, Ebola outbreaks are usually easier to contain than airborne infections, Dr Mule noted.

Should Indians be worried right now?

Dr Mule said that there is currently no reason to panic in India. "No outbreak has been reported in the country, and Ebola is not the type of virus that spreads casually in public or through everyday interactions. However, health authorities worldwide remain alert because international travel can sometimes lead to isolated imported cases." Dr Mule also asserted that India has significantly improved its disease surveillance and airport screening systems since the Covid-19 pandemic, which enhances preparedness if any suspected case occurs. The focus right now should be on awareness, not fear.

What precautions should Indians follow?

People traveling to affected African regions should avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms like fever, bleeding, or severe illness. "It's also crucial to avoid handling body fluids or coming into contact with dead animals, especially bats and primates, which are known carriers of the virus." Good hand hygiene is one of the simplest and most effective protective measures. "Healthcare workers should continue following strict infection-control practices and use protective equipment when necessary." For the general public in India, there is no need for masks, panic buying, or travel anxiety. A smarter approach is to stay informed through reliable health updates and avoid misinformation spreading on social media.

How ultra-processed food companies are pitching ads to normalise your chips and cola buys

The sales of ultra-processed foods in India have increased 40-fold from \$0.9 billion in 2006 to nearly \$38 billion in 2019. The sales of ultra-processed foods in India have increased 40-fold from \$0.9 billion in 2006 to nearly \$38 billion in 2019. Are you choosing to be unhealthy when you buy a packet of chips or a bottle of cola? Not necessarily. Research shows that the companies that produce ultra-processed foods — foods that have undergone industrial processing and contain additives and preservatives unavailable in kitchens — may be influencing your choice by smart speak on pocket-friendliness and even it being 'healthy.' The market for these foods is driven by convenience, hyper-palatability, some nutrient profiling and longer shelf lives — coupled with vigorous advertising. "These foods are addictive and companies are following the same template as the tobacco industry. Given their health impact, there is a need

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.

Silver prices fall to Rs 2.70 lakh/kg amid oil rally and dollar strength



New Delhi: Silver prices declined by Rs 1,832 to Rs 2.70 lakh per kilogram in futures trade on Monday as a rally in crude oil prices amplified inflation concerns, while strength in the US dollar in overseas markets weighed on investor sentiment. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the white metal for July delivery depreciated by Rs 1,832, or nearly 1 per cent, to Rs 2,70,054 per kilogram, extending losses for the third straight session.

Analysts said the surge in crude oil prices has fuelled inflation concerns globally, strengthening expectations that major global central banks may maintain a tighter monetary policy stance for longer, which in turn pressured precious metals. "Silver witnessed sharper selling pressure on Monday in line with global prices near the USD 75 per ounce range, as industrial demand concerns and profit booking

weighed on sentiment," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said. Crude oil prices surged above USD 111 per barrel, driven by escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and rising fears of supply disruptions, he added. Manav Modi, Commodities Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said the bullion market witnessed a major policy shift after the government's latest curbs on silver imports were moved from "Free" to "Restricted," tightening supply conditions and creating sharp volatility in MCX prices while weakening physical demand sentiment. The government, on May 13, hiked import duty on precious metals — gold and silver — from 6 per cent to 15 per cent. The effective duty (including 3 per cent IGST) is over 18 per cent. It was raised to control the outflow of forex by curbing non-essential imports. In the international markets, Comex silver futures for the July contract fell nearly 3 per cent to USD 75.48 per ounce in New York. According to analysts, investor sentiment also remained cautious after the United Arab Emirates blamed a fire near its nuclear facility on a drone allegedly launched by Iran or its proxies, raising fears of further escalation in the region. US President Donald Trump also warned that "the clock is ticking" for Tehran as negotiations aimed at ending the conflict remained stalled. On the domestic front, analysts said tighter restrictions on silver imports and higher duties on precious metals have increased volatility. Brokerage firm Kotak Neo (formerly Kotak Securities) said persistent supply tightness, geopolitical risks and resilient industrial demand continue to support silver despite near-term weakness.

to control how they are advertised, which will lead to a decline in consumption," says Dr Arun Gupta, convener of Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPI). The sales of ultra-processed foods in India have increased 40-fold from \$0.9 billion in 2006 to nearly \$38 billion in 2019. With a growing burden of non-communicable diseases, a study recently published in the journal, BMJ Global Health, identified alcohol, tobacco, and ultra-processed foods as three of the most important commercial determinants of health. "(These) are often designed to be highly addictive and hyper-palatable, overriding an individual's ability to limit consumption," it said.

The study looked at six strategies or mechanisms of influence when it comes to ultra-processed foods. One, aggressive television and digital advertising geared towards children — products such as salty snacks, sugared beverages and confectionary items were advertised significantly

more often on children's channels than on mainstream channels in India. Two, school-based promotion, with companies ensuring availability in school canteens and providing branded educational material. Three, conducting CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities such as the ones by an instant noodles brand that has programmes for creating nutritional awareness and sustainable agriculture. "While people are more aware about the dangers of ultra-processed foods now, it is still difficult to make the healthy choice.

These products are widely available, including in school canteens. Our study on school environment also found that healthier options were costlier and difficult to store, which reduced their availability as compared to UPFs," says Shalini Bassi, consultant, Public Health Foundation and the first author of the paper. "

'Selfish' Mo Salah must be dropped from Liverpool farewell game: Wayne Rooney



GNS News Agency, May 23

Manchester United legend Wayne Rooney slammed Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah for his "selfish" comments on Liverpool's style of play in the 2025-26 Premier League season ahead of his proposed farewell match for the Reds on Sunday. Salah, who had announced his departure from the club after nine years in May, took to social media earlier this week and urged Liverpool for a return to high-octane football. "I have witnessed this club go from doubters to believers, and from believers to champions. It took hard work and I always did everything I could to help the club get there. Nothing makes me prouder than that. Us crumbling to yet another defeat this season was very painful and not what our fans deserve."

"I want to see Liverpool go back to being the heavy metal attacking team that opponents fear and back to being a team that wins trophies. That is the football I know how to play and that is the identity that needs to be recovered and kept for good. It cannot be negotiable, and everyone who joins this club should adapt to it," Salah wrote on his social

media post. I have witnessed this club go from doubters to believers, and from believers to champions. It took hard work and I always did everything I could to help the club get there. Nothing makes me prouder than that. Rooney, who stands just ahead of Salah on the all-time Premier League scoring charts, slammed the latter for a distasteful jibe at Liverpool manager Arne Slot, insisting that the 33-year-old must be dropped from his farewell match against Brighton on Sunday. "I find it sad at the end of what he's done and what he's achieved at Liverpool. It's not the point for him to come out and aim another dig at Slot, Rooney said, speaking on the Wayne Rooney Show on BBC. "He wants to play heavy metal football, so he's basically saying he wants Jurgen Klopp football. Now I don't think Mo Salah can cope with that type of football anymore. I think his legs have gone to play at that high tempo and high intensity." Rooney recounted a disagreement with Sir Alex Ferguson that prompted the former Man United head coach to drop him ahead of his last managerial appearance.

"If I was Arne Slot, I'd have him nowhere near the stadium in the last game. I had it with Alex Ferguson. I had a disagreement and fell out and at Alex Ferguson's last game at Old Trafford, he left me out of the squad for that reason." Rooney claimed that Salah was trying to vindicate himself through social media after a woeful season. With Liverpool slipping to fifth in the standings, the club's all-time goal-scorer has netted only seven goals in 26 appearances. "I think Salah's trying to vindicate himself and make himself feel better because he's had a very poor season. So I think he's been very selfish in what he's done in the two occasions. It's a shame and fans will be on his side, but I think when you look deeper into it and having been in a dressing room in a similar situation to that as well, Mo Salah knows exactly what he's doing," said Rooney.

McGrath, Gillespie and Fleming back BBL privatisation but warn Test cricket must be protected



GNS News Agency, May 23

Three of Australia's popular fast bowlers have backed BBL privatisation as inevitable but warned Cricket Australia that Test cricket must be ringfenced from the fallout, speaking on the Fast Bowling Cartel podcast on Monday. Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie and Damian Fleming addressed the ongoing standoff between Cricket Australia and several state associations, with NSW and Queensland having already rejected CA's initial proposal to sell stakes in BBL franchises to private investors. Gillespie, who recently coached Hyderabad Kings in the PSL, identified the core risk plainly.

"Let's say an IPL franchise comes in and buys one of the Big Bash teams," he said. "They've signed Travis Head to a multi-million dollar contract. They want him playing Christmas Day or New Year's Eve - and this coincides with test cricket. Does this change what the Boxing Day test, the New Year's test looks like? I think a lot of these questions are being asked right now." McGrath echoed those concerns. "Test cricket's the ultimate. We need to protect test cricket," he said, noting that only India, England and Australia make serious money from the format. "If you've got your key players off playing Big Bash rather than test cricket, that's a concern."

Neymar livid after bizarre referee error accidentally forces him off pitch



GNS News Agency, May 23

Neymar snatched the official substitution request sheet from the fourth official and held it up in front of the TV cameras to tell broadcasters that Santos coach Cuca had written teammate Escobar's number on it rather than Neymar's. (Screengrab via X) Neymar snatched the official substitution request sheet from the fourth official and held it up in front of the TV cameras to tell broadcasters that Santos coach Cuca had written teammate Escobar's number on it rather than Neymar's. In one of the most bizarre incidents in football, Brazilian football star Neymar was left livid after being accidentally substituted by an error from the fourth official. The game was Neymar's last chance to impress Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti before the Brazilian FIFA World Cup squad is announced.

Instead, Neymar was at the centre of an ugly scene where the game was held up for many minutes as Santos players and coach Cuca tried to plead with the referee to overturn the error of his colleague. The incident happened in the 65th minute of Santos' Brazilian league clash with Coritiba, when Neymar's relegation-threatened side were already 3-0 down. Neymar was on the field having his right calf sprayed by a doctor. The referee told him to go to the sidelines, where the treatment continued. But before Neymar was ready to come back on, the fourth official raised a substitution board which indicated that Neymar would be making way for Robinho Jr., who immediately stepped onto the pitch. "I knew Robinho was coming in, but I wasn't even watching it," an angry Neymar said after the game. "I didn't know I had been substituted, I had not seen the board. It was a very serious mistake by the officials, by the fellow who puts the numbers on the board." Apparently, Santos coach had asked the fourth official to pull out No 31 (Gonzalo Escobar) and the fourth official thought they wanted Neymar

Gillespie, however, said he believed NSW and Queensland's resistance was less about principle and more about process. "I think it's inevitable," he said. "I think New South Wales and Queensland just probably want a little bit more clarity on what exactly it will look like." He flagged South Australia's position as straightforward: "What South Australia want to know is - okay, but it's got to benefit South Australian cricket." Fleming pointed to the competitive pressure driving the privatisation push - the SA20, the ILT20, the proposed NZ20 - all offering players significantly more money than the BBL currently can. "The BBL doesn't want to be a B-grade T20 competition," he said, adding that IPL franchises buying into South Africa represented perhaps the biggest immediate threat to Australian players staying home over summer. The trio also flagged the longer-term ownership question. Once private investors are in at 49%, Fleming suggested, the trajectory is in one direction only. "How long will it be till that's 55, 60 per cent? Once they're in, they're going to own 100 per cent at some stage." Gillespie said he understood players wanting to maximise their earnings but stressed those conversations were already happening. "I can assure you those conversations are already being had with Australian cricketers," he said, referencing Head specifically. "Knowing Travis the way I do, his big goal is to play 100 tests for Australia. That's his dream." CA CEO Todd Greenberg, speaking separately last week, acknowledged the organisation had not communicated its case well. "There's no doubt we could have, and should have, done a better job of the public narrative," he told SEN. He has repeatedly described privatisation as "inevitable" and warned that without higher salary caps, Australian players would follow the money to rival leagues. CA is currently pushing ahead with a hybrid plan - testing the market for stakes in Melbourne Renegades, Perth Scorchers and Hobart Hurricanes - while NSW, Queensland and South Australia remain either opposed or uncommitted.

(No 10) subbed off. "It is a mistake (of the fourth official) indeed. But it wasn't the reason why we lost, it would be unfair to place blame on this," Santos coach Cuca said in a press conference. Once Neymar and the other players realised what had happened, they crowded the referee and tried to make him overturn the decision. Neymar even snatched the official substitution request sheet from the fourth official and held it up in front of the TV cameras to tell broadcasters at the Neo Quimica Arena in Sao Paulo that Santos had written Escobar's number on it rather than his. But despite vociferous protests from Neymar, the referee refused to budge, eventually showing Neymar a yellow card. The forward was eventually escorted off the field.

Bharat Singh Chauhan re-elected Commonwealth Chess Association chairman

Hyderabad: Continuing his remarkable contribution towards the growth and development of chess over the last five decades, Mr. Bharat Singh Chauhan of India has been re-elected unanimously and unopposed as Chairman of the Commonwealth Chess Association (CCA) for the term 2026-2030. The elections were held during the Annual General Body Meeting of the Commonwealth Chess Association at Citrus Hotel, Wasakaduwala, Sri Lanka on Sunday.

Mr. Akhramsyah Muammar Ubaidsh Sanusi of Malaysia was elected unopposed as Deputy Chairman, Mr. G. Luxman Wijesuriya of Sri Lanka as General Secretary, and Mr. Vicky Magu of South Africa as Treasurer. Mr. Hurrinrain Bhowany of Mauritius, Mr. Allan Herbert of Barbados, Mr. Benard Wanjala of Kenya, Mr. Craig Hall of New Zealand and Mr. Crition Tomaritis of Cyprus were also elected unopposed as Executive Members of the Association. The election process was conducted under the supervision of Hon'ble Santiago Pushpa Kumara Ekaratne, Retired Judge of the High Court, who served as the Returning Officer for the elections.

During the meeting, the Association also resolved to introduce the Commonwealth School Chess Championship, with the inaugural edition scheduled to be held in Malaysia in October 2026.

Antoine Semeno joins the band of back-heel bamboozlers



All Erling Haaland could see was a wave of dark blue shirts. In front of him on the right, just inside the box, bristling like a matador trying to tame the bull was the fizzy-crowned Marc Cucurella. Haaland paused and surveyed the goalmouth. Reece James and Moises Caicedo penned Bernardo Silva at the centre. Wesley Fofana and Malo Gusto screened Nico O'Reilly rushing down the flanks. Chelsea's backline had blocked potential paths and receptors. Jorrel Hato was ambling in for reinforcement. Then there was Antoine Semeno. He was the nearest man to Haaland, but Levi Colwill had confiscated him like an angry customs officer. He could not slide to the left because there was little space to run through on the ball; he could not swivel to his right, or half turn, because he would run straight into a blue wall. Haaland too seemed confused (or did he foresee Semeno's wizardry?). His cut-back seemed misdirected, as though he had scuffed it. The shot seemed passing benignly, before Semeno intervened.

He held off Colwill, waited for the ball to almost pass through his legs before deflecting it on the volley with the instep of his back-heel, imparting the momentum with a pirouetted flourish towards the far corner of the post. Artfulness stood out as much as courage. Foremost, back-heeled brilliance requires killing the fear of failure, not least in a final. He would look silly and indulgent, and be blamed for losing the ball in the opposition box. Like a batsman's attempted scoop that sees the stumps played, Semeno, with his back to the goal, had to imagine the ball's path, adjust to its flight, impart it with the ideal weight, pace and direction, and wrestle with a defender almost smothering him. It's as though he had a rearview mirror latched in front of him that shows the space and movements behind. But back-heel virtuosos often admit they don't. Imagination strikes in an instant. The legendary French striker Thierry Henry (the Charlton goal in the 2004-05 season) would say: "You don't go into a game thinking you would score a back-heel goal or assist. It just happens, sometimes you realise it after you have played it." Semeno spoke in a similar

way: "Everything happened so fast to be honest. It came straight to me and I had to improvise myself as quickly as I could. I can't lie." He had a sense of space and geography, though. "The ball was behind me and as long as I got contact on it towards the goal, I was hoping it would go in," he revealed after the game. He, though, used to finesse it in practice sessions. "It has happened a couple of times in training - it happened perfectly today," he said.

A deceptive form of football improvisation, often it is a caress, or a graze. But a well-executed one could split defences cruelly and batter the defending team's morale, rendering them spellbound and feeling foolish. It's football's sleight of foot that unlocks impregnable defences. Little wonder that some of its finest exponents were either Italians or that played in Serie A in the 80s and 90s, where defences were waterproof and tactics restrictive.

Former Manchester City manager and Italy forward Roberto Mancini netted the most famous of them, a near-post backheel volley on the run for Lazio against Parma. Three defenders had marked him during a corner. But he swished to his right and directed the ball over the fourth defender's head. Gianfranco Zola, Pablo di Canio, both rare Italian forwards that thrived in England, dizzied fans with this exceptional piece of skill. The reel of the most stunning backheel goals involves many legends of the game. A not-so-famous one too makes the top pile. The Northern Ireland midfielder was not even credible enough to be considered for his national team and had a modest league career with a clutch of mid-table clubs, for which he made less than 100 appearances. But he scored a goal that would be considered for the 2010 Puskas Award, which honours the player judged to have scored the "most beautiful" goal of the year. He missed out narrowly in the end, but the goal won him fans and fame on YouTube. Two minutes into the injury time, with his team Glentoran scrapping a draw against Portadown, he got a wild cross from the left flank. He stole a few yards on his marker, rushed to the ball, and his back still to the goal, leapt and conjured a right-footed back-heel volley floating over the goalkeeper, 18-odd yards away from him. "I could maybe try to do that 100 times and it would only come off once - I caught it perfectly," he would say. A few days ago, Semeno was the beneficiary of a gorgeous backheeled assist from teammate Phil Foden against Crystal Palace. As the game gets more physical and defensive in England's top league, back-heeled assists and goals would gain more currency. It's the ultimate defence-shredder, touched with as much madness as magic. The goal won City a trophy, and if indeed is the last silverware Pep Guardiola holds aloft with the sky blues, it would be a fitting tribute to the man who remoulded the Premier League with his ideals.

Iran's Alireza Yousefi breaks world record, dedicates medal to strike victims



22-year-old Iranian weightlifter Alireza Yousefi broke the world record in the clean and jerk section of the +110 kg category at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Ahmedabad and dedicated his medal to the school kids killed during a missile attack by the USA in February earlier this year. Yousefi, who is a World Championships bronze medalist, lifted 261 kg in the clean and jerk section to win the gold medal and overall lifted 445 kg to claim the silver medal in the category. Competing under the new weight categories after an overhaul by the International Weightlifting Federation last year, Yousefi's 261 kg is the best mark in the world in the new category and is the first world record. Yousefi, who had lifted 184 kg in snatch, was placed overall third on the podium for his category, but his 261 kg lift meant that he leapfrogged others to win the overall silver and gold medal in clean and jerk. Alireza Yousefi broke the world record at the Asian Weightlifting Championships

in Gandhinagar by lifting 261 kg.

After successfully lifting the 261 kg, Minab removed his singlet with a Persian message on his t-shirt reading "Martyrs of Minab", dedicating his medal to more than 120 school children who lost their lives when a missile strike destroyed the Shajareh Tayyebah Elementary School in Minab, Hormozgan province, Iran. The devastating bombing, which also killed teachers and parents, occurred on the first day of the military conflict between the US and Iran. The Iranian Embassy in India applauded his gesture on the social media platform X. "Alireza Yousefi broke the world record at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Gandhinagar by lifting 261 kg. This Iranian champion dedicated his gold medal to the children martyred in the Minab school tragedy. Well done to Iran's champion," the embassy posted.

India finished 11th in the medal table with 11 medals, while the women's team ended third in the rankings. India won one silver and 10 bronze to be placed 11th in the medal tally, with China perched at the top with 21 gold, 12 silver and 8 bronze. North Korea finished second with 30 medals (18 gold, 11 silver, 1 bronze) while Chinese Taipei took the third spot with 3 gold, 7 silver and 3 bronze. There were 25 world records broken while 27 new Asian records were set, according to a release from the Indian Weightlifting Federation, the organisers of the continental meet. Ri Suk (63kg category) of North Korea was declared the best lifter among women, while China's He Yueji (65kg category) was adjudged the best among men.

Praggnanandhaa holds off Jordan van Foreest to stay unbeaten in Romania



India's R Praggnanandhaa managed to sidestep a potential banana-peel of an opponent in Dutch grandmaster Jordan van Foreest in round 4 of the Super Chess Classic Romania 2026 tournament. Pragg's 35-move draw on Sunday evening against Van Foreest means that the Indian prodigy has remained unbeaten so far at the event in Bucharest. While the result against the Dutchman is his third draw, Pragg managed to defeat World Championship contender Javokhir Sindarov, the one opponent he would have ached to defeat.

Pragg and van Foreest were part of the five-player leading pack heading into the fourth round, but the draw ensured they are half a point behind the tournament leader Vincent Keymer. The day started with the game between Alireza Firouzja and Fabiano Caruana not being played because of what the organisers said was a "medical issue" for the French-Iranian grandmaster. Beginning with a Zukertort Opening, the Pragg versus van Foreest game didn't light up at all and ended quickly as compared to the Indian grandmaster's long-drawn-out game in the previous round. When asked about his tournament so far by the Saint Louis Chess Club after the round, Pragg said: "The tournament so far has been good except the first game. Hopefully I can continue playing good chess." "The first round game

didn't go well but I managed to save it. The rest of the games were okay, but my play was good. Maybe in the first few moves today you can say (that they were not good) but I didn't make any huge mistakes." Rising star Van Foreest's star has been rising rapidly in chess. After touching a rating of 2700 in 2021, the Dutch GM experienced a slump. But since the start of 2026, his career trajectory has been on the rise. From being World no 42 this time last year, Van Foreest finds himself as the World no 16 at the moment, one spot ahead of Pragg and three ahead of world champion Gukesh in the FIDE ratings list. At the start of the year, at the Tata Steel Chess tournament in Wijk aan Zee, Van Foreest had held Gukesh, Pragg, Arjun Erigaisi, Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Javokhir Sindarov, and Hans Niemann to draws while also handing a defeat to his country's top rated grandmaster, Anish Giri, and German GM Vincent Keymer. Recently, Van Foreest had defeated five-time world champion Magnus Carlsen to a defeat in classical chess at the TePe Sigeman Chess tournament. The other talking point from the tournament has been world championship contender Javokhir Sindarov not managing to get a single win in four rounds, a sharp contrast to his form at the Candidates.

Sunil Gavaskar calls Rajasthan Royals' bowling decision 'suicidal move'

Hyderabad: "Handing the ball to Donovan Ferreira to bowl the 18th over was a suicidal move. You are bringing a slow bowler on a pitch offering him no help. He was just bowling in the slot. It was his first over of the match. He had also scored a golden duck with the bat," JioStar expert Sunil Gavaskar said Sunday's 'Amul Cricket Live' show.

Debut in landmark Malayalam film but daughter's suicide devastated Prema; took own life 4 years later



time. Shoba's rise in cinema was almost meteoric. She won the Kerala State Film Award for Best Child Artist in 1971, and then, pretty much grew up in front of the camera, slowly transitioning from child actor to leading lady. According to Manorama Online, she played a lead role for the first time at the age of 15 in Ramu Kariat's *Dweepu* (1977). The same year, she appeared opposite Kamal Haasan in the Malayalam film *Ormakal Marikkumo*, directed by KS Sethumadhavan. During this time, she was also active in Tamil.

Randu Penkuttikal, Uthrada Rathri, Ulkadal, Ekakini, Bandhanam, Oru Veedu Oru Ulagam, Mullum Malarum, Oru Vidukadhari Oru Thodarkadhari, Azhiyatha Kolangal, and Shalini Ente Koottukari were among the titles where she delivered spectacular performances, winning the hearts of both Malayalam and Tamil audiences. While she bagged the Kerala State Film Award for Second Best Actress for *Ormakal Marikkumo* in 1977, Shoba won the Kerala State Film Award for Best Actress in 1978 for *Ente Neelakasham*. She clinched the National Film Award for Best Actress at the age of 17 for her performance in director Durai's *Pasi* (1979). She also worked in a couple of Telugu and Kannada films. Although she was soaring, Shoba was going through intense emotional insecurity. During this time, she grew close to director-cinematographer Balu Mahendra. Though he was already married and about 23 years older than her, Shoba fell for his compassion, which came as a light at the end of the tunnel for her amid the pressures in personal and professional life. They eventually tied the knot.

However, Prema opposed this union, reportedly believing that Shoba's relationship with a married man — a father to a child, for that matter — would ruin her life and future. Shoba was torn between her mother and her husband. Yet, she believed that Balu would leave his first wife, Akhileshwari, and his son, Shanki, for her. But that did not happen, and this apparently scarred her emotionally. Within weeks of winning the National Award, she ended her life by hanging herself on May 1, 1980. Prema, however, wasn't ready to believe that it was a suicide. According to India Today, she wrote to the then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi alleging "foul play." She accused Balu Mahendra of making "colossal financial demands" on her. The then-Tamil Nadu Governor, Prabhu Das Patwari, ordered the police to conduct a thorough probe. However, investigations reportedly ruled out foul play as the cause of death. Shoba won the National Film Award for Best Actress at the age of 17. Shoba in *Mana Voori Pandavulu*. (Credit: 20cmoviestars.weebly.com) KG George's *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*

In the meantime, filmmaking legend KG George made *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* (1983). Loosely based on Shoba's life, death, and her relationship with Balu Mahendra, the film also chronicled the grey areas of the film industry and how South Indian cinema exploited its women. George reportedly wrote in his autobiography, "There is no dispute that it was Shoba's suicide that prompted me to make *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback*. However, I do not claim that the film is exclusively about Shoba's tragic end. Rather, it reflected the 'suicide syndrome' that has always been prevalent in the film industry." The movie was essentially created by absorbing the essence of lives in Kodambakkam (once the hub of the South Indian film industry) and hence, cannot be viewed merely as the story of Shoba, Balu Mahendra, and Prema. The movie and its central characters contained traits of many individuals George encountered in Kodambakkam. However, writer Anu Pappachan mentions in her book *Penthrira: Malayala Cinemayile Pennungal* that the audience, unfortunately, failed to perceive these nuances. She noted they fell into generalisations and sought the origins of Lekha's mother solely in the real-life Prema. "The gossip columns and rumours of that era were the reasons why this unscrupulous 'mother' in *Lekhayude Maranam Oru Flashback* — portrayed as immersing herself in the glitz of cinema and yielding to every compromise, and even sacrificing her own daughter's life — was read as a mirror image of Prema. Consequently, the true essence of Prema's life as an actor was rendered irrelevant within this tragic and mysterious narrative." Prema's fight to ensure justice for her daughter didn't last long. She was devastated by Shoba's death. According to Vanitha, she used to serve rice in front of a large photo of Shoba in their house and act as if she were feeding her daughter. She couldn't bring herself to believe that Shoba had gone. On April 5, 1984, Prema Menon died by suicide.

It's been over 46 years since Shoba's tragic death, but the indelible mark she left as an actor shines on. She lived in this world for only 17 years, and during this brief period, she not only scaled great heights as a performer but also endured significant life struggles that eventually forced her to take an extreme step. However, Shoba's story didn't end with her demise... It wasn't hers alone to begin with; it was also her mother's. In a way, it can be said that Shoba's story was an extension of her mother Prema Menon's, and vice versa. Maybe that was also why Prema couldn't survive long in a world without her baby girl.

Prema's entry into cinema Although Prema is widely known as "Shoba's mother," she herself was an actor who appeared in over 70 movies. While Prema didn't grow into the kind of actor/star her daughter became, she wasn't an obscure artist. According to the late renowned film journalist Chelangatt Gopalakrishnan, Prema's entry into Tinseltown came courtesy of her uncle, legendary author SK Pottekkatt. While her family was struggling financially following her father's death, Pottekkatt brought poet-filmmaker Bhaskaran and producer TK Pareekutty to her home to introduce them to her. Gopalakrishnan wrote in his book, *Malayala Cinema: Charitram Vichitram*. They instantly liked Prema and cast her in their upcoming *Neelakuyil* (1954), the first Malayalam film ever to win a National Award. Helmed by Bhaskaran and Ramu Kariat, *Neelakuyil* was based on a story by noted author Uroob and challenged the social evils of the caste system, untouchability, feudalism, and gender injustice. At the 2nd National Film Awards, it earned the now-discontinued All India Certificate of Merit and the President's Silver Medal for Best Feature Film in Malayalam. Along with Sathyan, Miss Kumari, and Bhaskaran, Prema portrayed one of the central characters and earned significant praise for her performance. If you or someone you know is going through a difficult time, help is a call away. Helpline numbers are mentioned at the end of this piece. She then played key roles in the Bhaskaran-Uroob duo's *Rarichan Enna Pauran* (1956) and *Nairu Pidicha Pulivalu* (1963), delivering noteworthy performances. In a career spanning 28 years, she appeared in about 77 movies, including *Moodupadam* (1963), *Shakuntala* (1965), *Rakthapushpam* (1970), *Inquilab Zindabad* (1971), *Sindooracheppu* (1971), *Poompaatta* (1971), *Taxi Car* (1972), *Paakkadal* (1976), *Swapnadanam* (1976), *Sankhupushpam* (1977), *Ormakal Marikkumo* (1977), *Velluvili* (1978), and *Padmatheertham* (1978).

Interestingly, she and Shoba shared the screen in movies such as *Inquilab Zindabad*, *Sindooracheppu*, *Taxi Car*, *Aaradi Manninte Janmi* (1972), and *Ormakal Marikkumo*. Lahari (1982) marked Prema's final film appearance. While she was gradually making a footing in the industry, Prema and her husband, KP Menon, became parents to a little girl, Mahalakshmi, on September 23, 1961. The little one entered the world of cinema at the age of four through the Savitri-starrer Tamil film *Thattungal Thirakkapadam* (1966). She subsequently made her Malayalam debut in director P Venu's *Udhayogastha* (1967), where she was credited as "Baby Shoba" for the first

Pati Patni Aur Woh Do Ayushmann Khurrana's film earns Rs 24 cr globally, trails behind Kartik Aaryan original

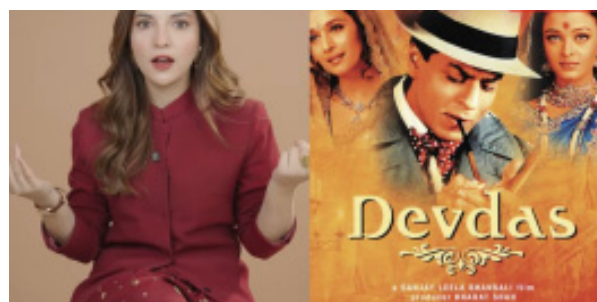


its first day (Friday), *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* collected Rs 4 crores, and on day 2 (Saturday), the film earned Rs 5.75 crores.

Compared to Saturday, *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* also saw an impressive jump in its occupancy on Sunday. While the overall occupancy on Saturday was 17.69 percent; on Sunday, it jumped to 26.02 percent. With 19 shows, Chennai had an occupancy of 53.5 percent, and with 168 shows, Pune recorded an occupancy of 31.8 percent. In Mumbai, the overall occupancy for *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* was 28.5 percent with 468 shows running, and in Delhi NCR, the occupancy was 20 percent with 961 shows. The Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer trails behind its 2019 predecessor, which starred Kartik Aaryan. Back in 2019, Kartik Aaryan's *Pati Patni Aur Woh* had earned Rs 17.50 crores and closed its opening weekend with a total collection of Rs 42 crores. Before this, Ayushmann Khurrana was last seen in *Thamma*. The film performed decently at the box office, earning Rs 187.59 crore in its lifetime. So far, *Dream Girl* remains the highest grosser for Ayushmann Khurrana. *Rakul Preet Singh's* last film, *De De Pyaar De 2*, collected Rs 111.77 crore at the box office. This is *Wamiqa Gabbi's* second release in 2026. Before *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do*, she was seen in *Bhoot Bangla*, which became a hit and managed to earn Rs 249.05 crore worldwide. As for Sara Ali Khan, she was last seen in *Anurag Basu's Metro Inn Dino*; the film failed to impress both critically and commercially. Ever since the film's trailer dropped, the film has been panned for promoting adultery. However, the film's director and the lead actor, Ayushmann Khurrana, had denied the claims. Another controversy around the film was about its leading ladies not getting along. As per a few media reports, *Rakul Preet* and *Sara Ali Khan* had been ignoring and sidelining *Wamiqa Gabbi* at one of the film's events.

Pati Patni Aur Woh Do box office collection Day 3: Mudassar Aziz-directed rom-com *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* has been getting a mixed response from audiences. However, a positive sign for Ayushmann Khurrana, *Rakul Preet Singh*, *Wamiqa Gabbi*, and *Sara Ali Khan* starrer is that its numbers have been scaling upwards at the box office. After the first weekend, the film has made a total net collection of Rs 17.50 crores and a total gross collection of Rs 21 crores. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, *Pati Patni Aur Woh Do* raked in a gross total of Rs 3.25 crores overseas. The film's gross total worldwide collection stands at Rs 24.25 crores. Ayushmann's latest film saw a 34.8 percent increase in its box office collection on Sunday as the film earned Rs 7.75 crores net across 6350 shows in India. On day 3, the film's gross collection in India stood at Rs 9.30 crores. On

'Shah Rukh's Devdas overrated, glamourises alcoholism': Pakistani actor Dananeer Mobeen gets hate



Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2002 film *Devdas*, starring Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, and Madhuri Dixit, is considered an all-time classic in Indian cinema. However, Pakistani actress Dananeer Mobeen feels otherwise. In one of her recent interviews, the Mera Lyari actress called the SRK starrer overrated and went on to ask why people have been going gaga over the film all these years. Dananeer's comments soon went viral on social media, inviting some serious backlash.

24-year-old Dananeer Mobeen is an influencer-turned-actress. In 2021, Dananeer went viral on social media for her catchphrase 'Pawrty hori hai'. That same year, Dananeer got her break on television with a show called *Sinf-e-Aahan* that aired on ARY Digital. However, Dananeer's breakthrough performance came in 2023 with the show *Muhabbat Gumshuda Meri*. Last year, Dananeer's show *Meem Se Mohabbat* also gained immense popularity. In 2026, Dananeer is seen in the show *Hurmat*. She also made her film debut with *Mera Lyari*, where she plays the role of Afsana Baloch. As per reports, Dananeer's debut film, which was supposed to be an answer to India's *Dhurandhar*, went on to tank at the box office.

What did Dananeer Mobeen say about *Devdas*?

In her recent interview with *Mashion*, Dananeer was answering some fun trivia questions. When she was asked to name a classic film she finds overrated, the actress went on to name *Devdas*. "What is the story? There's an alcoholic, there's a woman who has no self-respect, there's a dad who 'beep', and there's another woman who is forced upon the man. There is a man who is forced upon this other woman... what is happening, and why is it a classic? Why is everyone going gaga? I get the sets, the grandeur, outfits, but the story? Why are we glamorising alcoholism?" Someone should remind Dananeer, *Devdas* does not glorify alcoholism. His downfall is driven by ego and addiction, and he dies broken. Paro's choice to marry another man is an act of self-respect, not weakness. This clip from the interview soon went viral on X, with Dananeer receiving massive backlash. In fact, one of the users also pointed out how the actress had dressed up as Paro from the film during a segment on one of her shows called *Very Filmy*.

Internet reacts to Dananeer's comments on *Devdas* Netizens strongly reacted to Dananeer's comments about *Devdas*. One of the users wrote, "I'm sure Dananeer has no clue that *Devdas* was based on a novel from Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, one of the most prolific authors

CM Vijay's appointment of Rajmohan as Film Minister divides Tamil film industry: 'Not demeaning but...'

A week into taking oath as the new chief minister of Tamil Nadu following his historic win in the State Assembly Elections, C Joseph Vijay has jumped into governance. While assigning portfolios to members of his party *Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam* (TVK), he handed out his home turf of Film Technology and Cinematograph Act to actor-filmmaker Rajmohan, the propaganda secretary of the party. Rajmohan has also been assigned the portfolios of School Education and Tamil Development and Information. Actor-producer Vishal took to his X handle on Sunday and called out the issues with the appointment. "Happy to see #CMJosephVijay allocating ministries to respective elected MLAs but it's disheartening to see honorable minister #Rajmohan to be in charge as minister of Film Technology and Cinematograph Act," he wrote. "How would I or we as a body or as an association render our requests or grievances of our film industry which is actually bleeding and so many reforms to be made and give a ray of hope for the fraternity especially producers/production houses to someone who has lesser or no experience of what is happening in our industry more than our CM who was and is part of the industry from grassroot level and being part of the fraternity for last 30 years," he added. "Not demeaning Mr. Rajmohan, but it's just my opinion. CM can give us the much needed relief. God bless," he concluded.

Raghava Lawrence defends Vijay's decision Meanwhile, actor-filmmaker Raghava Lawrence defended Vijay and Rajmohan, and requested the naysayers to at least give him enough time to get acquainted with the portfolio. "Our Honorable Chief Minister and Nanba #CMJosephVijay surely would not have taken this decision without careful thought and consideration. Rather than reacting impulsively, let us give it some time and extend our support," he wrote on X on Sunday. "I'm hopeful that Minister Raj Mohan will deliver his best for the welfare of the film fraternity. I understand the concerns, especially given the current challenges faced by the film industry. However, Honorable Minister #RajMohan, as the Minister for Film Technology and the Cinematograph Act, deserves some time and a fair opportunity to settle into this role," he added, along with posting a picture of Vijay and Rajmohan. Our Honorable Chief Minister and Nanba #CMJosephVijay surely would not have taken this decision without careful thought and consideration. Rather than reacting impulsively, let us give it some time and extend our support. I'm hopeful that Minister Raj Mohan will deliver his best... Actor-producer T Siva also shared the same picture on X minutes later and wrote, "Honorable Minister @imrajmohan is not only highly popular on social media platforms but also possesses substantial experience in that field. He has even directed a film. Moreover, he shares strong friendships and close ties with many in the cinema industry." "Given his deep understanding of the challenges and current circumstances facing the Tamil cinema sector, selecting him as the Minister for the Tamil Film Industry would be an exceedingly appropriate decision. Heartfelt thanks to the Honorable Chief Minister Vijay for making this excellent choice (folded hands emoji)," added Siva. Rajmohan broke through in 2009 after winning season 2 of reality TV show *Tamil Pechu Engal Mochu* on Star Vijay. Also a stand-up comedian, he served as a mentor and judge on *Comicstaan Semma Comedy Pa* in 2020 on Prime Video, the Tamil version of popular

from the Bengali Renaissance. This is what happens when you become an actor due to viral reels." Another user said, "What a shallow and uninformed take on *Devdas*. Reducing a classic like that to casual commentary shows a real lack of understanding of cinema. Not every opinion needs to be voiced, especially when it dismisses something so iconic so lightly. Very disappointing." I'm sure Dananeer has no clue that *Devdas* was based on a novel from Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, one of the most prolific authors from the Bengali Renaissance. This is what happens when you become an actor due to viral reels. She probably thinks *Ismat Chughtai* is a medical lab pic.twitter.com/CATep4nU71A third user wrote, "She is insufferable. I couldn't even make it through the whole clip. Someone please sit her down and explain to her what a 'tragedy,' is in the literary sense. Or better yet, stop giving her the damn mic altogether and save us all the trouble." Another user wrote, "Someone should remind Dananeer, *Devdas* does not glorify alcoholism. His downfall is driven by ego and addiction, and he dies broken. Paro's choice to marry another man is an act of self-respect, not weakness. The only thing overrated here is her fake accent, not *Devdas*." The backlash continued with someone calling Dananeer an attention seeker, while another user referred to her views as idiotic. "Dananeer is an attention seeker !!! Always tries to become famous through shortcuts!," a user wrote. Another one said, "What an utterly idiotic take. She is running down one of the greatest classics written by one of the greatest playwrights who ever existed. That's why education is so important. Any random person getting a mic and speaking nonsense needs to stop."

What Sanjay Leela Bhansali said about *Devdas*?

In 2024, during an interview with Hollywood Reporter India, director Sanjay Leela Bhansali had also spoken about the perceptions around *Devdas*' character being toxic. He had shared that several actors had reservations about how the character would be portrayed. "What is the story of *Devdas*? That he's a loser, he doesn't do anything, he gets upset... My actors didn't understand why we're telling this story. They said, 'Oh, it's romanticising alcoholism'. I said, 'This is the story of a man who loved'. What is our biggest duty in this life? To love and give love. Does anyone love like *Devdas*. I wanted to say, 'If you love somebody, that's how you love'. *Devdas* is a story of a man who loved. People have been making *Devdas* (for years). Why? They say he's a loser. He's not a loser. He's the most noble of any of my characters. He loved Paro. You ask him anything, he would say, 'Paro'. That is love. That is a love story." Talking about this character, Shah Rukh Khan had said at the Locarno Film Festival in 2024, "I don't like to play characters that demean women, I didn't want him to be liked in the film for the reason that he disses a woman and doesn't commit to her, I wanted him to come across as a person who is spineless and not somebody you should look up to. Bhansali made the film beautifully, but I don't think anybody wants to be *Devdas*, it is not a character you take back home. I just didn't want a character who has commitment issues with women to become popular in a different sense, I think I achieved that."



comedy talent hunt show *Comicstaan*. He has also appeared in a number of films since 2017, before he made his directorial debut with *Baba Black Sheep* in 2023. However, his primary claim to fame has been through his popular YouTube channel *Put Chutney*. It first gained recognition in 2017 when he posted the video, *Who Killed Anitha*, which probed into the death of a medical aspirant by suicide after she opposed the NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test). He further advocated easy access to education during the Covid-19 pandemic by launching a dedicated YouTube channel for college students whose classes were hampered by the global shutdown.

Why does Vishal say Tamil cinema is 'bleeding'? In his tweet, Vishal claimed the Tamil film industry is "bleeding". Along with expressing his dissatisfaction over the appointment of Rajmohan, the actor-producer also highlighted three requests for the betterment of Tamil cinema:

1. Kindly introduce government ticketing window which will bring revenue to government as well as relief to viewers who pay Rs 30 per ticket.
 2. Kindly abolish local body tax, as we are the only state in India to induce two taxes, against the "one India one tax" rule.
 3. Kindly increase subsidy for small films every year from the current meager amount given.
- Not only Vishal, but also veteran actor-filmmaker Kamal Haasan met Vijay on Saturday, and submitted six "important demands emphasizing that the Tamil Nadu government's support and embrace are essential for the Tamil film industry, which is facing various obstacles". These demands are as follows:
1. Launch of a state-owned OTT platform where Tamil audiences could access Tamil cinema, independent film and documentaries at affordable and subsidised rates.
 2. Abolition of local body entertainment tax levied at 4 percent. This will greatly help the Tamil film industry.
 3. Creation of a dedicated anti-piracy enforcement team within the Tamil Nadu police cyber crime department to protect Tamil cinema with powers to enforce real time takedowns of pirated content.
 4. Permission for theatres to screen five shows per day for all films.
 5. Making an eight-week OTT release window mandatory for all films released in Tamil Nadu.