

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

26 May 2026 | Tuesday | Volume No:14 | Issue No: 98

Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹1/-

## Sudden downpour disrupted traffic, power in Medak town

Medak: Unseasonal rains coupled with gusty winds lashed Medak town and neighbouring mandals on Monday evening. Several low-lying areas were inundated due to the sudden downpour. In rural parts of the district, paddy brought to procurement centres was damaged due to the sudden rain. Electric poles and trees were uprooted at several places due to strong winds. Traffic was disrupted at several places in the town. There was disruption in power supply too as power lines snapped due to heavy winds. Transco officials were working to restore power.

## Women stage protest at police station as SI refuses to take complaint in Jharsangam

Sangareddy: Women of Yelgoi village staged a protest at Jharsangam police station, accusing SI Kranthi Kumar of refusing to register an FIR in a robbery case.

According to villagers of Yelgoi, the victim Narsamma and another woman had gone to agricultural fields on Sunday afternoon when an unidentified person robbed her of gold and silver ornaments after threatening to kill her.

## Centre Not Cooperating In Paddy Procurement: CM

Hyderabad, May 25

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday said the state government is purchasing paddy from farmers though the Centre is not "cooperating" in the process. During an interaction with CPI leaders who called on him here, he said the state government is procuring maize from farmers, though the Centre is not purchasing.

The state government is procuring maize from farmers, though it makes losses in the process, he said and stated that the state has witnessed a good yield of maize during the crop season. In a separate interaction with CPI(M) leaders who met him, the chief minister alleged that the Centre is not procuring even 30 per cent of the produce from farmers. The Centre should be questioned on this, he said.

Against the backdrop of opposition's attack on the Congress government over the alleged delay in procurement, the CM said there has been a shortage of workers for the procurement process as many of them belong to West Bengal who travelled to their home state for the recent assembly elections. The procurement is not taken up at the agriculture market yards in the afternoons in view of severe heat, he said. The state government is purchasing all the produce from farmers, and it is also paying a bonus for a fine variety of paddy, he said.

The Telangana government has instructed officials to speed up the procurement of paddy and jowar and complete the process before the onset of rains. The number of paddy procurement centres was increased to expedite purchases and ensure smooth transactions for farmers.



number of paddy procurement centres was increased to expedite purchases and ensure smooth transactions for farmers.

## NEET Paper Leak: NTA has not Learnt Lessons, Says SC

New Delhi, May 25

The Supreme Court on Monday said it was sad that NTA has not learn lessons from the earlier NEET paper leak as it sought response from the Centre, NTA and CBI on pleas for replacement of the testing agency with a robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance exam.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe directed that copy of petitions be served to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta besides other parties and asked the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is responsible for conducting the NEET exam, to file an affidavit by Thursday on compliance of directions issued by the court in 2024.

"It's sad that they have not learnt their lessons. The matter travelled to this court earlier also. There was a committee, a monitoring committee which made some recommendations and they were accepted. We want NTA to file an affidavit on the steps taken for compliance of recommendations suggested by the committee," the bench said.

The top court, which issued notice on a plea filed by the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), through lawyer Tanvi Dubey said it is tagging all the similar matters together.

It directed the Centre-appointed committee led by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Radhakrishnan for overhaul of the functioning of the NTA to detail the steps taken for compliance of its directions.

## No Ebola Case Reported in India So Far, Says Health Minister Nadda; Reviews Preparedness

New Delhi, May 25: No case of Ebola Virus has been reported in India so far, said Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Monday, directing officials to ensure all surveillance and testing arrangements remain in a state of readiness. "India has not reported any case of Bundibugyo Ebola disease to date," Nadda said.

According to an official statement, during a high-level meeting with senior officials of the Union Health Ministry, Nadda assessed the country's readiness amid global concern over Ebola and directed that all preventive mechanisms remain fully alert and operational.

Nadda said, "Enhanced screening and surveillance measures have been initiated at international airports and other points of entry, and advisories along with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on screening, quarantine, clinical management, laboratory testing and infection prevention practices have been shared with all States and Union Territories."

Meanwhile, aviation watchdog DGCA has asked airlines to implement various measures, including making in-flight announcements and mandatory filing of self-declaration forms from passengers originating or transiting through the affected countries.



The medical body has urged the top court for direct restructuring or replacement of NTA with a robust and autonomous system to conduct NEET-UG, citing a "direct assault" on the fundamental rights of over 22.7 lakh students through recurring paper leaks.

It has also sought a direction to appoint a high-powered monitoring committee until a fresh body is formally constituted to oversee the re-examination. It further said the committee should comprise a retired Supreme Court judge as the chair, along with a cybersecurity expert and a forensic scientist, to ensure that no further leaks occur.

The undergraduate-level National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) held on May 3 by the NTA for admissions to medical education programmes was cancelled on May 12 amid allegations of paper leak, which are now being probed by the CBI.



Meetings have also been held with States/Union Territories and stakeholders concerned to review preparedness and response measures.

On the minister's directions, the Union Health Secretary chaired a joint review meeting with officials from various ministries and agencies concerned to strengthen coordination and preparedness measures, the statement said.



## President Droupadi Murmu confers Padma Awards; actor Dharmendra, violinist N Rajam honoured

New Delhi, May 25

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday conferred the Padma Vibhushan on Bollywood actor Dharmendra posthumously and classical musician and violinist N Rajam at a Civil Investiture Ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

Dharmendra's award for exceptional and distinguished service in the field of art was received by his wife and MP Hema Malini.

Rajam was honoured for her pioneering contribution to Indian classical music, especially for revolutionising violin performance through the 'Gayaki Ang' style that replicates vocal music on the instrument.

Murmu conferred the Padma Bhushan on Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, former Uttarakhand chief minister; Shatavadhani R Ganesh, acclaimed polymath who revived the challenging classical Indian art form 'Avadhana'; Uday Suresh Kumar Kotak, founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank; and gastroenterologist Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy.

She also conferred the award posthumously on ad guru Piyush Pandey and former parliamentarian Vijay Kumar Malhotra. Pandey's wife and Malhotra's son, respectively, received the awards.

India women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur, actor Prosenjit Chatterjee, para athlete Praveen Kumar and former Central Reserve Police Force director-general K Vijay Kumar received the Padma Shri.

The ceremony, which was held in the Gantantra Mandap of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, began with an instrumental rendition of the national song, 'Vande Mataram', followed by the national anthem. It was attended by Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, among others.

For 2026, the President has approved conferment of 131 Padma Awards -- five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri. The awards will be conferred at two separate Civil Investiture ceremonies.

The Padma Awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.

The coveted civilian honours are given in various fields, including art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service.

## Seven cars and two trucks damaged in accident at Indalvai, Nizamabad

**A major accident involving seven cars and two trucks occurred on NH-44 at Chandrayanpally in Nizamabad district on Monday evening. Six persons were injured after a truck reportedly suffered tyre and brake failure, triggering a massive pile-up and long traffic disruption**

Nizamabad, May 25 Seven cars and two trucks were severely damaged in a major road accident on NH-44 at Chandrayanpally in Indalvai mandal here on Monday evening.

Officials said no casualties were reported, though six persons sustained injuries. The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment.

According to reports, the accident occurred after a truck suffered a tyre burst and brake failure, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle. The truck rammed into two cars travelling ahead of it, forcing them to stop on the highway.

Five cars travelling behind the truck then crashed into the vehicles, resulting in a massive pile-up on the highway.



Massive pile-up on the highway.

Meanwhile, another truck carrying coconuts, which was following the cars, lost control while trying to avoid the collision. The vehicle skidded off the road and overturned in nearby fields.

The accident triggered chaos on the busy highway, with motorists struggling to understand the sequence of events. Traffic movement on NH-44 remained disrupted for a long time as police and rescue teams cleared the damaged vehicles.

Videos and photographs of the accident were widely circulated on social media platforms.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Vinesh verdict puts fairness above vendetta

THE Delhi High Court's decision allowing Vinesh Phogat to participate in the Asian Games trials is about more than the fate of just one athlete. It underscores that sporting institutions cannot function through opaque rules, selective application and personal vendetta. The court's sharp remarks against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), including its observation that the federation appeared "vindictive", should worry everyone invested in Indian sport. Federations exist to nurture talent and ensure fairness, not to settle scores with athletes who challenge authority. The attempt to deny Vinesh a fair opportunity after her return from maternity leave and injury recovery exposed how Indian sports administration lacks transparent, humane and gender-sensitive policies.

India has celebrated sporting mothers before. Mary Kom returned after motherhood to win world titles and an Olympic medal, while Sania Mirza made a successful comeback to international tennis after childbirth. Globally, champions like Serena Williams and Allyson Felix transformed conversations around maternity rights in sport through their extraordinary post-pregnancy performances. Motherhood, therefore, cannot become a professional handicap or an excuse for bureaucratic exclusion. The controversy also reflects the continuing fallout of the wrestlers' protest movement, where several athletes accused powerful officials of intimidation and misconduct. When outspoken sportspersons begin facing administrative roadblocks, public confidence in sporting bodies erodes rapidly. India celebrates women athletes when they win medals, but often abandons them when they confront institutional power or biological realities such as pregnancy and recovery.

## Police Personnel Honoured for Efficient Bandobast During IPL Matches at Uppal Stadium



“UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL ): Police officials felicitated police personnel for efficiently performing bandobast duties during the seven Indian Premier League (IPL) matches held at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal. On the occasion, Uppal Sub-Inspectors Chiranjeevi and Madhu, along with Head Constable Jangaiah, were honoured with mementoes in recognition of their dedicated services in maintaining tight security arrangements during the matches. The programme was attended by Malkajgiri Police Commissioner Sumathi, Uppal Zone DCP Suresh, Additional DCP Venkataramana, ACP Venkat Reddy, SHO Ramalinga Reddy, and DI Ravikummar. Sunrisers Hyderabad cricketer Abhishek Sharma also participated in the event and appreciated the services rendered by the police personnel. Officials stated that despite the huge turnout of spectators during the IPL matches, the police ensured foolproof security arrangements and prevented any untoward incidents through effective coordination and vigilant policing.

## De sealing should be abolished.

Sand ramps should be managed in the old way by societies. Revenue from agency resources should be earmarked for development of the agency area. The Telangana Aboriginal Tribal Community Demand... Mulugu/ Venkatapuram. may25 Indian Chronicle. Members of the state committee of Telangana Indigenous Tribal Association, Jezzari Damodar, said that the agency is working with the Congress party in the state to lock up forest mineral wealth and natural resources for corporate powers, investors and push indigenous tribal development into darkness. The Telangana Aboriginal community at the Alubaka Center attended the Assembly of Mandals and said that the Modi government in the country was clearing thousands of acres of forests to make profits for its allies, Adani, Ambani and Bada investors so as to destroy the hidden mineral wealth in the wild areas of the country and thus ensure compliance with the agency's 1/70, Pesa laws, forest protection and wildlife conservation. The Governments, which are supposed to improve the living standards of people by using forestry for indigenous peoples and their development, have acted in such a way as to make the country's people, including Aboriginal people, disappear while working for the profits of the Badda Investors. He said that even today, governments are failing to provide the minimum infrastructure needs (roads, water, electricity, education and medicine) in indigenous villages, while not spending income through agency resources for indigenous people but rather cheating them by spending on other necessities of the state. Revenue from agency resources are to be allocated for development of the agency area. The government's machinery demanded that the hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of sand be looted in Venkatapuram district under the name of Sitharama project, and also demand that an investigation should be conducted through old-fashioned societies to clear about 15 kilometers of unlicensed sand in Venkatapuram district. The native population of Leningrad was warned to unite and engage in direct fighting. Subsequently, the Telangana Aboriginal and Tribal Community Venkatapuram New Zones Committee was unanimously elected with Poonem Chandu as its Chairman and Kapula Venkateswar as its Secretary. This event was attended by members of the community's Zones Committee, Irpa Srinu, Kunj Narayana, and others.

## With everyone's coordination, we completed the shoot of 'Memu Cop'lam' in just 17 days



— Cinematographer Kishore Boyidapu “A cinematographer is the creative force who beautifully translates a director's vision onto the screen. Not only that, but they are also the magician who multiplies the value of a producer's budget through visual storytelling. If the producer is the father of a film and the director is the mother, then the cinematographer is undoubtedly the elder son who stands by the film from beginning to end. One such talented cinematographer making his mark in this crucial department is Kishore Boyidapu. Starting his journey from the grassroots level in the camera department, he proved his talent not only in Telugu cinema but also by working in Bollywood and Hollywood films. Recently, he earned appreciation for the series “Memu Cop'lam”, directed by Pradeep Maddali with Naga Babu in the lead role. The series is currently streaming on Zee5. Kishore Boyidapu, who played a key role in completing the series shoot in just 17 days, shared several insights about his cinematic journey, the challenges he faced, and experiences from the series. My full name is Durga Kishore Kumar. Since my entire family was associated with the film industry, I naturally developed an interest in it. My father used to take our photographs and narrate stories through those photos. That's where my interest in this field began. From childhood itself, I was fascinated by cameras. Cinema Journey. I started my career in 2002 as a camera assistant in Ravi Prasad's unit. After about four years, I moved to Mumbai. My first project there was working in the camera department for Slumdog Millionaire. Later, I also worked on English films and gained experience working on nearly 15 Hollywood films, including Mission: Impossible 4. In 2012, I worked as the Director of Photography (DOP) for a film titled Boy Meets Girl. During that phase, my journey with Anil Mehta began in 2015. That journey started with Ae Dil Hai Mushkil and continued until Jersey. In between, I also got the opportunity to work on nearly ten more films. Working with sir as one of the main assistants gave me immense happiness and valuable experience in my career. Everything I learned from him has been extremely useful in my cinematography journey. Every lesson from that phase remains very valuable to me. Thanks to Anil Mehta sir. After COVID, when I received opportunities for films like My Name Is Shruithi and 105 Minutes, I spoke

with him. At that time, he encouraged me by saying, “Go ahead and start your own work independently.” That's how I restarted my journey as a cinematographer with a fresh beginning. A Challenging Experience Making a film in a single shot is extremely challenging. In 105, starring Hansika, we made the film with a single character and in a single-shot format. The audience need not know the effort behind it — what matters is whether they liked the film or not. But nobody really understands the difficulty involved in making a single-shot film. If even one mistake happens anywhere, the entire process has to begin again from scratch. From Film to Digital Earlier, films were shot on film stock, but now everything has shifted to digital. Today, we can take as many takes as we want. In the past, filmmakers had to constantly monitor film length while shooting. Those limitations no longer exist. Now, everyone does extensive research about lenses. We choose lenses according to the story and budget. Researching every lens and selecting the right one itself is a huge task. I mostly use Cooke lenses. For the upcoming film Premaku Namaskaram starring Shanmukh, I used the Cooke 7 lens. People I Follow Every cinematographer has their own style. I follow Ravi Varman sir, Anil Mehta sir, and Sudeep Chatterjee sir a lot. There's no fixed rule saying something must be done only one way. It depends on the scene and situation of that day. Sometimes, even when there's room for improvement, pressure forces us to move on. What matters most is delivering the best possible output within the available time. The Difference Between Hollywood and Indian Cinema Hollywood films generally use more natural, soft, and cinematic color tones. They prefer realistic lighting and controlled coloring. Indian films, on the other hand, feature vibrant colors, rich skin tones, and emotional lighting. This is because our culture, festivals, costumes, atmosphere, and emotions are deeply connected to our storytelling style. That's why colors hold immense importance in Indian cinema. Hollywood films use advanced color workflows like ACES, RAW, and HDR. Indian cinema, especially OTT projects, is now moving in the same direction. Simply put, Hollywood presents colors realistically, while Indian cinema presents colors emotionally and culturally rich. The color tones used in Hollywood are different because their stories, culture, and environment are different from ours. If we completely adopt those depressed tones here, the audience may not connect with them. We use the same lenses they use, but the difference is that they spend much more time on DI (Digital Intermediate). Here, we usually don't have that much time. By the time we do four or five layers of grading, time runs out. If the sky isn't bright enough there, they enhance it using VFX. Shoot Completed in Just 17 Days We completed the entire shoot of 'Memu Cop'lam' in just 17 days. That was possible because of strong pre-production planning and the hard work of every department. From planning to execution, everyone gave their best and supported the project smoothly. Special thanks to director Pradeep garu for always leading with clarity and support throughout the journey. Heartfelt thanks to producer BVS Ravi garu and the entire production team for believing in us and supporting the project. Special thanks as well to Naga Babu garu, Srinu garu, Ravi garu, and the entire cast and crew. With everyone's teamwork and coordination, we successfully completed the shoot on time. Even during location recce, Pradeep and I discussed how each scene should be shot and how quickly it could be completed. We spent a lot of time discussing everything in the office itself. We had complete clarity during pre-production, and because of that coordination, we finished the series even ahead of schedule. Thoughts on Direction Transitioning from cinematographer to director is not an easy task. Direction is a highly responsible job and involves immense pressure. I too have some ideas, but I'm not planning to move into that side anytime soon. Right now, I'm trying to learn AI technology. Current Projects Premaku Namaskaram is ready for release. It stars Shanmukh, Shivaji garu, and Bhumika garu. Another film titled Mana Doctor Babu, featuring Rajeev Kanakala in the lead role, is currently completing post-production work. Apart from these, two or three more projects are in the discussion stage.

## Vihari OTT Global Vision Unveiled during Cannes Film Festival by 'Big Boss' Fame Sri Satya while filming Cannes as a Tourist destination



“The Vihari OTT team released a special preview at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival, marking a new chapter in Telugu digital entertainment and travel storytelling. For the past 18 years, Vihari has entertained audiences with its travel programs. Now, it is transforming into a full-fledged global travel OTT platform. Known as one of the most popular travel brands in Telugu media, Vihari has showcased tourist destinations, cultures, traditions, food, and unique experiences from around the world. After successfully presenting many inspiring travel stories on television, Vihari is now set to reach audiences on a much larger scale through OTT. Vihari OTT will be launched grandly in June as the first Telugu OTT platform dedicated entirely to travel content.”

## As part of the “Rythu Gosa – BJP Bharosa” programme, a delegation led by BJP State President Sri N. Ramchander Rao garu,

BJLP Leader Sri A. Maheshwar Reddy garu, along with BJP MPs, MLAs and MLCs, has left for Vikarabad to visit the agricultural market and hold face-to-face interactions with farmers.

“The delegation commenced its journey from the BJP State Party Office, Nampally. Through this programme, the Bharatiya Janata Party is stepping forward to stand firmly with the farmers of Telangana, who are suffering due to the negligence of the Congress Government. The BJP will take up the farmers' cause, expose the irregularities and fraud in grain procurement, and highlight the failures of the State Government in protecting farmers' interests.

## People should remain alert due to severe heat and heatwave conditions... District Collector Divakar T.S.

“People must take precautions to avoid heatstroke. Do not go outdoors during afternoon hours unless absolutely necessary. Khammam, May 25, Indian chronicle: District Collector Divakar T.S. stated in a release on Monday that people should remain cautious as severe heat and heatwave conditions continue across the district. As high temperatures are being recorded in several areas of the district, people have been advised not to step outside, especially between 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM, unless it is absolutely necessary. The Collector advised elderly people, children, pregnant women, and those suffering from illnesses to take special precautions. Since the risk of heatstroke is very high due to the intense heat, people should follow necessary safety measures. He suggested that people drink plenty of fluids such as water, buttermilk, coconut water, and lemon juice frequently. He also advised consuming fruits with high water content such as watermelon and cucumber. While going outdoors, people should use umbrellas, hats, or wet cloths for protection and wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes.



## Koti Lingala Installation Booking and Brochure Unveiled at Sri Chilukeshwara Anjaneya Swamy Temple

“Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Participates in the Programme”



“UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): The booking process and brochure for the “Koti Lingala Sthapana” programme were formally unveiled on Sunday at the Harihara Kshetram Sri Chilukeshwara Anjaneya Swamy Temple under the divine blessings of Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamy of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the event as the chief guest and officially launched the booking initiative and pamphlet for the grand spiritual programme. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA assured full support for the development of the temple and appealed to leaders from all sections, beyond political affiliations, to contribute towards the temple reconstruction activities. He also urged devotees and the public to actively participate in the temple renovation and religious programmes. Temple Committee President Dasari Krishna stated that devotees can participate in the Koti Lingala Sthapana Mahotsavam by contributing Rs. 2,116 for Ashtottara 108 Lingas and Rs. 21,116 for Sahasra 1008 Lingas. He invited devotees to take part in the sacred programme and receive the blessings of Lord Shiva. He also appealed for donations towards the reconstruction and development of the temple. The programme was presided over by Temple Committee General Secretary Gone Srikanth. Several temple committee members, village elders, devotees, youth members, and representatives from various organizations participated in large numbers. Among those present were Bannala Praveen, former temple General Secretary and Uppal Press Club (Print & Electronic) President Vaddepalli Kishore, Burugula Ramesh Goud, Jelly Mohan, Amrutha Lavu, Gone Anjaiah, Devasani Balachander, Chatarasi Sidhiraju, Palvancha Vitthal, Jayadheer, Kompally Ravinder, Devula Purushottam, R. Balaram, Guda Srisailam, Kavali Narasimha, Kongari Ramachander, Masa Shekhar, Boda Vidyasagar, Shamirpet Chandrayya, Gurralla Mallesham, Palle Narsang Rao, Eerelli Ravinder Reddy, Sanghi Swamy



Yadav, Orsu Shekhar, Sikuri Krishna, Akiti Bal Reddy, Anasuya Reddy, Vasu, Gajjala Sathyaraj, Madipadega Srinivas, Ravinder Goud, Jalji Prashanth, Srinivas, Vamsi, members of the Marwadi Association, and many others.

## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Meets CM's OSD Srinivasulu

“UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy met Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's OSD Vemula Srinivasulu at the Ambedkar Secretariat on Monday. During the meeting, the MLA discussed several issues related to LOCs (Letters of Credit) and CMRF (Chief Minister's Relief Fund) concerning the Uppal constituency. Bandari Lakshma Reddy urged the OSD to ensure that LOCs are issued quickly to beneficiaries who have applied for assistance under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The MLA explained that delays in issuing CMRF cheques are causing difficulties for beneficiaries and requested that the applications be processed at the earliest. He further stated that many poor people apply for financial assistance from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund due to their inability to afford medical treatment and appealed for speedy sanction and release of funds after proper verification of the applications.

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHAMSUDDIN S/O JALALUDDIN (old name) born on 13-12-1977 at Adilabad earlier was Holding Passport No. F2267927 DT: 08-02-2005 hereby changing my Name and henceforth in future I would be known as SHAMSHUDDIN JIWANI S/O JALALUDDIN (new name) HNo. 10-144/9 Adarshnagar, khoja colony, Adilabad -504001 Telangana State.

DECLARANT. SHAMSHUDDIN JIWANI S/O JALALUDDIN

Place: Adilabad Date: 26-05-2026

## Permanent Solution to Drainage Problem in Uppal Venkateswara Colony

“Rs. 60 Lakh New Underground Drainage Sanctioned with HMWSSB Support: Uppal Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy

dents brought the issue to the notice of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy. Responding immediately, he visited the colony and personally inspected the drainage problem. “Parameshwar Reddy’s Efforts Lead to Solution” Through coordination with HMWSSB officials, Parameshwar Reddy succeeded in getting Rs. 60 lakh sanctioned for the construction of a new underground drainage system. The works for the new UGD line have already commenced in Venkateswara Colony and Suryanagar Colony. “Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said, “It is our responsibility to resolve public issues immediately after they are brought to our notice. I personally witnessed the hardships faced by the residents of Venkateswara Colony due to the drainage problem. A quality underground drainage line is being laid with an expenditure of Rs. 60 lakh. Once the drainage works are completed, CC road works will also be taken up soon. Sewage water will no longer overflow onto the roads.” The residents expressed happiness and thanked Parameshwar Reddy for resolving the long-pending issue. “Among those who participated in the programme were Kalluri Venu, Nayapu Venkatesh, Kishore, David, Ayodhya, Bitla Babu, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Kadapa Nursing Farhan, Pawan, Naveen, Chen Reddy Papireddy, Chandra, Mangal, Subbarao, Ramesh and others.



UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Residents of Venkateswara Colony near Master Chef Santosh Dhaba in Uppal had been facing severe underground drainage problems for the past several months. During rains, sewage water overflowed onto the roads, causing foul smell and increasing mosquito menace in the area. “The colony resi-

UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Representatives of the Chiluka Nagar Mala Welfare Association, along with Chiluka Nagar Division Congress Party President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj, submitted a memorandum on Monday to Uppal Congress Constituency In-Charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy requesting allocation of funds for the construction of an additional floor to the Mala Welfare Association building in Chiluka Nagar. “Under the leadership of Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj, members of the Mala Welfare Association met Parameshwar Reddy and explained the urgent need for expansion of the welfare association building. Responding positively to the request, Parameshwar Reddy assured the delegation that he would immediately bring the matter to the attention of the concerned officials and take necessary steps to ensure that the building expansion work is taken up at the earliest. “Speaking on the occasion, Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj stated that the Congress government remains committed to the welfare and upliftment of poor and weaker sections of society. He said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Uppal Congress In-Charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy has been consistently striving for the development of the Chiluka Nagar Division. “He expressed confidence that, through the efforts of Parameshwar Reddy, funds for the construction

of the additional floor to the Mala Welfare Association building would soon be sanctioned. The Chiluka Nagar Division Congress leaders and Mala Welfare Association representatives thanked Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy for responding positively to their appeal. Senior Congress leaders P. Kishtiah, David, and leaders of the Mala Welfare Association, among others, participated in the programme.

## Special Measures for Maternal Healthcare — Anemia Screening at Government Hospital



“Narsampet/Warangal, May 25 (Indian Chronicle) : As part of the ‘Praja Palana Pragathi Vedika’ (People’s Administration Progress Forum) initiative, anemia screening tests were conducted for pregnant women on Monday at the Narsampet Government General Hospital, under the joint aegis of the ICDS and Health Departments. “Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Nirmala, Head of the Gynecology Department, and ICDS ACDPO Jyothi stated that hemoglobin (Hb) levels can be effectively monitored by undergoing regular blood tests starting from childhood, thereby raising awareness regarding the prevention of anemia. They emphasized that a nutritious diet plays a pivotal role in preventing anemia among women and adolescent girls. “They advised pregnant women with low hemoglobin levels to consume foods rich in Iron and Vitamin A—such as drumstick leaves, leafy greens, fresh vegetables, and fruits. They explained

that anemia can be largely prevented through proper dietary habits, thereby reducing the need for blood transfusions during emergency situations. “Underscoring the importance of maternal health, they asserted that only a healthy mother can give birth to a healthy child; they urged pregnant women to consume a balanced and nutritious diet. They also encouraged beneficiaries to properly utilize the supplementary nutritional items—such as milk, eggs, and daily nutritious food—provided through the Anganwadi centers. “Participants in this program included Dr. Nirmala (Head of the Gynecology Department), ICDS ACDPO Jyothi, Supervisor Aruna, Dr. Sindhura, Dr. Kalyani (RMO), Dr. Naveen (RMO), Dr. Bhargav, Dr. Sravan Kumar, Dr. Alakhya, Health Supervisor Sarojana, nursing officers, ANMs, lab technicians, Anganwadi teacher Nalla Bharathi, ASHA workers, IKP CLRPs, and pregnant women.

## Midnight Soil Transport Sparks Concern in Nelakondapalli Illegal Soil Mafia Operating Secretly

If It Is a Government Work, Why Only at Midnight Private Individual Involved in Unauthorized Road Construction? “Who Is Behind the Midnight Dumping of Soil on Public Roads?” Khammam, Nelakondapalli , May 25 Indian chronicle: “Residents of Nelakondapalli are expressing serious concern over the continuous transportation and dumping of soil during late-night hours. Heavy tipper lorries are reportedly moving through the town past midnight, unloading huge piles of soil on village panchayat roads located in residential areas. “Locals allege that the roads are being completely blocked with mound-like heaps of soil dumped right in front of houses, causing inconvenience and raising safety concerns. They are questioning under whose permission these activities are being carried out. “Residents are also asking: if the soil transportation and dumping are part of an official government project, why are the works being carried out secretly during midnight hours instead of openly during the daytime in a transparent manner? People in the area suspect foul play, as heavy tippers are allegedly entering the locality while the town is asleep, unloading soil, and leaving without any public information or official clarification. “Several questions are now being raised by locals: “Was official permission granted to dump soil on the gram panchayat road? “If so, who was awarded the contract? “Under which government department are these



works being executed Why was no prior information given to the public? “What was the urgency to carry out the works overnight on a war footing? “Residents are demanding immediate clarification from the concerned authorities. They are also urging officials to take strict action against vehicle owners and contractors allegedly involved in transporting soil and operating heavy vehicles through residential areas at night, endangering public safety.

## BRS Senior Leader Jalli Mohan Announces Rs. 21 Lakh Donation for Reconstruction of Chinkanagar Sri Hari Hara Kshetram Chilukeshwara Swamy Temple

— Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Felicitates and Congratulates Jalli Mohan UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): “BRS senior leader Jalli Mohan has announced a donation of Rs. 21 lakh for the reconstruction of Sri Hari Hara Kshetram Chilukeshwara Swamy Temple located in Chilukanagar Division. He stated that he was making the contribution inspired by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. “Jalli Mohan, who has always remained committed to the development of Chilukanagar, has already undertaken several developmental activities in the area with his own funds. These include the establishment of a police outpost, construction of a common arch in front of the Maisamma Temple, and the installation of Bodrai as the president of Chilukanagar, all of which have earned appreciation from local residents. Speaking on the occasion, Jalli Mohan said, “The development of our village temples is the responsibility of everyone. I consider serving the people of Chilukanagar Division as my duty. I will continue to remain at the forefront of public service in the future as well. “Later, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy felicitated Jalli Mohan



with a shawl and congratulated him for his generous contribution. “Local residents and devotees expressed happiness over the donation announcement and conveyed their gratitude to Jalli Mohan.

## Memorandum Submitted to Uppal Congress In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy Seeking Funds for Additional Floor of Chiluka Nagar Mala Welfare Association Building



of the additional floor to the Mala Welfare Association building would soon be sanctioned.

The Chiluka Nagar Division Congress leaders and Mala Welfare Association representatives thanked Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy for responding positively to their appeal. Senior Congress leaders P. Kishtiah, David, and leaders of the Mala Welfare Association, among others, participated in the programme.



Peddapalli District “Manthani,” Indian Chronicle, “Medagoni Venkatesh: “Manthani Native Becomes Part of TG20 Franchise Ownership” Inspired by the Indian Premier League (IPL), the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has decided to specially encourage and promote Telangana cricketers. The association believes that providing opportunities to talented players from various districts of the state will help them gain recognition at national and international levels. “In this regard, the HCA invited bids for district-wise franchises and announced the owners who secured them. A total of eight teams from Telangana will participate in the inaugural edition of TG20. “The Warangal franchise has been acquired by Bain Global Resources Private Limited for ₹6.55 crore. The franchise is Represented by varun jupally and Sravan Reddy muskula (Ivonor group). HCA has allotted an orange-colored jersey for the team. “The management stated that the player selection process will begin soon to encourage cricketers from the undivided Warangal district. Players who perform exceptionally well in TG20 are expected to gain recognition at both national and international levels. “It is noteworthy that Muskula Shraavan Reddy is a native of Manthani in Peddapalli district. His father, the late Muskula Narayana Reddy, served the Congress party for many years. Having established himself in the real estate business, Shraavan Reddy entered the inaugural edition of TG20 with the aim of supporting and promoting talented cricketers. “Manthani is known as a hub of intellectuals, and many people from the town have achieved success in business and commerce. However, it is considered remarkable that Muskula Shraavan Reddy has now secured ownership rights of a cricket franchise team.

## Fuel prices in Hyderabad increase after fourth hike

Hyderabad: Following the fourth hike in petrol and diesel prices across the country on Monday, the current fuel prices in Hyderabad are as follows:

In the previous hike announced on May 23, petrol prices went up by 87 paise and diesel prices increased by 91 paise. This was the third such hike. Following the last revision, the price of petrol stood at Rs 112.81 per litre, while diesel was priced at Rs 100.94 per litre in Hyderabad.

# Public grievances must be resolved promptly... District Collector Divakar T.S.



"District Collector receives public petitions during Prajavani...Khammam, May 25, Indian chronicle: "District Collector Divakar T.S. instructed district officials to resolve the applications submitted by the public without delay. "During the Prajavani program held on Monday at the Collectorate meeting hall, District Collector Divakar T.S., along with Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Dr. P. Srija and Additional Collector P. Srinivas Reddy, received petitions from the public. "Kanchapogu Suresh from Bhimavaram village of Vemsur mandal submitted an application requesting admission for his son Abhishek in a Best Available School. The Collector directed the District SC Development Officer to take necessary action as per rules and regulations. "P.



Bhavani from Allipuram village in Khammam Urban mandal submitted a request seeking sanction of an Indiramma house. The Collector instructed the PD Housing Officer to take appropriate action. "Anjaneyulu from Thimmaraopeeta village of Enkoor mandal submitted a petition stating that his grandfather owned 9 acres and 38 guntas of land in Survey No. 30, out of which 4 acres and 38 guntas had allegedly been pattadarized in another person's name. He requested cancellation of the said patta and restoration of the land to his family. The Collector directed the Tahsildar to take necessary action. "District officials, Collectorate AO Srinivas, and others participated in the Prajavani program. "Issued by the District Public Relations Officer's Office, Khammam.

# Tough Action to Protect Government Lands, Crackdown on Encroachments: MLA Nayini



"---Foundation Stone Laid for Development Works Worth ?1.03 Crore""Hanamkonda, May 25 (Indian Chronicle) : Nayini Rajender Reddy said the government, in coordination with officials, is taking stringent measures to safeguard government lands and curb illegal encroachments. "Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony for side drainage and internal road construction works worth ?1.03 crore in the 30th and 31st divisions on Monday, the MLA directed officials to ensure the projects are completed within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining high-quality standards. "Addressing the gathering, Nayini Rajender Reddy expressed satisfaction over the rapid transformation of Shayampet Division from a rural atmosphere into a fast-developing urban locality. He stated that witnessing such progress during their tenure was a matter of pride. He also alleged that certain political opponents, unable to digest the ongoing development in the constituency, were resorting to false propaganda to mislead the public. "The MLA accused previous rulers of negligence and allowing large-scale land encroachments, which, he said, resulted in a severe shortage of government lands. He alleged that several individuals who had occupied lands over the past decade were continuing attempts to deceive the



public through baseless campaigns. He termed encroachments carried out in the name of religion as unfortunate and unacceptable. "Questioning whether any incidents of land grabbing had occurred during the last two-and-a-half years, Nayini Rajender Reddy alleged that some groups were attempting to mislead people using claims related to ancient idols. He questioned why the Archaeology Department had not been informed if genuinely ancient idols had been discovered. The MLA further stated that creating obstacles to the development of the Bhadrakali Temple was inappropriate. "He made it clear that as long as he remains MLA, land encroachments would not be tolerated under any circumstances. Warning of strict action against anyone involved in illegal occupation of lands, irrespective of their influence, he reiterated that the government's objective was to provide transparent and corruption-free governance to the people. He also cautioned that political criticism crossing acceptable limits would not be tolerated. "The MLA further assured that the government would implement stringent measures not only to protect government lands but also to safeguard private properties belonging to citizens from land grabbers. "Local public representatives, party leaders, activists, officials, and residents participated in the programme.

# Priority for BCs in PACS Committee



-- Gratitude to MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy... -- Dyagala Srinivas Mudiraj, BC Welfare Association Leader""Hanamkonda, May 25 (Indian Chronicle) : Dyagala Srinivas Mudiraj—President of the BC Welfare Association (Warangal District) and In-charge of the Narsampet constituency—expressed his gratitude to Narsampet MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy for ensuring adequate representation for Backward Classes (BCs) within the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) committee by appointing seven BC members as Directors. "He stated that the MLA's decision to provide opportunities for BC leaders within the cooperative sector reflects his deep commitment to



social justice and inclusive leadership. He further lauded this initiative as a pivotal step forward in empowering BC communities within government institutions. "Dyagala Srinivas extended his congratulations to the newly appointed Directors: Lakarsu Ramesh (Narsampet), Kesari Venkateshwarlu (Narsampet), Kolipaka Rajayya (Kammampalli), Jinakala Sampath (Ramaram), and Damera Ravinder (Akula Thanda); as well as to the women Directors: Kathi Chaitanya (Laknepalli) and Doni Keerthana (Narsampet). Chennuri Ravi Mudiraj (Warangal District Vice President, BC Welfare Association), Kadari Suresh Yadav (District Youth President), Maddela Shyam Kumar Yadav (Narsampet Town Vice President), Gandla Srinivas (Town Secretary), and leaders Marapaka Ramesh Mudiraj, Seeramshetty Rajender Peraka, among others, participated in this program.

# Adarsh Nagar, Chilkanagar Building Construction Welfare Association Meeting Held UPPAL

, MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): A meeting of the Adarsh Nagar, Chilkanagar Building Construction Welfare Association was held near Boddu Rai in Chilkanagar under the ?ship of Association President Jaidu Ramesh. "The main objective of the meeting was to emphasize that building construction workers and masons should remain united and work collectively for the welfare and well-being of all workers in the sector. The members unanimously resolved that the benefits and objectives of the association should reach every member effectively. "The members also decided to strengthen the association further by enrolling new members. They appealed to construction workers and masons to take membership in large numbers and support the organization. For new membership registrations, interested persons were requested to contact the Association Gen-



eral Secretary Sheikh Saleem at 9010620208. "Association General Secretary Sheikh Saleem, Treasurer Kongari Vijay Babu, and members Palamakula Raju, Garapati Srinivas, Jai Paparao, Jai Lakshminarayana, Sheikh Mastan, Koduru Nageswara Rao, Maripadige Shankaraya, Koduru Krishna, Sadhana Raju, Gurrula Swamy, Guvva Krishna, Gandhi Somayya and several others participated in the meeting and made the programme a success. "

# New Committee Elected for Hanamkonda District Netball Association

"---D.Vishnu Vardhan Reddy Chosen as President, Surya Rao as Secretary""Hanamkonda, May 25 (Indian Chronicle) : "The elections for the new executive body of the Hanamkonda District Netball Association were conducted in a grand manner at the Warangal West MLA camp office on Sunday. With an aim to strengthen the development of netball and encourage greater participation among youth in the sport, D. Vishnu Vardhan Reddy was unanimously elected as the President of the district association, while CH. Surya Rao was selected as the Secretary. "The election process was supervised by District Olympic Association Secretary Kailash Yadav, who attended the proceedings as an observer under the directions of Telangana State Netball Association Vice-President Rammohan



Goud. "Speaking on the occasion, several sports personalities congratulated the newly elected committee and expressed confidence that the association would play a vital role in promoting netball across the district. "Former SAP Director Rajanala Srihari, Telangana State Netball Association Vice-President Lily Florence, officials from the DYSO office, sports representatives, and others participated in the programme.

# Warangal Youth Selected for International Handball Championship

"---Kodakandla Sriram to Represent India in Bangladesh""---Appeal for Financial Support to Encourage Talented Player from Economically Weaker Family""Hanamkonda, May 25 (Indian Chronicle) : "Young handball player Kodakandla Sriram from Kothawada in Warangal, who has been training under the Hanamkonda District Sports Authority, has earned selection for international handball competitions, bringing pride to the district, said former corporator Basavaraju Kumaraswamy and senior Congress leader Chippa Venkateshwarlu. They stated that Sriram's journey from a humble background to the international arena through sheer dedication, discipline, and perseverance is truly inspirational for aspiring sports persons. "Sriram has been selected for the Indian National Handball Coaching Camp scheduled to be held from May 27 to June 8 at Rudrapur in Uttarakhand. Following the camp, he will represent India in the International Handball Championship to be conducted from June 10 to 14 in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. "Training under handball coach Vishnu Vardhan at the Hanamkonda District Sports Authority, Sriram has earned recognition at the national level through consistent performance and hard work before progressing to the international stage. Sports personalities noted that a young athlete from a rural background securing a place in the Indian team stands as a source of inspiration for many budding players. "They further stated that athletes from the district excelling on national and international platforms are motivating the younger generation to pursue sports with commitment and determination. Sriram has proved that discipline, dedication, and relentless effort can help achieve success even at the global level, they said, while urging all sections of society to encourage and support the talented player who is bringing recognition to Warangal on the international stage. ""---FROM A POOR FAMILY TO THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA...""Coming from an economically weaker family, Sriram has so far participated in 12 national-level handball tournaments and 20 state-level competitions, earning appreciation for his out-



standing performances. Rising steadily from the state level to the national stage and now to the international arena, he has brought recognition to Warangal through his achievements. "Sriram's father, Sunil, works as a carpenter to support the family. Due to their weak financial condition, the family is struggling to bear the expenses required for his participation in the international tournament, including travel costs, sports kits, and other essential expenditures. "They appealed to donors, sports lovers, public representatives, and voluntary organisations to extend financial assistance to the young athlete, stating that representing India on an international platform is a rare honour for any sports person. With proper encouragement and support, Sriram has the potential to achieve greater success and bring laurels to the nation in the future, they added. "Those willing to support the player financially may contribute through PhonePe number 6305046603 (Kodakandla Madevi) to encourage and assist the promising young athlete.

# Government Degree College Needed for Uppal

Uppal Congress In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy Requests Collector to Allocate Land in HMDA Bagayat"

UPPAL , MAY 25 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-Charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy met the Medchal District Collector on Monday and submitted a representation requesting allocation of land in HMDA Bagayat for the establishment of a Government Degree College in Uppal. "Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has already been giving special attention to the development of Uppal. He stated that 10 acres of land had been allotted in Uppal Bagayat for the MMC building and that the government had sanctioned Rs.100 crore for the construction of the building. "He further said that there is an urgent need for a Government Degree College in Uppal for the benefit of thousands of students in the constituency. Poor and middle-class students are currently forced to travel long distances to pursue degree education, he noted. "Parameshwar Reddy pointed out that government land is available in HMDA Bagayat and said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is positive about establishing a degree college in Uppal. He urged the District Collector to immediately allocate land for



the college and forward the proposals to the government at the earliest. He also stated that, as assured by the Chief Minister, efforts are being made to transform Uppal into an educational hub.

# Protect the Self-Respect of Orugallu : Kongara Ravikumar



---Do Not Sacrifice Shayampet's Identity for Delhi-Centric Politics, ""Hanamkonda, May 25 (Indian Chronicle) : BJP Geesugonda Mandal President Kongara Ravikumar strongly opposed the Congress government's reported move to install statues of Delhi leaders in Shayampet village, stating that such a decision would undermine the region's historical identity and insult the sacrifices made by local farmers for the establishment of the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park. "He said Shayampet is not merely a geographical location for the textile park project,

but a historic land shaped by the sacrifices, struggles, and hard work of thousands of farmers and labourers who gave up their valuable lands for the region's industrial development. Attempting to impose the names and statues of a single political family in such a place for political considerations would amount to humiliating the local farming community and disregarding their contributions, he alleged. "Ravikumar questioned why local MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy, who was elected with the support of the people of the region, has remained silent while the self-respect and sentiments of the people are being hurt. He urged the MLA to prioritise the identity and dignity of Orugallu over pleasing the party leadership. "He also appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who claims to lead a "people's government," to respect the emotions and aspirations of the local population. He stated that indulging in statue politics in a region being developed with hundreds of crores under the Centre's PM MITRA scheme would be inappropriate and unacceptable. "Demanding that the government immediately withdraw the proposal to install statues of Delhi leaders, Ravikumar called for the installation of statues of iconic Kakatiya rulers such as Rani Rudramadevi and Ganapathi Deva to reflect the historical legacy and cultural pride of the region. "He further demanded a comprehensive inquiry into the injustice faced by local farmers and poor families who lost their lands for the project and sought complete justice for them. Ravikumar warned that the BJP and local residents would continue their agitation until the identity and self-respect of Shayampet are protected, adding that the government would face strong public resistance if it proceeds with the controversial decision.

## Inside Gurgaon's private equity-backed schools: Why firms are investing and how classrooms are changing



**Growth in occupancy, insiders say, becomes a key metric. Schools carry heavy fixed costs — teacher salaries, classrooms, and infrastructure — regardless of student strength.**

GNS News Agency, May 25

In 2024, two private equity (PE) and venture capital veterans — Piyush Gupta and Norbert Fernandes — set out to build a new investment firm, Kenro Capital, at a time when artificial intelligence (AI) had become the industry's most overused buzzword. They started with a quieter, almost philosophical question that has been echoing through boardrooms and venture circles as AI accelerates its reach: In a rapidly changing AI-driven world, what are the things that will not change? The premise was not that AI would reshape everything — but that it would come close. The real challenge was identifying the rare corners of life that would remain stubbornly human. "One answer that stood out was high-touch businesses like schools. People will always send their children to schools," Fernandes says. With this conviction, Kenro Capital invested roughly Rs 340 crore in K12 Techno Services Private Limited at the end of 2024, best known for its flagship chain, Orchids: The International School.

And Kenro Capital is not alone in making that bet. Across India, private equity firms are increasingly circling the K-12 (Kindergarten to Class 12) education space. Nowhere is this more visible than in Gurgaon, where at least nine K-12 schools are already backed by private equity capital. Inside Gurgaon's private equity-backed schools: Why firms are investing and how classrooms are changing. Even as most schools in India operate as non-profit trusts or societies, private equity firms generate returns by investing in the commercial entities around them rather than the trusts themselves. According to industry insiders, PE funds that pool money from wealthy individuals and institutions, acquire companies that own school real estate, manage operations, license brands, provide technology platforms, or run services such as transport and curriculum support. "The school trust pays lease rentals, management fees and service charges to these for-profit entities, allowing investors to earn recurring revenue indirectly from school cash flows," an industry insider said.

The PE firms, the industry insider points out, also benefit from the scalability of branded school chains and higher valuations driven by consolidation in the education sector. "This improves profitability. Some exit at higher valuations through sales or public listings," the industry insider says. Increasingly, India's private school sector is emerging as a target. Industry insiders say PE's growing presence in K-12 education reflects a structural shift years in the making. For decades, many private schools in India operated like family-run businesses, where key decisions — from hiring teachers to expanding infrastructure — were made within the founder's close circle. Now, many of these schools are at an inflection point. The next generation of founders is often unwilling to take over day-to-day operations, preferring instead to bring in professional management. "Their next generation is no longer interested in running it on a daily basis and is instead open to handing over the management to professionally run players," Fernandes says. This opens the door for private equity firms, which see not just a school, but a scalable institution with predictable demand and long-term cash flows. For India's growing middle class, education is no longer just about securing admission to a nearby good school. "They want high-quality infrastructure, holistic exposure, and best-in-class outcomes," says Amitabh Jhingana, partner at EY Parthenon and EY's Global Education Sector Leader. "The new normal is a more global, aspirational and future-ready school format across both national (CBSE and ICSE) and international curricula (IGCSE and IB)," Jhingana says. For parents, these international programmes also promise smoother pathways to foreign universities and stronger global credentials. However, the transition comes at a cost. "IB and Cambridge systems require schools to send teachers for expensive training programmes. They also have larger staff structures. Overall costs are high," says Ameeta Watal, Chairperson of DLF Foundational Schools.

On the supply side, expansion is capital-intensive. Setting up a school requires large land parcels, regulatory approvals, and significant upfront investment. Regulations often mandate long-term control over land — either ownership or leases of up to 30 years, according to an industry insider who did not wish to be named. Many schools also operate under not-for-profit structures, limiting access to traditional financing. "Thus, it becomes difficult to expand on their own, necessitating institutional capital. This is where private equity comes in," the insider says.

Private equity firms are not solely focused on high-risk and high-return sectors, a senior PE investor emphasises. "A lot of their capital ends up in lower-risk, stable, cash-generating sectors like healthcare or essential consumer goods," he says. He explains the rationale lies in how PE funds are structured and how they generate returns. "Typically, they buy companies using a significant amount of borrowed money. To safely service that debt, they need businesses that generate steady and predictable cash flows." "Also, PE firms usually need to exit investments within 10 years through a sale. Buyers prefer companies with low operational risk, so low-risk industries make exits more certain," he says. Fernandes says PE firms view education as relatively lower risk because demand is stable. "Parents won't stop sending their children to school. One of the most important budget allocations at a household level tends to be their education. Other factors are that these are cash-flow positive businesses in which fees are collected in advance of the school year." Investors are also drawn to fragmented, unorganised markets that can be consolidated, similar to platforms like Uber and Oyo, according to an industry executive. "K-12 schooling in India, until now, is a largely unorganised market. Once you consolidate the market and have a large number of schools on your platform, efficiencies created by the economies of scale will

help you increase your margins while providing value," he says. Driven by these shifts, major private equity firms are investing in K-12 schools. Blackstone reportedly considered a majority stake in Jaipur-based Globetrotters Educational Innovations, which runs Jayshree Periwai International School (JPIS), last November. KKR, the second-largest global PE firm, holds a majority stake in Lighthouse Learning and increased its investment in November. In India, ChrysCapital, Peak XV, and Kedaara Capital hold stakes in K-12 Techno Services. When PE firms invest in schools, the focus shifts toward expansion and higher student enrollment, according to industry insiders. For instance, in 2023, Lighthouse Learning partnered with a top IB school in Gurgaon, Heritage Xperiential Schools, to open 10 new schools over five years. Manjit Jain, co-founder of the Heritage group, had said that Lighthouse would provide infrastructure and operational support to enable faster expansion.

Growth in occupancy, insiders say, becomes a key metric. Schools carry heavy fixed costs — teacher salaries, classrooms, and infrastructure — regardless of student strength. "As a result, even with half the number of students, the school continues to incur nearly the same overall costs," Fernandes says. The goal, therefore, is to reach 90–95% occupancy within one to two years, spreading fixed costs over a larger base. Fernandes also highlights that PEs prefer to invest in a network of schools instead of a single standalone school because of economic advantage. He cites examples like senior-school coaching classes as an example. He says students in higher classes often need extra subject-specific coaching for competitive exams — say for physics or chemistry. For one independent school, hiring a dedicated specialist teacher for each subject may be too expensive. "But if the school is part of a larger network, like K12 Techno Services' schools, that same specialist teacher can be shared across multiple campuses. Instead of one school bearing the full cost, the teacher can rotate between schools and teach students at each one," he adds. Within individual schools, the changes are most visible in everyday classroom practices, where insiders say standardisation has emerged as the most visible shift. Take for instance, Dwarka's Shantigyan School. A teacher said that after the founder's death, the institution was divided between his three children. While two continue to run separate schools, one brought in what the teacher described as the professional "cavalry" — K12 Techno Services. The company arrived with its management team, as well as physical, academic and technological infrastructure, and its brand name 'Orchids: The International School'. "When the new management came in, they brought everything new with them, even the furniture. The new furniture, which we were told is the same in every K12 school, was brought in from Bengaluru," the teacher says. Teachers receive lesson plans from the K12 team in Bangalore that include videos, presentations and instructional material for every period. "This is great mostly since we can teach according to a plan, but many times it also leads to micromanaging, as there are directions for every five minutes which are not feasible to implement and become tedious," the teacher adds. The model has also drawn support. Speaking about the difficulty of building schools such as DPS and Columbus, which take years to develop, former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan had pointed to the Orchids system two years ago on a podcast as a case study. "What he (founder of K12 Techno) does is that he has 37,000-plus lesson plans put together for each lesson that a teacher will give. Every lesson plan is written down for every subject, and then teachers are recruited to deliver this. You get pretty close to top-level public school education," Rajan said. Insiders also point to improvements in infrastructure and extracurricular activities. The Orchids network, for instance, the students point out has invested in facilities for music, dance, textiles, and pottery. At Heritage Xperiential International School (HIXS), a teacher says Lighthouse Learning is investing a lot in exploring the use of AI in teaching. "They want teachers to learn how to use AI in classrooms," she says. For many teachers in Gurgaon's elite private schools, the arrival of PE investors has brought with it a quiet but noticeable shift in everyday life — one marked by surveillance, scoring systems, and constant performance reviews. "Every morning, five teachers have to install microphones before classes begin. These devices record us throughout the day, and later we are given scores based on how we taught and managed students. Principals and coordinators also observe classes and assign ratings, which are used in appraisals," the teacher says. Concerns are emerging among teachers and students over what they describe as a gradual erosion of the school's original culture — one shaped by long-term teacher loyalty. They say the shift is contributing to higher teacher attrition. As per one teacher, the institution was never defined by the highest pay scales, but by continuity and personal connection. "People stayed — for the brand name, yes, but also because the founders created a personal connection. There was warmth, a sense of belonging," she said, adding that this environment was now fading. At two Gurgaon-based PE-backed schools, teachers point to a growing preference for hiring junior faculty over more experienced educators. Students say the attrition has had a direct impact on them. A senior student at one of the schools said at least nine senior faculty members left in 2025 alone. Letters of recommendation for foreign university applications are extremely important for those of us seeking undergraduate admission to top global universities," the student says. But newer teachers often do not know students well enough to write references. "If the senior teachers had stayed, we would not be facing this issue," the student adds. Even prospective parents are concerned. At a parent tour organised by the school two weeks earlier, one parent asked: "We hear that a large number of teachers are now being hired from outside." The response from the school representative was carefully worded — "We are providing all teachers with the right facilities and a good work environment. But some teachers leave for professional growth. At the same time, we also encourage fresh blood." Another visible shift has been the growing emphasis on academic rigour. Parents, however, remain divided over whether the change represents progress or a departure from what once distinguished these schools. "There is a shift away from the experiential learning model that prioritises holistic learning," one parent says. Others view the transition more favourably. Anisha Agarwal, a finance professional at Acuity Partners whose children attend a PE-backed school in Gurgaon, said the academic environment had become noticeably more demanding. "My eldest child hardly studied at all," she says. "But now, my younger child has far more assignments. Academics have become more rigorous. This is a positive change." Sridhar Rajagopalan, an education entrepreneur, said that while PE firms often focus on funding new facilities, technology upgrades and professional management, the real measure of success lies in learning outcomes. "The only metric to judge all these investments is whether the school is improving the learning outcomes of students, both academic and non-academic," he said, adding that the sector will ultimately be judged by "what kind of impact these investments have on learning outcomes."

## Refreshments in living room, last-seen WhatsApp timestamp: How police zeroed in on Govindpuri double murder accused



Refreshments in the living room and no signs of forceful entry in the house had initially led the police to suspect that someone familiar to the family was involved in the murders of 38-year-old Sharda Sahu and her 13-year-old son in South East Delhi's Govindpuri on the intervening night of May 20 and 21. The victims' last-seen WhatsApp timestamps helped investigators establish the probable time of the murders and subsequently narrow their scanning of CCTV footage to a specific time frame, officers said. As part of the preliminary investigation, police said they began examining CCTV footage. They had to establish the exact timeline in order to narrow down the footage they needed to scan, officers said. The examination of CCTV footage eventually led to the arrest of the key accused identified as Saurabh Sahu (28). Saurabh, Sharda's cousin, allegedly killed her and her son because he was angry over Sharda's repeated attempts to stop him from engaging in criminal activities and drug abuse, police said. According to the police, the CCTV footage from the night of May 20 through the early hours of May 21 was unclear and did not provide good visuals of people moving in the area. Officers were informed of the murders at around 1 am on May 21, when the woman's husband returned home from work.

The woman had suffered around 20 stab wounds, while her son had seven injuries on different parts of his body, police said. Signs of struggle were visible throughout the house, and the bodies were found in the kitchen, with blood splattered all around, police said. Upon reaching the spot, the police team found a glass of litchi juice along with some biscuits and muffins in the drawing room, indicating that refreshments had been served to a visitor, a detail that hinted that someone known to the family might have killed the two, officers said, adding that the main door of the house was open, and the locker inside an almirah had been broken. To identify the accused, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-east) Hemant Tiwari formed multiple teams and assigned officers separate tasks, including examining CCTV footage, questioning relatives and friends, and identifying local criminals. The Anti-Narcotics and Anti-Auto Theft Squad (AATS) teams, led by Inspectors Vishnu Dutt, Ajay Dalal, and Rajender Singh Daggar under the supervision of ACP Kalkaji VKPS Yadav, scanned CCTV footage from the area.

## Mamata Banerjee slams BJP govt's 'bulldozer politics', questions mandate



GNS News Agency, May 25

In her first major public address via Facebook Live since her party lost power in West Bengal, Trinamool Congress (TMC) chairperson Mamata Banerjee on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the new BJP government, accusing it of unleashing "bulldozer politics" and altering the election outcome through "massive institutional rigging". "Was this truly an election, or merely a mockery in the name of democracy?" the former chief minister asked as she detailed widespread poll irregularities, claiming that nearly one crore voters' names were deleted from the electoral roll through the Election Commission's "logical discrepancy" model. Alleging that Opposition agents were forcibly removed from counting halls, she said, "BJP workers entered counting centres wearing uniforms of the Central forces, and our agents' ID cards were snatched away... We would have won over 200 seats, but the outcome was altered. If they had truly won, why is there no celebration among the people?" She said the TMC would pursue legal remedies in constituencies where questions remained over the conduct of elections. Condemning the ongoing anti-environment and eviction drives targeting street vendors and hawkers in Kolkata and nearby areas, Mamata said the administration was operating through brute force.

"Today, the protector has become the predator... Municipal councillors are being arrested every day. The (Kolkata) Mayor and the chairman are kept unaware, yet the corporation is making decisions without any hearings. Those shouting 'chor, chor (thief, thief) are all outsiders who do not understand the culture of Bengal. That is why bulldozer politics is being used," the TMC supreme said, referring to demolition notices sent to several party leaders. She called the demolition of a statue near Salt Lake Stadium

## 2 govt teachers booked for 'attempting to convert' Class 10 student

GNS News Agency, May 25 Two govt teachers booked for 'attempting to convert' Class 10 student. The complainant alleged that the accused were operating as a coordinated group and were attempting to "brainwash minor girls", influence them to "change their religion", and draw them into what he described as "love jihad". Two female teachers at a government college in Kaushambi have been booked over allegations of brainwashing a minor student in an alleged attempt to influence her religious conversion. Police said the complainant told investigators that he began noticing unusual changes in his daughter's behaviour over the past few months. When questioned, she allegedly said she was being "pressured by the teachers to change her religion, embrace Islam, and take part in Islamic prayers and practices". Based on a complaint filed by the minor's father, an FIR has been lodged against the two teachers and several unknown persons under BNS section 351 (criminal in-

Although many visuals were blurred, investigators noticed several people moving through the lane late into the night. "Scanning the CCTV footage from the area around Govindpuri Gali number 10, which remains crowded until late at night, was a herculean task. Determining the exact time of the murder was crucial for us," an officer said. "On checking the mobile phones of the deceased, investigators found that the woman was last seen online at 7:30 pm and her son at 7:49 pm. A neighbour also informed police that he had called the woman at 8:26 pm regarding some work, but the call went unanswered and she never called back," an officer said. This information helped police narrow down the probable time of the murders. Investigators subsequently focused on CCTV footage recorded between 7:49 pm and 1 am.

In one of the clips, investigators allegedly spotted a blurry image of a suspect with his face partially covered, captured around 200 metres from the victims' house. Police then traced his earlier movements to identify locations where Saurabh's face appeared more clearly. When the clearer footage was shown to the victim's husband, he identified the suspect as Saurabh, who lived with his family in Sangam Vihar. "Saurabh's parents are vegetable vendors. He was previously involved in four criminal cases related to robbery, theft, and snatching in his area. He is a habitual offender and had come to the victims' house with a plan to commit robbery using a knife that he had purchased specifically for the crime," DCP Tiwari said. According to police, Saurabh frequently visited the victim's house owing to his family connection. Sharda had often tried to persuade him to stay away from criminal activities and drug abuse, but he reportedly resented her interference. A few days before the incident, Saurabh allegedly learned that the woman's husband had collected money to purchase a house in Kalkaji. Knowing that the husband, who was also involved in the vegetable business, usually returned home late at night, Saurabh allegedly planned the robbery accordingly, officers said. Police said the deceased's son opened the door when Saurabh arrived at the house. After a brief conversation, Saurabh allegedly demanded money from the woman, leading to an argument. He then allegedly attacked her, and upon hearing her screams, the boy rushed to her aid, but was stabbed by the accused, officers said. Then, Saurabh allegedly fled with cash and jewellery worth around Rs 10 lakh, officers added. Saurabh was arrested in the early hours of Saturday after a brief exchange of fire near a park in Tughlakabad Extension. Police said Saurabh sustained a bullet injury during the operation after he allegedly opened fire on the police team. He has since been admitted to a hospital and remains under police custody while receiving treatment, officers said. Police said some cash and jewellery have been recovered from his house. Investigators are also considering legal action against Saurabh's mother for allegedly sheltering him, despite reportedly being aware that he had brought home a large amount of cash and jewellery, officers said. Further investigation is underway.

that was conceptualised and designed by her, and the tearing down of party offices a "personal vendetta". Contrasting the BJP government's coming to power with her own, after having ended Left Front's over two-decade rule in 2011, Mamata said, "In my administration, 30 per cent of panchayats were under the control of the Opposition parties, but we never forced them to stop working. Now, even the Kolkata Municipal Corporation is not being allowed to function properly." "After coming to power in 2011, we ensured Rabindra Sangeet was played. But this time, even Rabindra Jayanti was not observed properly," she said. Accusing the BJP of using political pressure and intimidation against opponents, she said, "The more the BJP tortures TMC in Bengal, the more problems it will face in New Delhi... Our party workers and elected representatives are being tortured and intimidated, but we are holding on." She also accused the BJP government of failing to deliver on key welfare schemes while repackaging old financial policies. She stated that people have stopped receiving Lakshmi Bhandar benefits, and claimed that the government's current budgetary promises regarding Dearness Allowance (DA) and Pay Commission implementations are merely "old promises repackaged in new bottles". Addressing the concerns of the minority community in the state following the government's animal slaughter and loudspeaker guidelines, she said, "I know they (BJP) don't like the Muslim community... but sound decibel levels could have been regulated. A common rule could have been applied to everyone. No one has the right to take away people's freedom." Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his call for austerity measures, she said, "Instead of gifting chocolates to Italy's Prime Minister, he could have given them to children. They speak about saving fuel while travelling abroad, yet people are being advised not to buy gold or use cars." She said members of the INDIA bloc were likely to meet in the first week of June to discuss a joint strategy, while asserting that the Opposition camp was prepared for a prolonged political battle. "We are ready to fight, and we will not give up till the end," Banerjee said, adding that from now on she would be communicating through Facebook Live. "Those who are watching me on Facebook Live today, I want to tell them that I will speak to you through Facebook Live only. Now, no media is of the people. It is Godi media... My weapon is my Facebook Live... Keep a watch on our party's social media handles," she said as she signed off.

When questioned, she allegedly told him that two female lecturers at her college had been allegedly continuously subjecting her to mental harassment. Police said the complainant alleged that his daughter claimed she was being pressured to read Urdu books related to Islam and "participate in Islamic prayers and practices". It is further alleged that the two lecturers frequently "portrayed Hinduism negatively" while presenting Islam in a favourable light.

## How 8th-grade dropout developed malware, sold them to cyber fraudsters on Telegram



GNS News Agency, May 25

Imagine getting a call saying your electricity connection will be cut within hours unless you make an immediate payment. Then comes a WhatsApp message with a "Customer Support APK (Android Package Kit)" meant to solve the issue. You install it, hoping to avoid inconvenience — unaware that the app may have just handed strangers complete access to your phone, messages, OTPs and bank account. That's the scam Delhi Police say led them to a 25-year-old alleged malware developer operating Telegram channels under the name 'Jamtara Official Developer'.

On May 14, a Delhi Police team conducted a raid in Uttar Pradesh's Deoria looking for the suspect, Abhay Sahni, who allegedly sold malicious APKs to cyber fraudsters — only to find him casually eating ice cream with his friends near his house. During questioning, police were stunned to find that Sahni had only studied till Class 8 but knew how to develop and modify malicious APKs — which he learnt through YouTube — and sold to cyber fraudsters across states for around Rs 4,000 per APK. Sahni was arrested in connection with a cheating case registered on July 29, 2025, at the Cyber Police Station in Central District. Police said Sahni lives with his wife and two-year-old child; he had told his family he was in the business of selling mobile phones. The fraud

According to police officers, the case was registered after a complainant reported that Rs 1,20,999 had been fraudulently transferred from his bank account through unauthorised digital transactions.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Rohit Rajbir Singh said the victim had received a call from an unknown person posing as an electricity department official, who claimed his electricity meter would be disconnected unless an immediate payment was made. The fraudster allegedly sent a malicious application named 'Customer Support APK' via WhatsApp and convinced the complainant to install it. Soon after installation, police said, the accused gained remote access to the victim's mobile phone and carried out multiple fraudulent transactions. The investigation DCP Singh said after the case was lodged, a Special Investigation Team was formed under the guidance of ACP (Operations) Padam Singh Rana and supervised by SHO, Cyber Central, Inspector Yograj Dalal. The team, led by Sub-Inspector Ranvijay Singh along with Head Constables Sandeep and Paramveer, carried out an extensive technical investiga-

tion into the backend architecture of the malicious APK.

Police said the application was a 'FUD', a Fully Undetected malicious APK designed to bypass anti-virus and mobile security systems, enabling cyber criminals to remotely access victims' devices. An APK is the file format (.apk) Android uses to install apps, especially those downloaded outside official app stores. Cyber fraudsters often disguise malicious APKs as bank updates, traffic challan notices, electricity or gas bill payment apps, pension schemes, or government documents — and send them to victims through SMS links or messaging platforms (see box). Police said their probe in the current case led them to a man who allegedly procured and used malicious APKs in cyber fraud cases. On December 5, last year, they arrested Umesh Kumar Rajak, a 25-year-old resident of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. Further technical surveillance and digital analysis led investigators to Telegram IDs — "@raahul\_kumar717" and "Jamtara\_official\_Developer" — from where the APKs were allegedly being supplied. Police identified the administrator as Sahani and arrested him earlier this month. During questioning, police said Sahni allegedly admitted to operating Telegram channels under the name "Jamtara\_official\_Developer" and selling malicious files. Police said the accused learnt cyber fraud techniques, APK development, remote-access exploitation, and anti-detection methods through YouTube videos, Telegram groups, and social media platforms. Police said he had sold nearly 40-50 malicious APKs and admitted to his involvement in cheating around 20-25 victims through similar scams.

During the raid, police recovered 11 mobile phones, including five iPhones, three Google Pixel devices, and three Android phones, along with 11 debit cards, eight SIM cards, and a Ledger Nano S Plus crypto hardware wallet. A car purchased in the name of Sahni's brother was also seized and is currently under verification. Police said further investigation is underway to trace the wider network, financial transactions, and links with organised cyber fraud syndicates operating across the country. BOX: Here's how the fraud typically works, step by step: The bait: The victim receives a message claiming urgent action is needed — for example, to pay a traffic fine, update a bank account, or download a bill payment app. The download link: The message contains a link to download an APK file directly onto the phone, bypassing official app stores.

Permission requests: Once opened, the app asks for permissions such as accessibility access, SMS access, notification access, or screen-sharing permissions. The requests are often presented as necessary for the app to function. Device access: After permissions are granted, the malicious app can begin monitoring activity on the phone. Depending on its capabilities, it may read SMS messages and OTPs, capture keystrokes, track banking activity, intercept notifications, or remotely control parts of the device. Fraud execution: Using the stolen information, cybercriminals can access bank accounts, authorise transactions, take over accounts, or carry out financial fraud without the victim immediately realising it.

## Why Maharashtra's mango farmers are holding rare protest marches

GNS News Agency, May 25

Mango and cashew growers from Maharashtra's Konkan region have launched a rare and escalating agitation against the state government, demanding compensation for what they describe as massive crop losses this season. The protests culminated in the "Dhadak Kaifiyat Morcha" outside Mantralaya in Mumbai on Monday, where demonstrators led by farmer leader Raju Shetti and Maharashtra Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal staged a sit-in before several protesters were detained by police. Alok Deshpande explains the reasons behind the farmers' protest. Farmers say climate change has severely damaged this year's Alphonso mango crop in Konkan. According to Chandrakant Mokal, President of Maharashtra's Mango Growers' Association, nearly 40 per cent of mango trees in the region did not witness flowering this season. "The impact of climate change is clearly visible on mango production. Rising temperatures, growing diseases on mango plants, and erratic weather changes are affecting the production," Mokal said.

He added that this year's mango production is barely 10-15 per cent of last year's output in several orchards across Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. Alphonso Mango cultivation is highly weather-sensitive and depends on cool winters, stable humidity, and the absence of untimely rainfall during flowering and fruit formation. Farmers say warmer winters, sudden heat spikes, and erratic rainfall disrupted flowering cycles and caused widespread flower and fruit drop.

Why are these protests considered unusual?

Unlike farmers from western Maharashtra or Vidarbha, Konkan horticulture growers have historically not been associated with sustained street agitations. Much of the Konkan economy depends on mango and cashew cultivation, with thousands of small orchard owners relying on a single annual harvest for income. Farmer leaders say repeated climate-linked losses, rising cultivation costs, and inadequate government compensation have now pushed growers into financial distress severe enough to trigger statewide protests.

What are the farmers demanding?

The protesters are demanding compensation of Rs 5 lakh per hectare for damaged mango orchards and Rs 3 lakh per hectare for damaged cashew plantations. Farmer groups have rejected the state government's announced compensation of around Rs 22,000 per hectare as grossly



inadequate. "The 22,000 rupees per hectare assistance announced by the government is a mockery of the farmers. It amounts to just 220 rupees of aid per mango tree, which is less than the price of a single export-quality mango," Shetti said. He said the state government should utilise funds from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), and other relief mechanisms to support affected cultivators.

Why is the crisis particularly severe in Konkan?

Agriculture in Konkan differs significantly from many other parts of Maharashtra. Due to the region's terrain and climatic conditions, rice farming is often not economically viable, making mango and cashew cultivation the primary source of income for thousands of families. "When the mango crop fails, farmers effectively lose an entire year's income," farmer organisations say. Since Alphonso mangoes are harvested only once annually, even one failed flowering season can create a severe financial crisis for orchard owners.

How is the crisis affecting consumers and exports?

The sharp drop in production has already driven up retail prices of Alphonso mangoes. According to Mokal, retail prices have reached around Rs 800 per dozen, while wholesale prices are hovering around Rs 400-500 per dozen — nearly 40-50 per cent higher than last year. The crisis has also affected exports. Mokal said Konkan exported Alphonso mangoes worth around Rs 325 crore last year, but poor production and disruptions in international markets have severely affected export prospects this season. "The ongoing war and reduction in production have literally killed the possibility of export of mangoes. These are desperate times, and the government must step in to provide relief," he said.

## Ruptured spleen, blood clot in brain, bruises: Deepika Nagar autopsy shows multiple injuries

Greater Noida dowry death case: Blood clot in the brain, ruptured spleen, bruises all over the body: The autopsy report of Deepika Nagar (24), who allegedly jumped to death from the terrace of her in-laws' home in Greater Noida on Sunday, has pointed to multiple serious internal and external injuries. Her family had alleged she was being harassed by her in-laws for dowry, police said, adding that her husband and father-in-law have been arrested.

Sources said the post-mortem report recorded external injuries including contusions (bruises) on her face, elbow joints, forearm, right thigh, chest and abdomen regions. It also observed that a blood clot was found in the middle and left side of the brain, the spleen was found ruptured, chambers of the heart were found empty, kidney was in a pale

condition, and bleeding was found in various parts of the body. According to a police officer, the report indicates that while the injuries were caused by the fall, some appear to be ante-mortem (before death). "This possibly implies she was being harassed," the officer said, adding that efforts are on to arrest the other accused in the case. The FIR has been registered against seven people, including Deepika's mother-in-law and sister-in-law among others, under sections 85 (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjected to cruelty) and 80(2) (dowry death) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. The report, sources said, states that swelling (measuring approximately 12 cmx9 cm) was found on the right side of the face.

## Dalai Lama's longtime chief security officer Tenzin Taklha honoured with prestigious public service medal



Tenzin Taklha — Secretary to the 14th Dalai Lama (right) and longtime Chief of Security — was awarded a commemorative citation and medal honouring more than three decades of devoted service to the Tibetan cause and Himalayan cultural continuity. Tenzin Taklha — Secretary to the 14th Dalai Lama (right) and longtime Chief of Security — was awarded a commemorative citation and medal honouring more than three decades of devoted service to the Tibetan cause and Himalayan cultural continuity. Born in Kolkata, educated and professionally trained in the United States of America, seasoned in Delhi, and ultimately returning to Dharamshala in lifelong service to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Taklha, 61, has received one of the Tibetan exile community's most distinguished recognitions for public service and institutional stewardship.

Taklha — Secretary to the 14th Dalai Lama and longtime Chief of Security — was awarded a commemorative citation and medal honouring more than three decades of devoted service to the Tibetan cause and Himalayan cultural continuity. The event was held on May 20 at Thiksey Monastery in central Ladakh during celebrations marking the 84th birthday of 9th Thiksey Rinpoche. The award, instituted by Thiksey Rinpoche in 2016 with the Dalai Lama himself as its inaugural recipient, recognizes individuals whose lives have been dedicated to sustaining Tibetan institutions in exile. Taklha becomes only the second recipient, a reflection of the trust and responsibility he has carried for nearly

three decades behind the scenes of the Dalai Lama's global engagements.

Born Tenzin Namdhak in Calcutta in 1965, Taklha's life mirrors the journey of many Tibetans in exile. After infancy in Switzerland and childhood years in the United States, he returned to Dharamshala in 1978 and studied at Tibetan Children's Village, where he initially struggled with Tibetan language studies before emerging as a strong student through persistence and discipline. Taklha later graduated from St Stephen's College, Delhi, in 1988, before pursuing graduate studies in Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Yet rather than pursuing a conventional international career, Taklha returned to work connected to the Tibetan exile community and the Dalai Lama's office.

In 1990, he helped coordinate the resettlement of 1,000 Tibetan refugees across 16 regional clusters in the United States, work that demanded both administrative precision and emotional sensitivity. A later journey to Tibet in 1993, including a visit to the Potala Palace in Lhasa, deepened his commitment to preserving Tibetan identity and culture in exile. Following professional security training in the United States, Taklha joined the Dalai Lama's Private Office as Chief of Security in 1996. Over time, his responsibilities expanded far beyond security coordination to include managing international travel, diplomatic logistics, health schedules, official audiences, and liaison work with governments and host institutions worldwide. In 2014, he was appointed secretary to His Holiness, while continuing to oversee security operations, making him one of the most trusted and indispensable figures within the Dalai Lama's inner administrative circle. The citation presented at Thiksey praised Taklha's "integrity, discretion, and wisdom" — the qualities his colleagues frequently associate with his leadership style. Known for avoiding publicity and declining personal credit, Taklha has built a reputation as a calm and disciplined administrator who regards service itself as a spiritual practice. "My practice is serving His Holiness the Dalai Lama," he has often said, encapsulating a philosophy that has defined his career.

## Punjab, Chandigarh lead PGI school education index 2024-25; Centre flags 'huge scope for improvement'

However, both Punjab and Chandigarh have achieved the fifth-highest grade, "Prachesta-1", while no state or UT has been placed in the top four grades — Uttaraksh, Uttam-1, Uttam-2 and Uttam-3. Punjab has been placed above Delhi, Kerala and neighbouring states Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Punjab has remained a top performer in the PGI since 2019-20. For 2024-25, Punjab and Chandigarh have been bracketed in "Prachesta-1" with a score range of 701-760, corresponding to 51-60 per cent. Top grades remain vacant. The report clarifies that Prachesta-1 is not the highest achievable grade. It is the fifth grade after Uttaraksh (91-100 per cent), Uttam-1 (81-90 per cent), Uttam-2 (71-80 per cent) and Uttam-3 (61-70 per cent). The lowest three grades are Akanshi-1, Akanshi-2 and Akanshi-3. "None of the states/UTs have achieved the top four grades, indicating there is huge scope for improvement in performance by States/UTs," the report states. "The top-most grade attained is Prachesta-1, i.e. score range 701-760, indicating that there is huge scope for improvement in performance by States/UTs. Only Chandigarh and Punjab have attained Grade Prachesta-1, six States/UTs joined Grade Prachesta-2, nine States/UTs joined Grade Prachesta-3..." says the report.

Kerala, Delhi among states in Prachesta-2

The UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, along with Kerala, Delhi, Odisha, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh, have been bracketed in Prachesta-2. They are followed by Haryana, Goa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat in Prachesta-3. Only one state, Meghalaya, has been placed in the lowest grade, Akanshi-3. Punjab's consistent performance since 2019 Punjab has consistently remained among the top performers in the PGI since 2019-20, when it topped the index for the first time. In 2020-21, it retained the top position.

From 2021-22 to 2023-24, under the revamped PGI 2.0 framework, Punjab has continued to remain a top-tier state along with Chandigarh. The Performance Grading Index evaluates the performance of states and UTs by categorising them into different grades rather than assigning ranks. This grading approach allows multiple states and UTs to be placed within the same performance band, promoting a more balanced and constructive assessment framework. The report notes that this approach avoids the unintended stigma of underperformance that rankings may impose. PGI 2.0 is based on 70 indicators across two categories — outcomes, and governance and management — comprising six domains: learning outcomes and quality, access, infrastructure and facilities, equity, governance processes, and teacher education and training. The data is derived from the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan



2024, PM POSHAN Portal, PRABAND Portal and Vidyanjali Portal. The PGI report, released by the Centre, has often triggered political sparring in Punjab.

The political one-upmanship began in June 2021, in the run-up to the 2022 Punjab Assembly polls, when Punjab secured the top ranking in PGI 2019-20 under the then Congress-led Punjab government. Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi's then deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia had dismissed Punjab's achievement and said it was the "result of secret friendship" between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh. He had said PM Modi had "showered his blessings" on Amarinder with the report ahead of the 2022 polls. Sisodia had also questioned Delhi's lower ranking despite claiming that schools in the national capital were superior to those in Punjab. Punjab again figured among the top-performing states for 2021-22. The report was released in November 2022, months after AAP came to power in Punjab.

Delhi was again outperformed by Punjab even as the AAP government led by chief minister Bhagwant Mann was aggressively implementing the "Delhi model of education" in Punjab. Most AAP leaders remained silent and did not publicly celebrate Punjab's performance, drawing criticism from the Opposition, especially the Congress, which accused the AAP of being unable to acknowledge achievements made during the previous Congress tenure. AAP leaders, including Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, had also termed Punjab's top rankings in national surveys as "fake". Then education minister and now AAP MP Gurmeet Singh Mehtayer had said such reports were based on "fudged figures" and that the "ground reality in Punjab was totally different and schools were in shambles". However, after 2022, the AAP government has regularly celebrated Punjab's top rankings in national surveys, including PARAKH (previously NAS), PGI, and NITI Aayog reports, describing them as achievements of the government and proof of its "transformational school education policies".

## Mann launches pilot of underground electricity wiring project at native village

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Tuesday, launched an underground electricity wiring project on a pilot basis in his native Satoj village. Laying the foundation stone of the Rs 8-crore project, Mann said Satoj would become Punjab's first village to completely transition from an overhead electricity wiring system to an underground cable network, making it "pole-free". "This is a pilot project. It will be replicated in other villages and cities of Punjab," Mann said, adding he launched the project from his own village "because it is easier for me to convince my own villagers for a new project". Calling the "Satoj Model" a roadmap for the entire country, Mann declared the project as the beginning of a "Roshan Punjab" and said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has fulfilled its promise of creating wire-free villages for Punjab's farmers and asserted that underground power supply would also end the politics surrounding the installation of electricity poles in villages. Under the pilot project, 384 electricity poles will be removed from Satoj, and underground cables will be laid without digging roads. Mann said seven kilometres of high tension lines, 9.5 kilometres of low tension lines, and 41 kilometres of service cables connecting 800 consumers' homes will be laid underground. All high tension lines connected from the 66 kV grid to the village through three 11 KV feeders and linked to 28 transformers will go underground. Thereafter, all low-tension lines from the 28 transformers to the meter boxes will also be laid underground, he said. The cables connect-

ing meter boxes to all households will likewise be underground, due to which the electricity poles will be removed. "A special feature of the project is that roads will not need to be dug up for laying underground cables because trenchless drilling machines will be used to install underground pipes. These pipes will be laid three feet beneath the ground," he said, adding that the work will be completed in 45 days. He said the cables that will be laid are heat and water-resistant and will be inserted through conduits made of High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipes before being covered for protection. He claimed that the underground cables being used in the project come with a 50-year warranty. He said underground cabling would significantly reduce disruptions caused by storms and rainfall while also minimising transmission losses and accidental fires caused by sparking. Recalling a tragic incident during his tenure as Sangrur MP, Mann said, "Three young men from this village had lost their lives due to electric shocks involving combine harvesters. They were the only breadwinners for their families. This project is a tribute to those young men because such tragic incidents should never occur in future." Referring to the anti-sacrilege legislation, Mann said the state government enacted it against sacrilege, with provisions for punishment up to life imprisonment, to ensure that no one dares to disrespect Guru Granth Sahib in future. Meanwhile, state BJP chief Sunil Jakhar demanded an investigation into the project's tendering process.

# Samsung Elec set to face major strike after union talks collapse



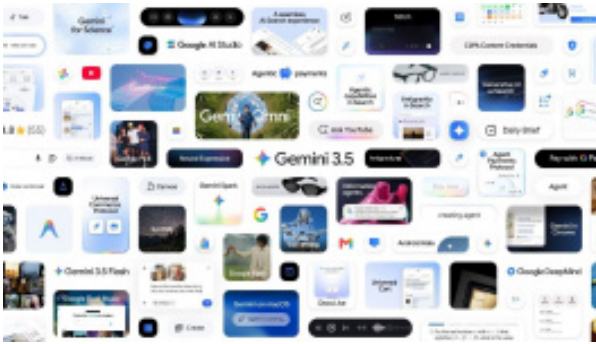
GNS News Agency, May 25

Samsung Electronics said in a statement that the union had insisted on "unacceptable demands" that included the size of bonuses for loss-making units. (Image: Reuters) Samsung Electronics said in a statement that the union had insisted on "unacceptable demands" that included the size of bonuses for loss-making units. Samsung Electronics' union plans for 48,000 workers to walk off the job on Thursday after efforts to clinch a deal on bonus payments fell through, threatening the health of South Korea's economy and the global supply of semiconductors.

Union leader Choi Seung-ho said that the 18-day strike would go ahead as management had not come round on one remaining sticking point in talks mediated by the government. "I want to make clear that we had accepted

the final proposal presented by government mediator," he told reporters. "We express deep regret and feel disappointed but the union plans to go ahead with the strike according to the law," Choi said. Samsung Electronics said in a statement that the union had insisted on "unacceptable demands" that included the size of bonuses for loss-making units. "The reason an agreement could not be reached ... is that accepting the labor union's excessive demands would undermine the fundamental principles of company management," it said. Its shares were down about 3% after the news. South Korea's government threatened at the weekend to step in and order emergency arbitration, citing the adverse impact the strike could have on the economy. The measure, which has been rarely employed, would prevent the strike from going ahead for 30 days while the government mediates talks. But a South Korean government official said on Wednesday that talk of emergency arbitration is premature and that there was still time for dialogue. South Korea's labour commissioner Park Soo-keun, who mediated the talks, said that the government is open to restarting the mediation process "anytime". Samsung accounts for almost a quarter of the country's exports. It is also the world's largest memory chip maker and production disruptions could dent global supply at a time when the AI boom has caused shortages. The union had demanded that Samsung abolish a cap on bonuses that stands at 50% of annual salaries, allocate 15% of annual operating profit to bonuses and that these changes be formalised beyond one year.

# From AI agents to smart glasses, here are the biggest announcements



Google I/O 2026 marked one of the company's biggest AI-focused events yet, with Google unveiling a sweeping lineup of Gemini-powered products, agentic AI systems, developer platforms and futuristic hardware designed to push AI beyond chatbots and into everyday digital life. From the launch of Gemini 3.5 Flash and the new Gemini Spark AI agent to AI-powered Search upgrades, intelligent smart glasses, generative video creation tools and advanced scientific research assistants, Google positioned Gemini at the centre of nearly every product across its ecosystem. The company also introduced major updates for Workspace, Android XR, Google AI Studio, Antigravity and Google Flow, alongside new AI commerce tools such as Universal Cart and agentic shopping experiences. New creative tools like Gemini Omni and Google Pics aim to simplify video and image generation, while Neural Expressive redesigns the Gemini app experience with dynamic visuals and conversational interactions. Google additionally highlighted new AI transparency initiatives, enterprise-grade research tools under Gemini for Science, and AI-powered coding systems aimed at accelerating software development and automation workflows. Gemini 3.5 Flash with faster AI agents and coding tools

Google has introduced Gemini 3.5, its latest family of AI models focused on combining "frontier intelligence" with advanced agentic capabilities. The first release, Gemini 3.5 Flash, is designed for complex multi-step workflows, coding, automation, and real-world AI tasks while delivering significantly faster performance than rival frontier models. Google says the model excels in coding, multimodal reasoning, and long-horizon task execution, with applications ranging from app development and financial document preparation to enterprise automation. Gemini 3.5 Flash combines frontier intelligence with action capabilities, delivering outputs up to four times faster than rival AI models. Gemini 3.5 Flash combines frontier intelligence with action capabilities, delivering outputs up to four times faster than rival AI models. Gemini 3.5 Flash also powers new AI experiences across the Gemini app, Google Search, and the upcoming Gemini Spark personal AI agent. The company highlighted stronger safety protections, enhanced cyber safeguards, and improved AI transparency. Gemini 3.5 Flash is now available globally through the Gemini app, AI Mode in Search, Google AI Studio, Android Studio, and enterprise platforms, while Gemini 3.5 Pro is expected next month.

Gemini app gets proactive AI agents, cinematic video tools and redesigned interface Google has announced a major upgrade to the Gemini app at I/O 2026, introducing more proactive AI-powered features, a redesigned interface, and new agentic capabilities. The update includes Gemini 3.5 Flash, Google's latest fast-performing AI model, alongside a refreshed "Neural Expressive" design language with fluid animations, richer visuals, and integrated conversational voice interactions. Google also unveiled Gemini Omni, a new multimodal AI tool capable of generating and editing cinematic-quality videos using text, image, and video prompts. Another key addition is Daily Brief, an AI agent that creates personalised morning summaries using Gmail, Calendar, and other connected apps. Google also introduced Gemini Spark, a cloud-based 24/7 AI agent that can automate recurring tasks, organise workflows, monitor emails, and interact with connected services like Canva and OpenTable. Many of the new features will initially roll out to Google AI Plus, Pro, and Ultra subscribers, while a macOS Gemini desktop app with advanced voice features is also launching later this year.

Google introduces AI-powered Search with agents, smarter browsing and custom mini apps Google has announced a major overhaul of Search at I/O 2026, introducing new AI-powered features designed to make Search more conversational, proactive, and agentic. The company is upgrading AI Mode with Gemini 3.5 Flash as the default model globally, alongside what it calls the biggest redesign of the Search box in over 25 years. The new AI-powered Search box supports text, images, videos, files, and Chrome tabs while offering contextual suggestions and conversational follow-ups. Google is also introducing "Search agents," which can continuously monitor the web, news, shopping, finance, and sports updates for users and send personalised alerts or recommendations.

Search is additionally gaining agentic booking tools for services, local experiences, and shopping tasks. Google also previewed AI-generated mini apps and dashboards powered by Google Antigravity, enabling Search to build custom trackers, visual simulations, and interactive tools on demand. Expanded Personal Intelligence support will also allow users to securely connect Gmail, Photos, and Calendar for more context-aware Search experiences across nearly 200 countries and 98 languages.

Google has unveiled Gemini Spark, a new always-on AI agent designed to move Gemini beyond answering questions and into actively completing tasks on a user's behalf. Powered by Gemini 3.5 and Google's Antigravity framework, Spark integrates deeply with Workspace apps like Gmail, Docs, and Slides, allowing it to automate recurring workflows, summarise meeting notes, monitor inboxes, and generate reports or emails in the background. Google says Spark can continue working even when a device is locked or offline. The company is also expanding integrations with services like Canva, OpenTable, and Instacart. Spark will begin rolling out to trusted testers and Google AI Ultra subscribers in the US. Gemini Omni Flash for AI video generation and editing Google has introduced Gemini Omni, a new multimodal AI model family designed to generate and edit content from text, images, audio, and video inputs, starting with video creation. The first model, Gemini Omni Flash, is rolling out to the Gemini app, Google Flow, YouTube Shorts, and YouTube Create. Google says Omni combines Gemini's reasoning abilities with generative media tools, allowing users to edit videos conversationally while maintaining scene consistency, physics, and character continuity across multiple prompts.

The model can generate videos grounded in real-world knowledge, create explainers, apply styles and effects, and combine multiple input formats into cohesive outputs. Google is also introducing AI-generated digital avatars based on users' voices and likenesses, while embedding SynthID watermarks into all AI-generated videos for transparency and verification.

Google expands Antigravity with faster Gemini 3.5 Flash and AI coding tools Google has announced major developer-focused upgrades centred around Gemini 3.5 Flash, its new high-speed AI model designed for agentic workflows and coding tasks. The company says the model delivers frontier-level performance while operating four times faster than rival frontier AI systems. Alongside the model, Google introduced Antigravity 2.0, a standalone desktop app for orchestrating multiple AI agents, as well as new command-line and SDK tools for developers. Google is also launching Managed Agents in the Gemini API, allowing developers to deploy AI agents capable of reasoning, using tools, and executing code in isolated environments with a single API call. Antigravity 2.0 updates aim to give developers more powerful tools and greater control over AI agents. Antigravity 2.0 updates aim to give developers more powerful tools and greater control over AI agents.

The company further expanded Google AI Studio with native Android app generation, Workspace integrations, Play Console publishing support, and a new mobile app for rapid prototyping on the go. Google also announced a new \$100-per-month AI Ultra subscription tier with higher usage limits for Antigravity tools. To encourage AI development, the company unveiled the Build with Gemini XPRIZE Hackathon, featuring a \$2 million prize pool for developers building AI-powered applications using Gemini models and tools. Google introduces Universal Cart for AI-powered shopping

Google has unveiled Universal Cart at Google I/O 2026, an AI-powered shopping hub designed to make online purchases smarter and more proactive. Powered by Gemini and Google's Shopping Graph of over 60 billion product listings, Universal Cart works across Search, Gemini, YouTube, and Gmail, automatically tracking deals, price drops, stock alerts, and compatibility issues for products added to the cart. Google says the system can even recommend alternatives and identify hidden savings using Google Wallet data like loyalty rewards and payment perks. The company also expanded its Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP) and introduced the Agent Payments Protocol (AP2), enabling secure AI-assisted purchases with user-defined spending limits and verification safeguards. Universal Cart will begin rolling out in the U.S. this summer.

Google Workspace gets Gemini voice tools, AI Inbox and new image editor Google has announced a major set of AI-powered upgrades for Workspace at I/O 2026, introducing new voice-driven productivity tools, an AI image editor called Google Pics, smarter inbox management, and deeper Gemini integration. Gmail, Docs, and Keep are gaining conversational "Live" features that let users search emails, brainstorm documents, and organise notes using natural voice commands. Google also unveiled Google Pics, a new AI image generation and editing app powered by Nano Banana, offering object editing, text translation inside images, collaborative canvases, and direct integration with Slides and Drive.

Gmail's AI Inbox is expanding with contextual draft replies, surfaced file links, and improved task management tools. Google additionally confirmed that Gemini Spark, its new 24/7 AI agent, will integrate with Workspace apps to automate tasks and assist with emails, documents, and scheduling under user control. Daily Brief: Gemini's new AI morning assistant

Google has introduced Daily Brief, a new Gemini-powered AI agent designed to deliver a personalised morning summary of everything users need to know for the day. Once enabled, Daily Brief works across connected apps like Gmail and Calendar to gather urgent emails, upcoming events, reminders, and relevant follow-up information into a single easy-to-read briefing. Unlike a standard summary tool, it actively prioritises tasks based on user goals and even suggests immediate next steps. Users can also refine recommendations over time using simple feedback controls. Daily Brief is rolling out first to Google AI Plus, Pro, and Ultra subscribers in the US.

Google teases Gemini-powered smart glasses launching later this year At Google I/O 2026, Google unveiled its upcoming intelligent eyewear platform built on Android XR, introducing AI-powered smart glasses developed in partnership with Samsung, Gentle Monster, and Warby Parker. The first products will be audio-focused smart glasses arriving later this fall, with future models also featuring built-in displays. Powered by Gemini AI, the glasses allow users to get directions, send texts, manage calls, translate speech in real time, snap and edit photos, and interact with apps using voice commands without needing to take out their phone.

Google says the glasses can understand what users are looking at, provide contextual information about surroundings, and assist with tasks such as food ordering, navigation, and ride booking. Features include hands-free messaging, live translations, camera-based AI queries, and integrations with apps like Uber, DoorDash, and Mondly. The glasses will support both Android and iOS devices as Google expands its vision for always-available AI-powered wearable computing. At Google I/O 2026, Google introduced Docs Live, a new AI-powered feature for Google Docs that can transform spoken thoughts into structured written content. Designed as a conversational writing assistant, the tool lets users freely dictate ideas while AI organizes them into outlines, drafts, tables, and formatted documents. With user permission, Docs Live can also pull context from connected Google services like Gmail, Drive, and Chat, as well as information from the web, to refine generated text. Google positions the feature as a faster, more natural way to brainstorm and draft content using voice rather than prompts. Docs Live will launch this summer for Google AI Pro and Ultra subscribers.

Google redesigns Gemini with 'Neural Expressive' AI interface Google has unveiled Neural Expressive, a major redesign of the Gemini experience focused on making AI interactions more dynamic and conversational. The new interface introduces fluid animations, vibrant visuals, updated typography, and haptic feedback across web, Android, and iOS. Google has also integrated Gemini Live directly into the main Gemini experience, allowing users to switch seamlessly between typing and natural voice conversations. The updated microphone system is designed to better handle free-flowing speech without interruptions, while future updates will add support for regional dialects. Gemini responses are also becoming more interactive, with AI-generated visuals, timelines, narrated videos, and dynamic graphics replacing traditional text-heavy outputs. Stitch with real-time AI design collaboration Google has announced major upgrades to Stitch at I/O 2026, turning the AI design tool into a real-time collaborative platform powered by the Stitch Agent. Users can now create and refine designs using text prompts, voice commands, existing codebases, or design files, making the workflow more natural and interactive. Stitch can instantly generate shareable links through Google AI Studio, while completed projects can be exported to Google Antigravity for backend integration or published direct

# Early war goal was to install hard line former President as Iran's Leader

Days after Israeli strikes killed Iran's supreme leader and other top officials in the opening salvos of the war, President Donald Trump mused publicly that it would be best if "someone from within" Iran took over the country. It turns out that the United States and Israel went into the conflict with a particular and very surprising someone in mind: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former Iranian president known for his hard-line, anti-Israel and anti-American views.

But the audacious plan, developed by the Israelis and which Ahmadinejad had been consulted about, quickly went awry, according to the U.S. officials who were briefed on it. Ahmadinejad was injured on the war's first day by an Israeli strike at his home in Tehran that had been designed to free him from house arrest, the U.S. officials and an associate of Ahmadinejad's said. He survived the strike, they said, but after the near miss he became disillusioned with the regime change plan. He has not been seen publicly since then and his current whereabouts and condition are unknown. To say that Ahmadinejad was an unusual choice would be a vast understatement. While he had increasingly clashed with the regime's leaders and had been placed under close watch by Iranian authorities, he was known during his term as president, from 2005 to 2013, for his calls to "wipe Israel off the map." He was a strong supporter of Iran's nuclear program, a fierce critic of the United States and known for violently cracking down on internal dissent.

How Ahmadinejad was recruited to take part remains unknown.

The existence of the effort, which has not been previously reported, was part of a multistage plan developed by Israel to topple Iran's theocratic government. It underscores how Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel went into the war not only misjudging how quickly they could achieve their objectives but also gambling to some degree on a risky plan for leadership change in Iran that even some of Trump's aides found implausible. Some U.S. officials were skeptical in particular about the viability of putting Ahmadinejad back into power.

"From the outset, President Trump was clear about his goals for Operation Epic Fury: destroy Iran's ballistic missiles, dismantle their production facilities, sink their navy, and weaken their proxy," Anna Kelly, a White House spokesperson, said in response to a request for comment about the regime change plan and Ahmadinejad. "The United States military met or exceeded all of its objectives, and now, our negotiators are working to make a deal that would end Iran's nuclear capabilities for good." A spokesperson for Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence agency, declined to comment. U.S. officials spoke during the early days of the war about plans developed with Israel to identify a pragmatist who could take over the country. Officials insisted that there was intelligence that some within the Iranian regime would be willing to work with the United States, even if those people couldn't be described as "moderates."

Trump was enjoying the success of the raid by U.S. forces to capture Venezuela's leader, Nicolas Maduro, and the willingness of his interim replacement to work with the White House — a model that Trump appeared to think could be replicated elsewhere. In recent years, Ahmadinejad has clashed with regime leaders, accusing them of corruption, and rumors have swirled about his loyalties. He was disqualified from numerous presidential elections, his aides were arrested and Ahmadinejad's movements were increasingly restricted to his home in the Narmak section of eastern Tehran. That U.S. and Israeli officials saw Ahmadinejad as a potential leader of a new government in Iran is further evidence that the war in February was launched with the hopes of installing more pliable leadership in Tehran. Trump and members of his Cabinet have said that the goals of the war were narrowly focused on destroying Iran's nuclear, missile and military capabilities.

There are many unanswered questions about how Israel and the United States planned to put Ahmadinejad in power, and the circumstances surrounding the airstrike that injured him. U.S. officials said the strike — carried out by the Israeli air force — was meant to kill the guards watching over Ahmadinejad as part of a plan to release him from house arrest. On the first day of the war, Israeli strikes killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader. The strike at Khamenei's compound in central Tehran also blew up a meeting of Iranian officials, killing some officials whom the White House had identified as more willing to negotiate over a change in government than their bosses. There were also initial reports at the time in the Iranian media that Ahmadinejad had been killed in the strike on his home. The strike did not significantly damage Ahmadinejad's house at the end of a dead-end street. But the security outpost at the entrance to the street was struck. Satellite imagery shows that building was destroyed. In the days that followed, official news agencies clarified that he had survived but that his "bodyguards" — in actuality Revolutionary Guard members who were both guarding him and holding him under house arrest — were killed. An article in The Atlantic in March, citing anonymous associates of Ahmadinejad's, said the former president had been freed from government confinement after the strike at his house, which the article described as "in effect a jailbreak operation." After that article, an associate of Ahmadinejad's confirmed to The New York



Times that Ahmadinejad saw the strike as an attempt to free him. The associate said the Americans viewed Ahmadinejad as someone who could lead Iran, and had the capability to manage "Iran's political, social and military situation."

Ahmadinejad would have been able "play a very important role" in Iran in the near future, the associate said, suggesting that the United States saw him as similar to Delcy Rodriguez, who took power in Venezuela after U.S. forces seized Maduro and has since worked closely with the Trump administration, the person said. During his presidency, Ahmadinejad was known both for his hard-line policies and his often outlandish fundamentalist pronouncements, such as his declaration that there was not a single gay person in Iran and his denial of the Holocaust. He spoke at a conference in Tehran called "A World Without Zionism." Western satirists lampooned these views, and Ahmadinejad became something of an unwitting pop culture curiosity, even the subject of "Saturday Night Live" parodies. He also presided over the country at a time when Iran was accelerating the enrichment of uranium it could one day use for making a nuclear bomb should it choose to weaponize its program. A U.S. intelligence assessment in 2007 concluded that Iran had, years earlier, frozen its work on building a nuclear device but was continuing the enrichment of nuclear fuel it could use for a nuclear weapon if it changed its mind. After Ahmadinejad left office he gradually became something of an open critic of the theocratic government, or at least at odds with Khamenei.

Three times — 2017, 2021, and 2024 — Ahmadinejad tried to run for his previous job, but each time Iran's Guardian Council, a group of civilian and Islamic jurists, blocked his presidential campaign. Ahmadinejad has accused senior Iranian officials of corruption or bad governance and become a critic of the government in Tehran. While he never was an overt dissident, the regime began to treat him as a potentially destabilizing element. In a 2019 interview with the Times, Ahmadinejad praised Trump and argued for a rapprochement between Iran and the United States.

"Mr. Trump is a man of action," Ahmadinejad said. "He is a businessman and therefore he is capable of calculating cost-benefits and making a decision. We say to him, let's calculate the long-term cost-benefit of our two nations and not be shortsighted." People close to Ahmadinejad have been accused of having too close ties to the West, or even spying for Israel. Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, Ahmadinejad's former chief of staff, was put on trial in 2018 and the judge in the case publicly asked about his links to British and Israeli spy agencies, an accusation publicized by state media. In the past few years Ahmadinejad has made trips out of Iran that further fueled speculation. In 2023, he traveled to Guatemala and in 2024 and 2025 he went to Hungary, trips detailed by New Lines magazine. Both countries have close ties to Israel. The Hungarian prime minister at the time, Viktor Orban, has a close relationship with Netanyahu. During the trips to Hungary, Ahmadinejad spoke at a university connected to Orban. He returned from Budapest just days before Israel began attacking Iran last June. When that war broke out, he kept a low public profile and posted only few statements on social media. His relative silence about a war with a country that Ahmadinejad had long viewed as Iran's main enemy was noted by many on Iranian social media. Discussion of Ahmadinejad on Iranian social media picked up after reports of his death, according to an analysis by FilterLabs, a company that tracks public sentiment. But the discussion declined in the weeks following, mainly amounting to confusion about his whereabouts. At the outset, Israel envisioned the war unfolding in several phases, starting with air assaults by the United States and Israel plus the killing of Iran's supreme leaders and the mobilization of Kurds to fight Iranian forces, according to two Israeli defense officials familiar with the operational planning. Then, the Israeli plan foresaw a combination of influence campaigns carried out by Israel and the Kurdish invasion creating political instability in Iran and a sense that the regime was losing control. In a third stage, the regime, under intense political pressure and the weight of damage to key infrastructure like electricity, would collapse, allowing for what the Israelis referred to as an "alternative government" to be established. Other than the air campaign and the killing of the supreme leader, little of the plan played out as the Israelis had hoped, and much of it appears in retrospect to have profoundly misjudged Iran's resilience and the capacity of the United States and Israel to exert their will.

# Whose parks and gardens are these anyway?



For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City. But of late, the city's parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership of these public spaces in their own ways. While the ownership of these spaces technically lies with the State government, the lack of concrete regulations give rise to the question of 'whose park is it anyway?' from time to time. What started this conversation this time around was what happened with Cubbon Reads on December 21. Cubbon Reads is a community of readers who gather at Cubbon Park, one of the largest lung spaces in the city, and read from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. every Saturday. There are people who come by themselves, those who come in duos or groups and lay down their mats and carry on with their reading. This practice has been going on for almost a year now and has inspired such events in other places in Bengaluru as well as other cities.

For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership.

The organisers claim that hundreds of people gather every weekend to read in Cubbon Park. However, chaos broke out on December 21 after the reading session was interrupted by officials of the Horticulture Department. On that day, readers had brought gift-wrapped books to exchange among each other to celebrate the pop culture event known as 'Secret Santa'. These books were confiscated by the officials and the curators of the event were called into their offices. G. Kusuma, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department, said that the event was stopped as there was a lot of "screaming and shouting" and a gathering of up to 1,000 people, which is not allowed as per department rules. She said that any event in which over 20 people gather should get prior permission from the department, which was not the case with Cubbon Reads. The organisers, on the other hand, alleged that they had never been informed about these rules by the department, and on that particular day, they were mistreated and harassed by the authorities. For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. "They first took two of our curators to the Department of Horticulture office. The department officials were hostile and thought that Cubbon Reads was selling books to the public and using a public space to make money. They forcefully extricated their ID cards. The security guards there were talking about imposing fines from anywhere between ₹25,000 and ₹60,000. Also, our founding curators, who are not in town, were called. They were threatened with a First Information Report and a fine and asked to show up in their office right away, or else the current curators would be held in custody," the community said in a press release.

For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. They further said: "Regarding the request for permission, we have been conducting silent reading gatherings for 100 weekends now, and each time, over 200 to 300 people have shown up. Not once did the park authorities have an issue with us coming there to read, stacking books, and taking group pictures with hundreds of us huddled. We did not anticipate that readers coming together with gift-wrapped books would invite suspicion from the park authorities, forcing them to snatch the belongings and unwrap gift covers—only to find harmless books inside." For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. Amidst all this, many other communities and individuals who frequent Cubbon Park also shared their experiences on social media stating that they were allegedly harassed by the Horticulture Department. There are many similar communities which go by the names Cubbon Paints, Cubbon Designs, Cubbon Canines etc. who all gather in the park on designated days. For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. There were also other regular visitors who sided with the Horticulture Department and said that hundreds of people gathering in a lung space without permission needed interception. For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. "While some rules of the department like banning photography inside the park do not make sense, with this particular issue, both the parties were at fault. While silent reading inside the park is one thing, making it an event for gift swapping naturally attracts more people and the organisers should have taken prior permission. We should also think about the fact that not all those

who participate in the event will dispose of those wrappers properly," said a member of the Cubbon Park Conservation Committee. But regulars of Lalbagh Botanical Garden in the southern part of Bengaluru rarely report rifts with the Horticulture Department. "For 15 years now, many small activities have taken place in Lalbagh. Whoever wants to conduct events usually gets in touch with the walkers and then we help them contact the officials and then reading, art and craft events are organised. The only time we had to fight with the department was when they wanted even the morning walkers to buy tickets. After we protested, they took that rule down," said P. Sadashiva, president, Lalbagh Walkers' Association.

Not only Cubbon Park For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. These debates are not limited to Cubbon Park alone and extend to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) parks as well. The BBMP owns over 1,200 parks in Bengaluru and they are open to all groups of citizens. With the privatisation of such parks and the adoption of 506 parks by local citizens and Residents' Welfare Associations (RWAs), citizens had raised issues about access to the parks. While BBMP had mandated that parks should be open throughout the day (5 a.m. to 10 p.m.), many used to be closed for hours in the afternoon. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar responded to these complaints in 2024 and reiterated that the parks should remain open throughout the day irrespective of who maintains them. However, there are some rules even in these parks which do not benefit the public. For instance, the BBMP has banned the consumption of food in public parks. "The intervention of the BBMP with regard to timings has definitely helped delivery partners. As gig workers, we are always on the move, and we need spaces where we can rest and have food. Hence the removal of restrictions on food consumption can be of great help to us as we cannot sit anywhere else and eat at ease," said Vinay Sarathy, president of United Food Delivery Partners' Union. For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. Just like gig workers, pourakarmikas, drivers, domestic workers, and street vendors are some of the other groups who are often disserved by the restrictions on access and activities in public parks. "Any organisation can help maintain the park, but they should not be the rulemakers. Parks are needed especially by people who cannot meet at other places, cannot find privacy in their own homes, homeless people, and blue-collar workers. The rules around access and activities in parks should be in such a manner that it benefits the most vulnerable and the marginalised in society. The decisions should be made democratically," said Vinay Sreenivasa, advocate and citizen activist.

Role of RWAs While the RWAs in the city deny allegations that they restrict access to parks and control the systems there, they agree that local residents should be involved up to some extent in the operations of the parks as they are the ones who should bear the consequences when things take a turn for the worse. For decades, Bengaluru has revelled in its status as the Garden City, but of late, its parks and gardens have become objects of contention as different groups want to claim ownership. "As we live in the vicinity of these parks, we need to ensure that anti-social elements do not enter the parks. They even rough up security guards and it is the local residents who rush to the parks and call the police. We are the ones who take the responsibility for these parks," said Sneha Nandihani from I Change Indiranagar. She added that RWAs often also take care of planting saplings, maintenance of infrastructure in parks as BBMP officials rarely keep a check on such things. Need broader discussions and inclusive guidelines Are Horticulture Department officials of both the State government and the BBMP sufficient to frame rules for parks and gardens? No, say citizen activists.

"All public spaces are commons, and they should not have access restrictions. That being said, there needs to be rules for their maintenance which include broader democratic discussions. If we take Cubbon Park, it is much more than just a botanical garden, it is a public space. Hence, one government body is not enough to frame these regulations. Representatives from the Horticulture Department, from BBMP, from the police, and the public should come together to frame them," Vinay suggested. The Horticulture Department is gearing up to do something similar. "We have a Cubbon Park expert committee at the Principal Secretary level which includes stakeholders from other departments, walkers, and others. We are also including some more expert opinions on what rules and regulations need to be present in Lalbagh and Cubbon Park. We want to issue a government order in this regard to clear all the confusions," said M. Jagadeesh, Joint Director (Parks and Gardens), Horticulture Department. He further explained: "These regulations will specify what is allowed in these gardens, up to what extent, what is now allowed, and details regarding permissions that should be taken. Then there will be no ambiguity. Our main aim is to conserve Lalbagh and Cubbon Park. Hence, we will come out with a policy that is environment, park, and people-friendly." He also said that once the Republic Day flower show in Lalbagh is over, the department will go ahead with framing the policy. As for BBMP parks, officials said that there are no plans to release any specific guidelines for the parks as of now. "The timings of the parks are 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. and any restrictions on that are illegal and it should be brought to our notice directly. If any events are to be organised, then the organiser must seek permission from the BBMP. As far as restrictions on eating is concerned, they are in place as littering is not permitted in parks," said Preeti Gehlot, Special Commissioner, Horticulture, BBMP.

lysts say it is uncertain whether the enthusiasm, especially for foundation model firms that require substantial capital for computing power and talent, will be sustained. "The AI/LLM companies did enjoy a historically rich funding environment. Most raised multiple rounds at exponentially higher valuations last year. They will need to smash very significant business milestones this year to continue enjoying unlimited access to infinity capital," said James Cross, managing director at Franklin Venture Partners. Among venture capital funds some \$76 billion was raised in 2024, the lowest in five years, with major funds like Andreessen Horowitz and General Catalyst securing major pieces of the pie. Exits also remain challenging. Exit value in 2024 was \$149.2 billion, above the seven-year low of \$120 billion in 2023, but a fraction of 2021's \$841.5 billion. The IPO market did not recover as quickly as investors had hoped, though some year-end listings such as ServiceTitan helped rekindle some optimism.

# These perfumeries are bottling the fragrance of your favourite memories



When Abhishek Sengupta returned to Kolkata in November last year after realising that he could not afford the exorbitant rent for his apartment in Mumbai's upscale neighbourhood Khar on a consultant's salary, he was despondent. He wanted to take along something that captured the essence of the city. "It's strange," he says, "I've always known Kolkata to be home. But now Mumbai has an equal place in my heart." While many people choose to bring back souvenirs or items they have bought, Abhishek decided to invest in a perfume that smells like Maximum City. "Mumbai has a particular smell that's hard to replicate. I'm not talking about the sometimes-saline smell, but the city's energetic, almost frenetic aroma," he explains.

A colleague recommended Byredo's perfume Mumbai Noise — a scent crowded with contrasts: rich, warm woody and amber, blended with plummy Davana (*Artemisia pallens*) positioned alongside leather, bitter coffee stirred with sweet tonka beans. The scent captures the smoky haze of incense interspersed with street side coffee carts and dissonant soundscapes. "I rarely spritz on the scent; I just keep it to give it a whiff now and again," says Abhishek. Byredo, the European luxury brand founded in Stockholm in 2006 by Ben Gorham, has gained a cult following for its scents, which celebrate the nostalgia of "coming home" — a feeling of emotions and memories awakened. In fact, many of our purchases today are driven by nostalgia. Fragrance brands, too, are tapping into this emotion effectively, as scientific details about formulations are too complex for marketing. Instead, storytelling offers customers something to believe in, making the experience feel natural rather than forced. Booming industry Statista, a German online platform that specialises in data gathering and visualisation, projects that India's fragrance market will have an annual growth rate of 1.56% from 2024 to 2028. Non-luxury fragrances

are expected to account for 57% of total sales. There is also a growing demand for traditional and natural scents, reflecting a preference for local and eco-friendly products. For instance, Bombay Perfumery's Chai Musk, a unisex fragrance, also celebrates the vibrancy of Mumbai, capturing its hustle, shared stories, and the ever-present chai culture. Then there is Forest Essentials' Nargis, one of their best-selling fragrances, which is sourced from the snow-clad valleys of Kashmir for their sweet essential oil.

Receptivity for natural perfumes is part of the broader affinity and movement towards natural, organic beauty. Additionally, synthetic alternatives can never completely replicate the scent of the original, natural flower or ingredient. "At Forest Essentials, we wanted to create an exceptional range of natural perfumes as per the tenets of the ancient science of Ayurveda, keeping the legacy of traditional Indian perfumery alive. Our perfumes use the traditional process of Sandhan Kalpana and contain pure grain alcohol, as mentioned in ancient texts," says Sanya Dawar, marketing and brand communications lead at Forest Essentials. Manan Gandhi, founder of Bombay Perfumery, believes nostalgia varies for each person and is influenced by diverse cultural scents. "It's challenging to pinpoint specific nostalgic notes, but generally, Indians have a strong nostalgic connection to floral scents, which are tied to festivals, weddings, temples, and other cultural events. Many consumers are drawn to Bombay Perfumery's floral scents like Madurai Talkies and Moire, which feature popular Indian flowers such as jasmine, rose, and rajnigandha (tuberose)." Varisha P, a marketing consultant from Bengaluru, recently bought perfume oil from Call of the Valley, a Mumbai-based beauty brand founded in 2019 by Jean-Christophe Bonnafous. Bonnafous, who splits his time between Puducherry and Mumbai, created the brand to reconnect city dwellers with nature through the sensory experience of wearing precious oils and fragrances. Varisha says she had never tried this type of fragrance before, which is applied directly to the skin with a roll-on applicator, but was pleasantly surprised by its mild scent, as she prefers fragrances that are not overwhelming. "I purchased the Vetiver roll-on because it reminded me of a fragrance my mother, who passed away in 2018, would wear. The notes of the perfume sort of reflect my mother's personality, which was a beautiful contrast of being cool and warm," says Varisha. Manan believes that since nostalgia is heavily linked to emotions and personal memories, brands should be mindful not to use it as a marketing tool purely to convert new consumers. The fragrance industry in India is evolving, emphasising collaboration, emotional connections with consumers, and a deep understanding of fragrance context and purpose. Beyond just preserving memories, fragrance brands now serve as developers who mediate between clients and perfumers. Storytelling and forging emotional bonds are pivotal. It is crucial to identify the emotional associations consumers have with fragrances, as reactions to perfumes can often reflect deeper personal sentiments.

# Why geography matters to Abraham Verghese, author of The Covenant of Water

Physician and author Abraham Verghese often says that every change in geography has shaped his destiny. His parents moved from Kerala to Ethiopia, where he was born. Later, as there was civil unrest in Ethiopia, he followed them to the United States, where he practises medicine, teaches, and writes. Verghese's ancestry and his experiences in the two countries where he has lived have formed the basis of his four critically-acclaimed books. In his fourth and latest work, *The Covenant of Water*, published last year, Verghese narrates an epic story spanning three generations in Kerala. Oprah Winfrey has bought the rights to adapt the book into a film. Ahead of *The Hindu Lit for Life 2025*, which the author will inaugurate in Chennai on January 18, Verghese discusses why he always wanted to write fiction and the difficulty of mining one's own life for material. Edited excerpts from an email interview:

You have written two memoirs. Why did you feel the need to document your life?

In the mid-1980s, when I was living in a small town in Tennessee, working as an infectious diseases specialist, I saw more patients with HIV than was predicted for a rural town of 50,000. I realised I had stumbled onto an American paradigm of migration: young men who had left their small towns because they were gay were now returning decades later, having contracted the virus, and having cared for partners who had passed. At the time, AIDS was considered an urban phenomenon. I wrote a scientific paper describing the paradigm, but I felt it never quite captured the heartache of their journey, or the grief of their parents, or my own grief at seeing this again and again. I became a writer to tell that story — through fiction, or so I thought. But it turns out that non-fiction is much more in demand by publishers than fiction, because non-fiction sells predictably: if something really happened, we all have an inherent interest. So that story became my first book, *My Own Country* (1994). I thought I was telling the story of the small town and HIV, but inevitably, since I was a character, it was also a memoir. At the time I was writing the book, I was also living through an experience with one of my medical students, another extraordinary true story. Publishers were anxious for me to write another non-fiction book when I finished the first one, and the story that became *The Tennis Partner* (1998) seemed an easy way to do so. However, I really always wanted to write fiction, so after two memoirs I have not gone back to non-fiction. It isn't easy to mine your own life for material.

Memory is a tricky thing. In memoir writing, how do you ensure that you have got things right, especially when you're writing about emotional episodes from your life?

I think readers understand that memory is unreliable, and that all writing is in a sense a kind of artifice. If you confine yourself not to your memories but to what can be documented to have happened, and only to dialogue exactly what was said... well you have a very dry book, or else it is a newspaper account. Instead, just as when you are sitting with friends and recounting what happened to you, your listeners get your best recollection and they know it comes with all your biases, and with your propensity to exaggerate or else to under-report.

You often talk of how every change in geography changed your destiny. What other factors do you think changed your destiny? And can destiny be changed at all?

Geography matters greatly. But so do the choices you make at different crossroads in your life. Ultimately, I think life is ironic, and dependent on luck, fate, happenstance, etc. I never intended to be a writer so the fact that we are having this exchange is an example of how life is ironic. I chose infectious diseases as my specialty in medicine before AIDS came along; colleagues in other fields perhaps felt sorry for me. The AIDS experience was the hardest



thing I ever did, emotionally and personally; but it made me a writer. So, in short, I think our destinies are shaped by events beyond our control.

'The Covenant of Water' took you 14 years to write. When you're working on a book for so long, does your writing or the story change? And if yes, how do you address that?

I'm never in a great hurry to follow one book with another and another. This explains why the "canon" of my works is tiny. And I have a busy day job. But the job allows me the luxury of not having to churn out one book after the other to pay the bills; it has given me the luxury of being able to take my time. None of this I realise is a great explanation. The truth is I am slow, lazy, a great procrastinator. And despite every outline I make when I begin a book, in the act of writing, strange things happen — call it the muse, or the subconscious — and I wind up departing from the outline. Sometimes that detour is just the right thing; at other times you discover after six months of going in that direction and accumulating hundreds of pages, that you have come to a dead end. So, you back up and start again.

You have written quite a bit about your family. Is there a constant process of inclusion and elimination of stories, details, or memories during the writing process?

I think all stories are about family, ultimately. Tolstoy says, "All happy families are alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." And so, families — fictional or real — are inevitably good stories. As for the process, I think revision is the real skill of writing. And I think it is fatal, with certain exceptions, to show anything to anyone but your editor. Family can love your work even when it is bad. Or else they can bruise your ego when it really is bad, and they say so. At a later stage in the development of a piece, both my partner Cari and my older brother George are extremely helpful in different ways in the process.

Fiction, you say, stops time. What is the one book of fiction you read this year that truly stopped time for you?

Right now, I am reading *Paradise* by Abdulrazak Gurnah. The book is extraordinary and when I am in its pages, I disappear; time stops.

## Meta poaches top AI talent from OpenAI and DeepMind as Zuckerberg escalates AI push



detailed internal research showing that Meta knew Instagram was toxic for the mental health of teenage girls. The company's leadership chose to downplay the findings and continue with product strategies that exacerbated these harms. Both incidents stem from the same root philosophy: "move fast and break things," a mantra that prioritizes scale and engagement above all else, with societal consequences treated as unfortunate but acceptable collateral damage. Applying this ethos to AI, a technology with far greater potential for both good and harm, is a terrifying prospect. If a social feed algorithm could destabilize democracies and harm teen self-esteem, what could a superintelligent agent, deployed to three billion users with the same growth-at-all-costs mindset, be capable of? Mr. Zuckerberg's past misadventures are not just historical footnotes; they are the core reason for public skepticism towards Meta's AI ambitions. How Zuckerberg has evolved from social media to superintelligence Mr. Zuckerberg's character, as observed through his actions over two decades, is one of relentless, almost singular, ambition. He has consistently demonstrated a willingness to be ruthless in competition (cloning Snapchat's features into Instagram Stories), a visionary in long-term bets (acquiring Instagram and WhatsApp, pivoting to the Metaverse), and an ability to withstand immense public and regulatory pressure. His critics would argue he is a leader who lacks a deep-seated ethical framework, often optimizing for power and market dominance while retroactively applying ethical patches only when forced by public outcry.

His defenders might say he is a pragmatic engineer who is learning and adapting. The Cambridge Analytica scandal arguably forced him to mature from a hoodie-wearing coder into a global CEO who must at least speak the language of governance and responsibility. How Meta's AI super-team challenges OpenAI and Google? The crucial question is whether this change is superficial or substantive. His current strategy with AI suggests a potential evolution. The open-sourcing of the Llama models can be interpreted in two ways. On one hand, it's a shrewd business move to commoditise the layer of the stack where OpenAI and Google have a strong lead, fostering an ecosystem dependent on Meta's architecture. On the other, it can be framed as a commitment to transparency and democratisation, a direct response to the "black box" criticism leveled at his past operations. This new "super-team" will be the ultimate test. Will they be fire-walled by a new ethical charter, or will the immense pressure from Mr. Zuckerberg to "win" the AI race override all other considerations? Against the closed, API-first models of OpenAI and the integrated-but-cautious approach of Google, Meta is carving out a unique strategic position. It is fighting the war on two fronts — by making Llama an open-source alternative, Meta is making itself the default foundation for thousands of startups, researchers, and developers, disrupting the business models of its rivals. Mr. Zuckerberg hasn't stopped with that, he has also publicly committed to acquiring hundreds of thousands of high-end NVIDIA GPUs, signaling that his company will not be outspent on compute. With the addition of this new team, Meta completes the trifecta: massive data, unparalleled compute, and now, world-leading human talent. The goal is no longer just to build a chatbot for Messenger or an image generator for Instagram. As Mr. Zuckerberg's tweet boldly states, the aim is "Towards superintelligence." This is a direct challenge to the stated missions of DeepMind and OpenAI. The formation of this AI super-team is the culmination of Mr. Zuckerberg's pivot from social media king to aspiring AI emperor. It is an act of immense strategic importance, one that immediately elevates Meta to the top tier of AI development. Yet, the success of this venture will not be measured solely by the capability of the models it produces. It will be measured by whether Mr. Zuckerberg can build an organization that has learned from the profound societal failures of its past. This is a defining gambit for Meta founder — a chance to redefine his legacy not as the creator of a divisive social network, but as the leader who responsibly ushered in the age of artificial intelligence.

Can Zuckerberg be trusted with the future of AI?

This aggressive push into AI stands in stark contrast to the defining scandals of Zuckerberg's career. The Cambridge Analytica affair revealed a fundamental flaw in Facebook's DNA: a platform architecture that prioritized growth and data collection over user privacy and security, which was then exploited for political manipulation. The company's response was slow, defensive, and ultimately insufficient to repair the deep chasm of public trust. Then, "The Facebook Files" exposé by The Wall Street Journal

## Custodial deaths: police convictions remain zero in T.N. and beyond



"Even a murderer would not have caused this much injury to a person", observed the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday (July 1, 2025) during the hearing of a batch of Public Interest Litigation petitions over the custodial death of Ajith Kumar, a security guard who died in police custody in Sivaganga district last Saturday (June 28, 2025).

"Even a murderer would not have caused this much injury to a person", observed the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday (July 1, 2025) during the hearing of a batch of Public Interest Litigation petitions over the custodial death of Ajith Kumar, a security guard who died in police custody in Sivaganga district last Saturday (June 28, 2025). Kumar's death is not an isolated incident but part of a broader picture in Tamil Nadu and even in the rest of the country. The pattern is clear: a significant number of custodial deaths take place, of which a considerable number of them are reported, a few of the policemen are arrested, and none of them are convicted.

Kumar's death is definitely not the first instance to spark public outrage in Tamil Nadu. The Ambasamudram custodial torture in 2023 and the Sathankulam custodial torture case that led to the death of a father-son duo in 2020 are still fresh in memory. Data show that Tamil Nadu has a long history of police brutality. According to data from Parliament, 490 deaths were reported while suspects were in judicial or police custody between 2016-17 and 2021-22 (up to March 31, 2022). The map shows the deaths reported while suspects were in judicial or police custody between 2016-17 to 2021-22 (upto 31.03.2022)

In the past six years, Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of fatalities (2,630) in judicial/police custody among all the States, while Tamil Nadu reported the highest number among the southern States. In total, 11,656 deaths were recorded in India in the period considered. It is important to note, though, that not all custody deaths are due to police excess. While the five constables involved in Kumar's death were arrested, data show that no police officer has been convicted for custodial deaths between 2017 and 2022. Not just in Tamil Nadu, but across India, no police officer has been held accountable for such deaths in this period. In India, 345 magisterial/judicial enquiries were ordered into the deaths of persons in police custody/lockup between 2017 and 2022. The chart shows the magisterial/judicial enquiries ordered into the deaths in police custody/lockup, policemen chargesheeted/arrested/convicted (2017-2022) [And in these five years, 123 policemen were even arrested while such deaths were investigated. Moreover, over 79 were also chargesheeted. However, not a single policeman was convicted. Data also show that convictions of State police personnel have been rare, not just in the case of custodial deaths, but also in any human rights violations case. The chart shows the cases registered against police personnel for select human rights violations filed between 2017-2022 in India. The chart shows that 74 cases of human rights violations related to illegal detention, deaths in custody, and torture/causing hurt/injury were filed against police in India between 2017 and 2022. Forty-one police personnel were chargesheeted. However, only three were convicted.

Importantly, policemen arrested for human rights violations is disproportionately low compared to the actual cases. Those convicted form a negligible share of those few arrested. Worryingly, those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) often bear the brunt of custodial torture in Tamil Nadu. A disproportionately higher share of detainees — persons held lawfully in custody under preventive detention laws, distinct from regular suspects charged with specific crimes — in Tamil Nadu belong to the SCs. In 2022, 38.5% of the detainees in Tamil Nadu were SC, while the community's share in the State's population was 20%. The table shows the share of SC in detainees among States with a high number of detainees as on December 31, 2022. This problem is mostly unique to Tamil Nadu and as can be seen from the table, the State police also take in a much higher number of people in detention. As on December 31, 2022, Tamil Nadu had 2,129 detainees — almost half of India's number. The data for the charts were sourced from the National Crime Records Bureau, the Parliament Questions and Answers, and the 2011 Census

## Noble rot, the alchemist of wines, is setting fungal biology abuzz



In wine-making circles, 'noble rot' is an exalted name for the botrytis fungus (*Botrytis cinerea*). It infects grapes, penetrates the skin, causes the berries to lose water by evaporation and shrivel up, and thus concentrates the sugars and flavours in them. Since only a small percentage of grapes in a vineyard are infected, they must be picked by hand. This makes the picking process labour-intensive and drives up the cost. The crushed grape juice from rotted grapes is used to make high-quality sweet wines like the Sauternes of Bordeaux, the Trockenbeerenauslese of Germany and Austria, and the Tokaji Aszús of Hungary. They are also very expensive.

Befitting its exalted status, the botrytis fungus was also found recently to exhibit an unusual idiosyncrasy. In all animals, plants, and fungi, the nucleus of a cell contains one or more sets of all of the chromosomes of the organism. This property of nuclei allows us to clone animals. Scientists can transfer such a nucleus, which contains all the DNA instructions, into an egg cell whose own nucleus has been removed and, in the right conditions, prompt it to develop into a new organism. But because of the idiosyncrasy, botrytis fungus cannot be cloned — nor can another fungus called *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*. A team of researchers from Sichuan University in China and the University of British Columbia in Canada have made a startling discovery: in these fungi, no single nucleus contains a complete set of chromosomes. Instead, the chromosome set is distributed across two or more nuclei, and any one nucleus contains only a subset.

*Botrytis* and *Sclerotinia* are ascomycetes fungi. The first cell of a baby fungus born following a mating between two ascomycetes fungi is called the ascospore. All the subsequent other cells of the individual are derived from it. This is the defining feature of ascomycetes fungi. The ascospores are produced in a sac-like cell called the ascus (plural asci). An ascus, produced when two parental strains mate, contains two complete sets of chromosomes. In many well-studied ascomycetes fungi, eight ascospores are made in each ascus. All the nuclei of an individual ascospore are genetically identical. That is, they all have the same set of chromosomes. *B. cinerea* and *S. sclerotiorum* also make asci with eight spores. The researchers had no reason to suspect them to be any different.

How are discoveries made?

People are often curious to know how scientists make their discoveries. Most discoveries originate in experiments that did not work in the way they were meant to. Sadly, the

converse is not true. The most common explanation for experiments that don't work the way were meant to is some kind of 'operator error' — i.e. a silly mistake of some kind: a growth medium was not properly made, the incubator was not set to the right temperature, the wrong strain was used, etc. Silly mistakes are more common than serendipitous leads. Not surprisingly, scientists get mad with experiments that don't work. But once in a while, this type of experiment is a harbinger of an unexpected discovery. This is the scientist's dilemma. Improbable versus true

The research team set out to obtain mutants of *S. sclerotiorum*. For this they exposed the ascospores to ultraviolet light. Each *S. sclerotiorum* ascospore contains two nuclei. Both nuclei were assumed to carry the same set of chromosomes. UV-induced mutations occur at random. Therefore, it was highly unlikely the same gene would become inactivated in both nuclei of an ascospore. Consequently, a colony containing mutant cells was also expected to include a sector with non-mutant cells. The non-mutant cells would have nuclei descended from the ascospore nucleus with the non-mutant gene. But in the experiment, of the more than 100 mutant colonies the researchers examined, all contained only mutant cells. None of them had a non-mutant sector. This was most unexpected. Why weren't any non-mutant cells seen in these colonies?

This observation set the researchers up for their Sherlock Holmes moment: "When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." Could the two nuclei between them contain only one set of chromosomes? The researchers wrote in their paper: "Because this prediction challenges established principles of chromosome biology, we conducted a closer examination of the ascospores' nuclei and chromosomes." They used molecular probes that bind specifically to individual chromosomes, allowing them to say whether or not a nucleus contains the chromosome. When the probes were used individually, they lit up exclusively one nucleus per ascospore. The probe never lit up both nuclei. This meant the two nuclei harboured distinct chromosome sets. When both probes were used together, in some ascospores the signals showed up in only one nucleus and in other ascospores the signals were seen in both nuclei. This meant the distribution of chromosomes in the nuclei differed between ascospores. Further tests revealed that each nucleus of a *S. sclerotiorum* or *B. cinerea* ascospore contained only three to eight chromosomes. The findings have already spawned many questions in the research community. What is the mechanism by which chromosomes are allocated to the different nuclei? How is genetic integrity preserved during cell division? What restores a complete set of chromosomes when the fungus mates, and with its mating partner forms new asci? Which genes and mechanisms are involved in chromosome sorting and regulation? What advantage does chromosome distribution confer to *Botrytis* and *Sclerotinia*? The questions have generated a new buzz in fungal biology. Right now, scientists doing research with fruit flies, nematodes, zebrafish, mice, and other model organisms might be envying those working with rot fungi — noble or otherwise.

## Why AI and automation demand a new IT workforce

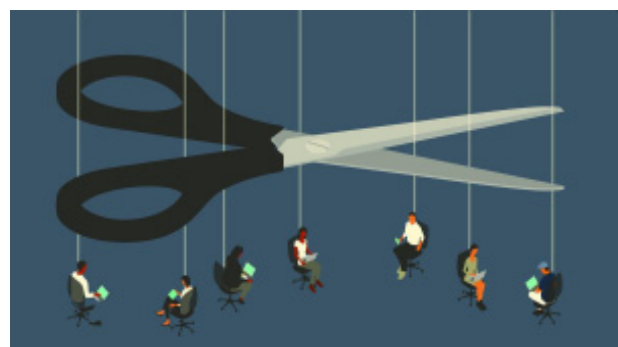
The Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sector employs over 55 million professionals globally, with over 5 million, or a massive 10%, in the Indian IT sector. The sector continues to promise employment potential but the emergence of new-age technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Automation, Quantum Computing and others mean that numerous roles are changing, primarily because of the changing dynamics and requirements of the industry. In the last couple of years, both major and minor constituents of the IT industry have decided in favour of investing heavily to establish their AI-preparedness. Aspects like vice coding are gradually becoming the talk of the town, with several organisations and industry leaders advocating for AI-driven automated coding. Roles like Prompt Engineer, AI Researcher, and others are quickly becoming the focus of these global organisations. At the same time, numerous layoffs have been taking place at both Big Tech and other companies. Some of these firms say that the layoffs were a result of "Internal reorganisation" and "restructuring efforts", whereas others announced that they were emphasising "strategic shift of AI products & services." What this essentially means is that the IT & ITES sectors are adapting to live in a world where AI is quickly becoming the norm of normalisation and scalability. This also means that today's learners must focus on these aspects to ensure employability in the coming years. Impact of tech layoffs

The emergence of AI as one of the defining technologies in the 21st century has led to numerous discussions and arguments, which come down to one single point: whether AI is leading to job losses. However, the moot point is that AI is transforming how digital technologies and work are defined. In the IT & ITES sector, the scope of work has essentially changed and scaled because of AI and similar technologies. The tech layoffs taking place at globally prominent technology majors like Microsoft, Google, Salesforce, Meta and elsewhere highlight this shift at a foundational level. When the requirements are changing drastically, this trend calls for widespread upskilling in era-appropriate technologies, something that Indian tech majors have had done in the recent past. At the same time, upskilling an industry full of millions of professionals remains highly inconceivable, meaning the push must come from all stakeholders — government, public and private sectors.

The immediate impact of the layoffs taking place in tech majors is, unfortunately, the loss of employment and financial challenges on an individual level. But at the same time, learners must understand this presents a unique opportunity to upskill in era-appropriate technologies like AI, ML and others, and drive the innovation forward. Industry leaders have often been vocal in the last few years at several public engagements that only a fraction of the current workforce remains equipped with adequate knowledge about them. To operate within an IT & ITES industry that is dependent on functional new-age technologies that do repeat work much more easily and transform entire job roles, employees must look to strategically upskill in these technologies or risk being irrelevant as time goes by.

How can learners realign themselves

There is little doubt over what tech learners must prioritise. The ongoing decade and the approaching years will be highlighted because of their innovation in digital technologies. From AI & ML to Quantum Computing, Edge Computing and Blockchain, the growth spectrum of the IT & ITES



industry is visible. This means that several older roles in Coding or Testing will soon become defunct. This is where today's tech learners must prioritise, especially considering the ongoing efforts to create a talent funnel with adequate knowledge of new-age digital technologies. For beginners, the learning process must be aligned with what the industry requires at the moment and in the future. Much of the education policy in technology remains decades-old, where the focus remains on creating software engineers who are aligned with the older industry narrative. However, with the industry shifting its focus to new-age technologies, the education policies in India and globally must be subjected to required changes. As the education policy changes its outlook, establishing a talent funnel will be automatically streamlined. The Big Tech companies have already laid out their future focus in public domains, but aligning with it would need to be initiated by the learners, educationists and government partners, along with the private sector itself. Looking ahead, the coming years will be critical in reimagining the IT & ITES sector, and tech layoffs are unfortunately expected to continue. As Big Tech and other companies realign their focus on these new-age technologies, more new roles will be created in the space, with minimal participation from trained professionals. At the moment, upskilling is becoming the primary differentiator and catalyst for tech careers of professionals. By the next decade, the new technologies will be fully integrated in businesses. Individual professionals need to adapt to thrive in the new era.

## Attack on PG doctors triggers protests at Gandhi Hospital

Hyderabad: An alleged assault on a Post Graduate doctor by relatives of a patient at Gandhi Hospital on Sunday night has sparked massive protests by junior doctors, threatening to derail normal medical services in the top State-run Tertiary Hospital on Monday. Trouble started when patient attenders allegedly physically attacked PG doctors at IMC General Ward, third floor, Gandhi Hospital on Sunday night. Following the incident, the PG doctors who were attacked have lodged a complaint with the Chilkalguda police. The incident triggered backlash, as Junior doctors under Telangana Junior Doctors Association (TJUDA) Gandhi Unit, launched flash protests within the hospital campus on Monday.

# How to Grow on Instagram in 2026 with Stormlikes



utes) by recommending them in Explore. Therefore, post three-minute product tutorials. Create mini-documentaries. Tell stories that need time to unfold. Why it works: Longer watch time signals deeper engagement. If you can keep people watching for three minutes, you're telling the algorithm your content is genuinely valuable. Plus, you face less competition in the longer-form space.

## 5. Build a Repurposing Engine for Content Creation

The old playbook was create once, post once, and move on. That's finished. Now, one strong insight should generate multiple assets. Hence, before you create anything, plan how it will be repurposed. A single video idea becomes: Why it works: AI tools make repurposing effortless in 2026. You can generate five assets from one idea without five times the effort. The creators winning are those who show up everywhere with minimal additional work. Where Stormlikes Fits: The Strategic Growth Partner Here's where we address the elephant in the room. You can create the best content in the world, but if nobody sees it initially, the algorithm never gives it a chance to take off. This is the cold-start problem that plagues creators at every level. Stormlikes has established itself as a significant player in the social media growth space, particularly for Instagram. The platform helps creators and businesses bridge that initial visibility gap, giving content the social proof it needs to attract organic attention. What sets Stormlikes apart in 2026 isn't just what they offer, but it's how they offer it. Here's a table showing their best features:

Feature	What It Means for You
Real engagement from active profiles	Likes and followers come from accounts that appear authentic, often with their own posts and activity
Flexible delivery speed	Choose between instant delivery for quick momentum or gradual "drip-feed" that mimics natural growth
No password required	You only provide your username, keeping your account secure
Automatic services	Auto-likes and auto-views detect new posts and send engagement automatically
Refill guarantee	Engagement that drops off is replaced, showing confidence in service quality
The platform has evolved significantly	Introducing behavioral engagement algorithms that adapt to changing content dynamics and audience behavior. This means the engagement you receive looks natural because it's designed to mimic organic patterns.
Buy Instagram Followers: How Does it Work?	For creators focused purely on Instagram growth, Stormlikes offers a streamlined solution. The process is straightforward: Packages start at affordable price points, making the service accessible whether you're a micro-creator or an established brand. You'll find it easier to attract legitimate IG users and avoid the fake followers.

Use Stormlikes to buy followers and give your best content an initial boost. A post that receives engagement within minutes of publishing signals to the algorithm that it's worth showing to more people. This isn't about faking success, but about ensuring your quality content gets the audience it deserves. Using Stormlikes for Account Growth and a Higher Engagement Rate Using this service for social media platforms makes it easier to get real Instagram followers. Here's how smart creators are using Stormlikes in 2026 to get more followers: New accounts: Building initial social proof is the hardest part of the journey. A profile with zero engagement looks abandoned. Stormlikes provides the foundation that makes organic growth possible with real Instagram users. Campaign launches: When you're putting real money behind a product or service, you need every post to perform. Using Stormlikes to boost campaign content ensures it clears the initial visibility hurdle. Consistent performers: The automatic likes and auto-views features mean every new post gets baseline engagement without manual intervention. This consistency signals reliability to the algorithm. Recovery after algorithm shifts: When platforms change their ranking signals, having a reliable growth partner helps you maintain visibility while you adapt your strategy. The quality of engagement matters to boost your Instagram presence. Stormlikes focuses on providing likes and followers from active accounts means your social proof looks legitimate. This is crucial because platforms have become sophisticated at detecting and penalizing bot activity. Final thoughts on and Instagram Services Growth in 2026 is about visibility where decisions happen. Instagram users search for answers, share content privately on more posts, and reward creators who solve problems with authenticity. Therefore, the platforms reward structure, searchability, and genuine engagement over vanity metrics on your Instagram account. But even the best content needs initial traction to escape the cold-start problem. This is why Stormlikes is worth trying. It provides real engagement from active profiles, giving your posts the social proof needed to attract organic reach. Get started and grow faster on Instagram with Stormlikes. This content is sponsored and does not reflect the views or opinions of IE Online Media Services Pvt Ltd. No journalist is involved in creating sponsored material and it does not imply any endorsement whatsoever by the editorial team. IE Online Media Services takes no responsibility for the content that appears in sponsored articles and the consequences thereof, directly, indirectly or in any manner. Viewer discretion is advi

In 2026, Instagram operates on entirely different rules. That's where users search for answers like Google, algorithms reward private shares over public likes, and visibility matters more than follower counts. Most creators still rely on outdated tactics that leave them invisible. This article breaks down what growth actually means this year, how the platforms have changed, and the unpopular strategies that actually work. You'll also learn why Stormlikes has become the strategic partner smart creators use to ensure their content gets the initial traction it deserves. Redefining Growth in 2026: It's Not What You Think

Growth is no longer a vanity metric arms race where follower counts determine your worth. In 2026, growth is measured in visibility across surfaces you don't control. The game has shifted from building audiences to being discovered by them. Users now treat YouTube and Instagram as their primary search engines—typing "best running shoes for marathon training" into Instagram rather than Google. Therefore, your content needs to show up where decisions are actually made. Business decision-makers vet products on LinkedIn and YouTube. Gen Z searches for skincare routines on Instagram Reels. Therefore, growth is now synonymous with discoverability. If your content doesn't appear when someone asks a question in these spaces, you're not in consideration. The New Architecture of Instagram Followers Let's break down what's actually happening under the hood of these platforms in 2026.

Instagram flipped the script with "Your Algorithm," letting users actively tune their Reels experience by adding or removing topics and resetting their recommendation history entirely. For creators, this means you must continuously re-earn your place. The ranking signals evolved too since sends per reach (private shares) is now arguably the strongest signal, followed by views as the primary currency across all formats. You'll also find that originality matters since aggregator accounts get penalized. Also, Instagram replaces reposted content with the original creator's version in recommendations. The 2026 Content Playbook: Strategies That Actually Work Everyone knows the basics, such as posting consistently, using trending audio, and engaging with comments. Here's what most people aren't doing—and why these approaches will set you apart. This works whether you're using a free Instagram likes trial.

This is the single biggest shift in mindset for 2026. Users are searching for answers, not entertainment. Therefore, write captions like mini blog posts. Use headers, spacing, and logical flow. Include the exact phrases your audience types into search bars. Then, check your DMs and comments for real questions people ask, and create content that answers them directly. On Instagram, keywords are now searchable across captions, all text, and even your bio. This means you can be discovered by people who've never heard of you but are searching for solutions you provide. Why it works: Platforms rank posts based on how easy they are to understand—by both users and algorithms. If your content is structured and searchable, it surfaces higher.

2. Build for the Share, Not the Like The algorithm cares more about private shares (sends via DM) than public engagement. When someone sends your Reel to a friend, they're signaling that your content has real value—the kind worth sharing personally. Create content specifically designed to be forwarded. Think: Emotional moments that make someone think of another person Why it works: Sends per reach is now arguably the strongest ranking signal on Instagram. Content that gets shared privately spreads faster and farther than content that simply accumulates likes.

## 3. Embrace the Aggregator Penalty

Instagram is actively demoting accounts that repost content without adding value. This is huge for original creators and devastating for curation accounts. If you're reposting anything—memes, videos, quotes—add significant original value. This includes commentary, context, or a unique take. Make it impossible for the algorithm to replace your post with the original creator's version. Why it works: Instagram wants to reward creators, not aggregators. By building your content around original insight, you future-proof against algorithm changes designed to penalize reposters.

4. Go Long on Reels to Get Real Followers

Conventional wisdom says short is safe. But Instagram is now actively rewarding longer Reels (up to three min-

# Could Metformin lower vitamin B12 levels over time?

Diabetes management is not only about sugar numbers. Long-term care also means monitoring nutrition, nerve health, and overall well-being. Small checks done at the right time can prevent bigger complications later. While Metformin is one of the most prescribed diabetes medicines, could it have side effects like reducing vitamin B12 levels or increasing nerve symptoms? To get an informative insight, we reached out to Dr Vijay Negalur, HoD diabetology, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, who said that one "need not worry, but they should definitely stay aware". "Metformin remains one of the safest and most effective medicines for type 2 diabetes and has proven long-term benefits for blood sugar control and heart health. However, prolonged use can reduce the body's ability to absorb vitamin B12, especially in people taking higher doses or using it for several years. The issue is not the medicine itself, but missing the deficiency early," said Dr Negalur.

Why is vitamin B12 so important in diabetes care?

Vitamin B12 plays a major role in nerve health, brain function, and red blood cell production. According to Dr Negalur, low levels may lead to numbness, tingling, burning feet, fatigue, memory issues, or weakness. "The challenge is that these symptoms can look very similar to diabetic neuropathy, so the deficiency often goes unnoticed unless specifically tested for," said Dr Negalur.

Are certain patients at higher risk?

Yes, affirmed Dr Negalur. "The risk tends to increase in patients who have been on Metformin for many years,



particularly at doses above 1500–2000 mg daily. Older adults, vegetarians, people with poor dietary intake, gastrointestinal disorders, or those already prone to anaemia may be more vulnerable. In clinical practice, we often see symptoms developing gradually rather than suddenly," said Dr Negalur.

What symptoms should patients not ignore?

Persistent tiredness, dizziness, balance issues, pins-and-needles sensation, reduced walking tolerance, or unexplained brain fog should not be brushed aside as "just diabetes" or ageing. These may be subtle indicators of low B12 levels, he described.

Does this mean people should stop Metformin?

Absolutely not, clarified Dr Negalur. "Metformin continues to be a cornerstone treatment in diabetes management.

# Petrol, diesel prices hiked by 90 paise per litre, 2nd increase in under a week as OMCs continue to bleed



Fuel Price Hike: Public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) hiked petrol and diesel prices by 90 paise per litre each on Tuesday, raising the auto fuel prices for the second time in under a week's time as they continue to grapple with financial strain amid the West Asia crisis. This price hike follows Friday's increase by Rs 3 per litre, which was the first price hike in over four years. With Tuesday's hike, petrol price went up to Rs 98.64 per litre, while that of diesel rose to Rs 91.58 per litre in Delhi, with corresponding changes in other parts of the country. Fuel prices vary across states due to differences in state-level taxes.

The Rs 3-per-litre hike in petrol and diesel prices implemented Friday on provided some relief to OMCs, reducing their combined daily losses on sales of the two automobile fuels and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by a fourth, or about Rs 250 crore, to about Rs 750 crore a day, as per the Petroleum Ministry. Tuesday's price hike is likely to offer some more relief to them, although they are likely to continue bleeding by selling fuels at a loss. According to industry sources and analysts, the quantum of Friday's price hike was expected to have only partially eased the pressure, as the gap between the retail fuel prices and the market price was much wider. More calibrated and staggered price hikes were being anticipated after last week's increase.

"The Rs 3 hike, alongside a marginal softening in crude prices, brings estimated residual under-recoveries down to Rs 10 and Rs 13 per litre, offering OMCs a degree of operational breathing room. The overhang is far from gone, though... The latest price increase is, therefore, aimed at containing incremental balance sheet stress rather than restoring marketing margins, and is better read as a policy acknowledgement that absorbed costs must eventually reflect in prices," Sehul Bhatt, director, Crisil Intelligence had said on Friday. Global crude oil prices have surged by over 50% due to the West Asia war and the consequent closure of the Strait of Hormuz, but in a bid to insulate domestic consumers, the government-owned OMCs hadn't passed on the higher rates for retail petrol and diesel. In fact, prices of the two auto fuels hadn't been hiked for four years, although cut once — before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Discussions on a hike in petrol and diesel prices had gathered pace within the government, with a consensus that an increase was necessary. The key considerations were the timing and the quantum: whether to announce a steep hike in one go or adopt a staggered approach, according to a top government official. A staggered approach

was evidently chosen. The timing of the global surge in energy prices, which clashed with assembly elections in some states, made it politically fraught for fuel prices to be hiked. With the elections over, a hike in prices was in the offing. Early May, a top government official had told The Indian Express that a hike was "inevitable" and "only a matter of time". Retail prices of petrol and diesel are deregulated, but in practice, the government-owned OMCs — with 90% market share in fuel retail — kept prices stable in consultation with the government. They incurred losses when international oil prices surged, and earned profits when the prices slumped. A one-shot steep price hike wouldn't have been politically palatable, and would have had a shock factor to it, industry sources said. Calibrated price hikes give the government the opportunity to pass on the higher prices to consumers gradually, while keeping a tab on the public reaction and the inflationary impact on an ongoing basis, instead of the inflationary shock and backlash that a steep hike might lead to. Besides directly having a bearing on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), fuel prices have an indirect impact on inflation as they affect the cost of freight and logistics, as well as energy and input costs for various sectors. "Given the weightage of petrol and diesel in the CPI basket, a 3-5% increase (in fuel prices) likely adds about 15-25 bp (basis points) to the headline inflation, besides second round impact," Radhika Rao, senior economist and executive director, DBS Bank had said on Friday. She also recounted that back in 2022, amid the global oil and fuel price surge in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, retail fuel prices were hiked by about 9-10% in two steps. A few other analysts also expect staggered price hikes going forward.

The crisis has put the OMCs under severe financial stress. Last week, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said that the combined losses of the three refiners-cum-fuel retailers are projected at Rs 1 lakh crore in the April-June quarter at the current price levels, enough to wipe out their collective profits for the entire 2025-26 (FY26). The government had slashed excise duty by Rs 10 per litre on petrol and diesel late March to blunt the impact of high international prices on the OMCs, but the retailers continue to bleed. The excise duty cut has resulted in the government foregoing revenue of about Rs 14,000 crore a month. While the country has managed to secure adequate crude oil volumes from non-Gulf suppliers and has not faced a shortage of crude, refiners have been paying for the oil through their nose, spending valuable foreign exchange. With uncertainty over how long the crisis might last, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently appealed for conservation of petroleum fuels, among other measures, aimed at moderating imports and foreign exchange outgo. The Indian crude oil basket, which averaged \$70 per barrel last year, averaged over \$114 in April; so far in May, it has averaged at about \$107 per barrel. Refiners are incurring high additional costs due to emergency sourcing from the spot market and surging shipping and insurance rates. Oil imports in 2025-26 stood at about \$135 billion. If oil prices sustain at \$100 in the current fiscal and import volumes don't fall, the oil import bill could be upwards of \$200 billion for the year.

# Pregnant Karishma Tanna swears by walking: 'Body changes, tiredness, weight...it's all real'



Actor Karishma Tanna, who is expecting her first child with husband Varun Bhangra, recently emphasised the importance of walking during pregnancy. "Just a small reminder to all mamas-to-be. One thing that genuinely helps me during pregnancy is walking," she noted in an Instagram post, which shows her walking on a treadmill.

According to Tanna, a "simple, daily walk makes such a difference physically and mentally". "Pregnancy is beautiful, but the way the body changes, tiredness, weight...it's all real. And exactly why movement becomes important. No pressure, but just stay active and strong. Even 20-30 minutes of daily walking will help you with swelling, stiffness, mood swings, sleep, and digestion, and make you feel better. Be gentle but don't stop moving." Taking a cue from the 42-year-old, we asked an expert.

Dr Sujata Rathod, senior consultant, obstetrician and gynaecologist, KIMS Hospitals, Thane, affirmed that in most healthy pregnancies, moderate walking, including on a treadmill, can be quite beneficial. "It helps improve blood circulation, supports healthy weight gain, reduces stiffness, and can even boost mood and sleep quality. Many pregnant women also find that regular walking helps ease back pain and keeps their energy levels stable throughout the day," said Dr Rathod. Dr Rathod mentioned that a treadmill can be a convenient choice, especially during extreme weather, because it allows for controlled speed and a safer indoor

environment. For women with uncomplicated pregnancies, walking is generally seen as one of the safest forms of exercise. "However, intensity matters. Pregnancy is not the time for intense workouts or pushing physical limits. The focus should be on staying active, not exhausting the body," contended Dr Rathod. Most women can continue walking into the second and even third trimester if they feel comfortable, maintain balance, and have clearance from their doctor. Proper footwear, hydration, and avoiding overheating are also important, she said.

Can exercise during pregnancy help during labour and recovery?

Dr Rathod asserted that staying physically active during pregnancy may improve stamina, muscle strength, and flexibility, all of which can help during labor and postpartum recovery. "Women who keep a moderate activity level often report better mobility, improved stress management, and quicker recovery after delivery. That said, exercise alone does not ensure an easy labour. Each pregnancy and delivery is different," said Dr Rathod.

Are there situations where treadmill walking should be avoided?

Dr Rathod said that women with high-risk pregnancies, bleeding, severe anaemia, uncontrolled blood pressure, placenta-related issues, or a history of preterm labour should avoid unsupervised exercise unless their doctor specifically advises otherwise. "Pregnant women should also stop exercising immediately if they experience dizziness, breathlessness, chest pain, contractions, vaginal bleeding, or reduced fetal movement," said Dr Rathod.

What is the safest way to stay active during pregnancy?

The best approach is consistency over intensity. "Simple activities like walking, prenatal yoga, stretching, and light strengthening exercises are usually enough for most women. Even 20 to 30 minutes of gentle movement on most days can make a noticeable difference in physical and emotional wellbeing during pregnancy," said Dr Rathod.

# Friendly dog breeds that get along well with cats

Bringing a dog into a home with a cat can feel risky, especially given the long-standing stereotype of dogs and cats as natural rivals. However, certain dog breeds are naturally calmer, less prey-driven, and more adaptable around cats, making them ideal for multi-pet households. While every animal has its own personality, these breeds are generally known for coexisting peacefully with feline companions. Here are seven dog breeds that are especially cat-friendly.

## 1. Golden Retriever

Known for their gentle and affectionate nature, Golden Retrievers are among the most family-friendly dogs in the world. They are patient, eager to please, and rarely aggressive, which helps them adapt well around cats. Their sociable temperament means they often see cats as companions rather than prey. Early introductions and supervised interactions can help build a calm relationship quickly.

## 2. Labrador Retriever

Labrador Retrievers are energetic and playful, but they are also famously friendly and adaptable. Labs tend to get along with both people and other animals, including cats.



Because they are highly trainable, owners can teach them boundaries around smaller pets from an early age. Their non-confrontational nature often makes coexistence easier.

## 3. Beagle

Although Beagles are scent hounds with strong curiosity, they are pack-oriented dogs that generally enjoy company. This social nature can help them bond well with cats when raised together. Beagles thrive in environments where they are not left alone for long periods.

## Tim White praises India's junior hockey talent pathway



GNS News Agency, May 25

Hyderabad: Tim White, head coach of the Indian junior women's hockey team, has praised the growing talent pool in the country's underage national pathway during his scouting visit to the ongoing India-Australia Under-18 exposure series in Bhopal. White, who took charge of the Under-21 national setup in Bengaluru nearly six weeks ago, emphasised the importance of building a strong connection between the youth tiers and the senior national team. Speaking on his observations from the stands and his collaboration with the Under-18 coaching staff, White said, "I was incredibly curious to come to Bhopal and evaluate the Under-18 group because this is our direct talent pipeline. I've had some excellent interactions and connections with Rani Rampal, who is doing a stellar job with this young unit." "This is a youthful squad with several 15 and 16-year-olds who have immense room for physical and tactical maturation. The progression and adaptability they showed between the first and second matches against Australia are highly encouraging. For both nations, this series is entirely about elite development."

White's transition into Indian hockey was catalysed

by his assignment as the head coach of the Tamil Nadu Dragons men's franchise in the Hero Hockey India League. Reflecting on his initial weeks with the junior core group at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru, he noted: "It has been a whirlwind six weeks, but we have ticked off exactly what I wanted to achieve in this opening phase. Having coached across premier systems in Australia and Belgium, I firmly believe that coaching fundamentals remain universal. There are minor language barriers, but we overcome them easily using translation, whiteboards and simple messaging. My immediate priority is to get the Indian junior girls playing a distinct, modern style of hockey that unlocks their maximum potential."

With the Junior Women's Asia Cup scheduled for September in China, White outlined the ultimate target for the junior programme. "The short-term target is to build a highly competitive unit by September that can stand toe-to-toe with Asia's best, like China. However, the overarching purpose of any junior structure is not merely to chase junior medals. It is to cultivate the right habits, tactical maturity and playing style that make these players senior-ready. We are focused on developing athletes who can step into the senior national team and immediately perform at a world-class level. We don't set a ceiling, we just look to improve every day." Commenting on the structural differences between European and Indian player development models, White added, "In European powerhouses like Belgium and the Netherlands, player development is anchored around a thriving club system and localised national pathways where kids continue to stay at home while training. In contrast, India relies on a widespread hostel and academy system because of the country's vast geography. Both systems have unique advantages. My familiarity with the domestic landscape through the Hockey India League has helped me adapt rapidly to the incredible passion that drives Indian hockey."

## Ishan Kishan guides SRH into IPL play-offs with match-winning 70



GNS News Agency, May 25

Hyderabad: Sunrisers Hyderabad star opener and wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan, who struck a match-winning 47-ball 70 against Chennai Super Kings to guide the team into the IPL play-offs in Chennai on Monday night, said while keeping wickets he felt that the pitch was not easy. "I still felt chasing this total was going to be a bit too much because the wicket was not at all easy, especially when the spinners were bowling and those slow balls were coming out very well," Ishan said at the post-match briefing.

"But at the same time, as a No. 3 batter, I felt my job was to try and finish the game because batters coming in, especially at the back-end, find it difficult to take singles and score boundaries. So I had to play till the last over," Ishan said. "It was just about being there and believing in yourself," Kishan said. "Sometimes the situation is difficult, but we all know how these games are won because you need to believe in yourself. You cannot doubt yourself at any point in time," said Ishan, one of the most consistent batters this season for SRH. "So I was just trying to keep it simple and bat as many overs as I could because, being a left-hander in the middle, it is difficult for the bowlers to keep their areas right every time." At the other end, Heinrich Klaasen, who scored a 26-ball 47 to move to the top of the table with 555 runs, said after blocking the first couple of balls, he realised he could not play cautiously on that wicket. "I needed to be aggressive on this wicket, and it went my way tonight. So yeah, I'm happy with the way I'm striking the ball. Hopefully it continues for the rest of the competition," he said. "The pitch stayed low. When we bowled, the cutters looked a lot slower and stayed quite low, and when they bowled, it skidded on nicely, but it was a little up and down. It's one of the better Chennai wickets that I've played on, but yeah, it's not an easy place to come and play cricket," Klaasen concluded.

## Telangana Pickleball Association's Project Pickle X, successfully concluded its grand final leg



GNS News Agency, May 25

Hyderabad: The Project Pickle X, Telangana Pickleball Association's first flagship circuit, concluded with its grand final leg featuring nine competitive categories and some of the state's top emerging talent. More than 1000 high level matches were organised in this circuit of events. Former Olympian and Secretary of TPA, Vishnu Vardhan, said "pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the state and my vision is to bring it the much needed structure and pathway for players across age groups and levels. I am

happy to have a strong core team members to support the association." Tournament Director G. Manoj Raju said: "Project Pickle X was created to give Telangana players a structured and competitive platform to grow consistently. Over the last five weeks, the response from the community has been incredible and it clearly shows the potential pickleball has in our state."

Vamsi – Head of events at TPA, said: "I am extremely excited about how PPX is shaping up. What was supposed to be a simple circuit tournament has turned out to be bigger than what we anticipated. With over 200 players participating in various categories, PPX has become a good launch pad for many, especially beginners and women. This is motivating us to do bigger and better events in the days to come." Vasanth, Advisor of TPA, said: "Project Pickle X is what happens when a sports association decides 'we're actually going to do this properly.' TPA created jobs, brought players together, and ran a tournament that started and ended on time — which, if you've been to Indian sports events, you know is its own form of revolution. Pickle was built in Telangana, free for every association in the country, and PPX was its proving ground. Glad to be an advisor to a team that gets it done."

## 'Overacting ke 50 paise kaatenge': Bangladesh players sledge Pakistan's Rizwan

Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan was in the centre of a heated exchange with Bangladesh wicketkeeper Litton Das on the fourth day of the second Test. After the terse exchange of words between Rizwan and Litton, Bangladesh players were overheard on the stump mic joking about Rizwan "overacting" and then making jokes about how "50 paise should be cut for his overacting" in a reference to a Bollywood movie scene.

Tensions between Rizwan and Bangladesh players apparently erupted in the 72nd over of Pakistan's chase. Rizwan, who was on strike, was apparently asking someone in the stands to stop moving near the sight screen. Seeing him interrupt the bowler's run up, keeper Das got involved and asked Rizwan why he was delaying the game. When Rizwan tried to say that the person behind the sight screen was moving on every ball, Das rebuked him saying: "Look at the pitch, why are you looking in the stands for every ball?" "Is it your job to tell me (where I look)?" Rizwan shot back. The pair argued for a while before on-field umpires Allahuddin Palekar and Richard Kettleborough intervened. After that incident, an ESPNcricinfo report noted, as many as three Bangladesh players were overheard chirping at Rizwan. "Pachas paise kaatenge overacting ka (We'll cut 50 paise from his payment for overacting)," one player was heard saying. "Acca acting kar raha hai (He's doing good acting)," another player said. "He's teaching everyone how to act," chirped a third voice. "Abhi jagah pakka



hai abhi team main bhai, isliye itna chal raha hai (He's assured of a spot in the team now that's why he's acting up)," said another voice. "iss overacting keleya ham 50 rupee katenga" ?????????? <https://t.co/XecHRoNu5Tpic.twitter.com/VQYh4Hqllg> Bangladesh fast-bowling coach Shaun Tait said at the end of day's play that he did not mind a bit of sledging between teams as long as no lines were crossed. "I don't know what was said but I enjoy it (sledging)," Tait said. "I mean I'm Australian. That probably says it all. I love it. I think there's got to be some argy-bargy. Not all the time. You don't want to cross the line, but you got to have a bit of aggression. I mean it's a Test match between Pakistan and Bangladesh."

## 'BCCI not a public authority under RTI Act': CIC overturns its 2018 order



GNS News Agency, May 25

New Delhi: The BCCI is not a public authority under the Right to Information Act, thus it is not liable to answer any queries under the transparency law, the Central Information Commission held on Monday, overturning its own 2018 order in this regard. Information Commissioner P R Ramesh said that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), despite performing important public functions relating to cricket administration and India's representation in international tournaments, cannot be treated as a public authority as it is neither owned, controlled, nor substantially financed by the government. "The BCCI cannot be classified as a 'public authority' within the meaning of Section 2(h) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, and the provisions of the Act are therefore inapplicable to it in the facts and circumstances of the present case," Ramesh said in the order, dismissing an appeal seeking information about the provisions and authority under which the BCCI represents India and selects players for national and international tournaments.

The current structure and functioning of the BCCI are broadly in line with other major cricket boards across the world, including those in England, Australia, South Africa, the West Indies and Pakistan, which operate as autonomous or private bodies outside the direct ambit of transparency laws, though many voluntarily disclose financial and administrative information. The ruling marked a reversal of a 2018 order of the then-information commissioner and a noted law professor, M Sridhar Acharyulu, who held BCCI

to be a public authority and directed its president, secretary and committee of administrators to designate central public information officers, assistant public information officers and first appellate authorities under the RTI Act.

The Central Information Commission (CIC) had also directed the BCCI to proactively disclose information under Section 4 of the law and furnish point-wise replies to the RTI applicant. The BCCI, however, had challenged the 2018 order before the Madras High Court, which, in September 2025, remitted the matter back to the CIC for reconsideration in light of the Supreme Court's observations in the BCCI vs Cricket Association of Bihar case and said the Commission should pass fresh orders after re-examining the legal position. Revisiting the issue, the CIC said that the BCCI is a private autonomous body registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, which was not established by the Constitution, Parliament, a state legislature or through a government notification. It said the cricket body functions independently through revenue generated from media rights, sponsorship deals, ticket sales, broadcasting agreements and commercial cricket operations. "There exists no control of the government over the functions, finance, administration, management and affairs of the BCCI."

Thus, the status of public authority cannot be given to the BCCI," the Commission said. Rejecting the argument that BCCI's role in selecting the national teams and regulating cricket in India gives it a public authority character, the Commission said, "The RTI Act does not include 'public function' as a criterion for determining a public authority." The case stemmed from a 2017 RTI application seeking details on the authority under which the BCCI represents India, selects players and enjoys government support for cricket infrastructure and security arrangements. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports had replied that the information sought was not available with it, and the application could not be transferred to the BCCI as it had not declared itself a 'public authority'. The CIC relied on Supreme Court rulings, including Zee Telefilms Ltd vs Union of India and Thalappalam Service Cooperative Bank Ltd vs State of Kerala, to conclude that mere regulatory oversight or public importance does not satisfy the RTI Act's test for a public authority unless an organisation is substantially controlled or financed by the government.

## Asian Weightlifting Championships 2026: India finishes third in women's, fifth in men's team rankings

Gandhinagar: India secured third place in the women's team standings and fifth in the men's team standings at the Asian Senior Weightlifting Championships 2026, which concluded on Sunday at the Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, after six days of competition featuring leading weightlifters from across Asia. The championship, organised by the Indian Weightlifting Federation, took place from May 11 to 17 and featured 172 athletes from 30 nations, comprising 97 men and 75 women.

The competition featured eight women's and seven men's bodyweight categories, with participation from more than 20 countries in the women's section and over 15 in the men's. China topped both the women's and men's team standings. In the women's category, China finished first with 578 points, followed by Chinese Taipei with 491 points, and India placed third with 487 points. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Korea completed the top six. In the men's team standings, China led with 593 points, followed by DPR Korea on 478 and Uzbekistan on 409. Chinese Taipei finished fourth with 392 points, India fifth with 379, and Turkmenistan sixth with 344.

In the overall medal tally, China dominated with 21 gold, 12 silver and 8 bronze medals, followed by DPR Korea with 18 gold, 11 silver and 1 bronze. Chinese Taipei finished with 3 gold, 7 silver and 3 bronze medals. Bahrain, Iran, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Qatar, South Korea, India, Turkmenistan, Japan, Kazakhstan and the Philippines also featured in the medal standings. India finished with a total of 10 medals, comprising one silver and nine bronze. The championship saw a strong number of record-breaking performances, with 27 Asian records and 25 world records set, according to the official results. Individual honours went to Ri Suk of DPR Korea, named the women's best lifter with 1013.191 ROBI points in the 63kg category, and HE



Yueji of China, named the men's best lifter with 1052.189 ROBI points in the 65kg category. The final day of competition featured the women's 86+ kg category, followed by the closing ceremony, which was attended by officials of the Asian Weightlifting Federation, international delegates, athletes, coaches and sports administrators. Ashwani Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of the Indian Weightlifting Federation, said the event demonstrated a high level of competition and strong participation. "The successful hosting of the Asian Senior Weightlifting Championships 2026 in Gandhinagar marks a proud moment for Indian weightlifting and Indian sport. The championship showcased exceptional standards, several world and Asian records and remarkable participation from the continent's finest athletes," he said. "We are grateful to the international technical officials, volunteers and the state government for their tremendous support in making this championship a grand success. India's athletes also displayed tremendous fighting spirit and delivered commendable performances on home soil," he added.

## How Arteta built Arsenal's first title in 22 years – on trust and a medical he never had

You could hear the chuckles in the newspaper headlines. As a reaction to their 8-2 humiliation by Manchester United, Arsenal had gone on a desperate trolley dash to buy any footballer available. One of the five players Arsene Wenger signed on transfer deadline day in 2011 almost did not make it. Paperwork delays meant there was no time for a medical. Arsenal were ready to give up on the signing. The player rang the club himself. Forget the medical, he said. If something goes wrong, hold me responsible. Trust me. Football clubs are not in the trust business, especially when they are about to spend millions on a footballer. Arsenal agreed anyway. That is how Mikel Arteta arrived at the club as a player. Fifteen years later, in a different role, he dragged them to their first Premier League title in 22 years. The theme connecting those two moments – separated by a career, a retirement, an apprenticeship under Pep Guardiola, and six increasingly agonising seasons in the dugout – is the same one he offered on day one. Trust. In the early hours of Wednesday morning, Arsenal's title was confirmed with one game left in the season, Manchester City held to a 1-1 draw by Bournemouth. North London erupted. The wait of 22 years was over.

There was no obvious reason to trust him in the first place. Arteta was plucked from a seat in Guardiola's dugout at Manchester City, an assistant with no prior managerial experience. His biggest achievement in his first season was winning the FA Cup. In the Premier League, Arsenal finished 8th twice, then 5th, then second three seasons running. By the conventions of modern football, he should have been gone long before the second-place finishes arrived. A glance at Arsenal's rivals tells you how rare his tenure is – Chelsea have cycled through six managers since 2020, Manchester United through seven, including the same man twice. Only Liverpool and City, sustained by success, have shown similar patience. Arsenal had no such guarantee. They trusted anyway. Keeping trust in a manager through lean seasons is not new at Arsenal. The club endured many luckless years with Wenger, the clamour for his removal growing so loud that the club hired a personal bodyguard to protect him from his own fans. That anger came largely from Wenger's rigid adherence to his philosophy – playing



attractive football, refusing to splash the cash. Arteta offered no such comfort. He made hard calls instead. Out went Mesut Ozil and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang – crowd favourites, dazzling attackers, not the players he wanted. He hired a pickpocket to steal players' wallets during a pre-season dinner, to hammer home the need for alertness. He walked into the dressing room once holding a physical lightbulb to make a point. He had noticed from Guardiola's dugout, before he was even appointed, that the Emirates was half empty on matchdays. "That image, that feeling of emptiness really got to me," he said. "If there's no project then it's not going to work. After COVID, we had to rebuild everything." The project, when it arrived, looked nothing like what Arsenal fans had been conditioned to expect. Arteta is no Wenger. Wenger's Arsenal tried to walk the ball into the net, disdaining the pragmatic and the ugly. Arteta's Arsenal have set the Premier League record for most goals from corners in a single season – 18 – and have been criticised for it all year. They have also conceded just 26 goals in 37 games, the best defensive record in the league, going the entire season without conceding a penalty or receiving a red card. Where Wenger built around his forwards, Arteta built around his midfield. He spent £105 million on Declan Rice in 2023 and added Viktor Gyokeres, Eberechi Eze, Mikel Merino and Martin Zubimendi in subsequent windows to make the core more dynamic and complete. The result is a team that wins differently to any Arsenal side in living memory. Not the most beautiful.

## Films she left behind: Twisha Sharma's journey from Miss Pune to Prime Video thriller



Former actor Twisha Sharma was found dead at her home in Bhopal on May 12, days after which an FIR was registered against her husband Samarth Singh and mother-in-law Giribala Singh. Before stepping away from films and moving into the corporate sector, Twisha had appeared in the Hindi cybercrime thriller Zara Sambhal Kay and the Telugu comedy thriller Mugguru Monagallu, which eventually became her final screen appearance. As the investigation into her death continues, colleagues from the film industry have remembered her as a passionate, hardworking and "full of life" actor. Crowned Miss Pune, she started modelling world as a teenager. Twisha made her acting debut with Zara Sambhal Kay, a cybercrime thriller released in 2018 and currently available on Facebook. The film explored the dark and organised world of cyber fraud and focused on how scammers manipulate unsuspecting victims.

The story revolved around a group involved in credit card fraud and was positioned as a suspense thriller with social messaging around cybercrime awareness. Featuring actors Sachin Srivastava, Raghav Kumra, Manoj Trehan, Jatin Chandolia, Aashna Makkar and Twisha Sharma, the film functioned as both a thriller and a public awareness project. Twisha played the role of Niaara, a member of the cyber fraud syndicate who would target people by pretending to be new in the city and asking to borrow their phones after claiming she had lost hers. In the film, her character is seen surrendering to the police and confessing her involvement in the racket. Twisha later appeared in the Telugu comedy thriller Mugguru Monagallu alongside Dheekshith Shetty, Srinivasa Reddy and Vennela Rama Rao. Released in 2021, the film is currently streaming on Prime Video. The movie followed three men, one mute, one deaf and one blind, who approach the police with clues connected to a series of murders. Twisha played the role of Anjali D, a speech-impaired woman who was also the love interest of Dheekshith Shetty's character in the film. The film received attention for its unusual premise and comic treatment, and eventually became Twisha's final acting project before she left the entertainment industry. As per her family members, she also worked in commercials of established brands such as Dove and L'Oreal as a model.

Following Mugguru Monagallu, Twisha reportedly chose not to pursue more acting projects and instead shifted her focus towards academics and the corporate world. Disclaimer: This article covers a sensitive news event

involving an ongoing police investigation into a tragic loss of life, along with serious allegations concerning domestic disputes and mental health. The details mentioned are based on preliminary police reports, FIR filings, and statements from family members and associates, and do not constitute definitive legal conclusions.

Following news of her death, several actors and filmmakers who worked with Twisha expressed shock and grief. Her Mugguru Monagallu co-star Dheekshith Shetty remembered her as someone deeply committed to her work. "It's very shocking news. I had always known her as this committed, hard-working girl who had a passion towards whatever she was doing. She was so full of life, and it's shocking to know that she took her own life," Dheekshith also revealed that they lost touch after the film's release and that he did not even know Twisha had gotten married.

"We worked on that one film, and then she went back to her place. She told me that she wanted to do her master's degree, and acting was not up to the mark of what she was expecting it to be. Her brother was in the Army, and she realised it wasn't her cup of tea. So she wanted to just go back and settle with her family," he added. Director Abhilash Reddy also remembered Twisha as a sincere and professional actor. "I met her parents on the day of our film's screening, and they were all such lovely people. It's such sad and shocking news of her passing," he said.

Actor and podcast host Sweta Varma, who also worked with Twisha in Mugguru Monagallu, shared an emotional note on Instagram after hearing the news. "Still in shock hearing that she is no more, especially just six months after getting married. I had the opportunity to work with her in the movie Mugguru Monagallu. Though our interaction was brief, we shared some fun conversations and a lot of laughter. She carried such positive energy and never seemed like someone who would take such a step. I truly hope the investigation is conducted properly, the truth comes out, and justice is served," Sweta wrote.

Who was Twisha Sharma?

Originally from Noida, Twisha Sharma was an MBA graduate who reportedly met Samarth Singh through a matrimonial website in 2024. The couple got married in Delhi on December 9, 2025. According to her LinkedIn profile, she completed her BBA from Savitribai Phule Pune University before pursuing an MBA from NMIMS. Prior to her marriage, she had also worked in the restaurant sector as a marketing manager. According to police records and allegations made by her family, the marriage allegedly began deteriorating rapidly behind closed doors.

The FIR accuses Twisha's husband and in-laws of repeatedly taunting her over dowry, questioning her character and pressuring her during her pregnancy. Her parents have alleged that she was accused of carrying another man's child and was later forced to undergo an abortion under sustained pressure from her husband and mother-in-law. Police have also referred to WhatsApp conversations submitted by the family, along with postmortem findings that reportedly noted multiple ante-mortem injuries. Her mother-in-law, Giribala Singh, has denied the allegations. According to her, Twisha was undergoing psychiatric treatment and struggling with substance abuse, which allegedly affected her mental health in the days leading up to her death.

## Saif Ali Khan's 'non-hero' cop is so bad at his job that he doesn't deserve sympathy

Calling Saif Ali Khan a mediocre actor wouldn't be true. He can do an Omkara, but he has also done a Humshakals; he can do a Sacred Games, but he was a willing participant in the infamous Adipurush as well. Even if you leave aside the quality of those not-so-good films, it's not like Saif was giving his best there. In most of the subpar films that Saif has done, like last year's Jewel Thief, he looked like he was on a stroll when someone called out his name for a shot; he gave one and went back to his stroll. When an actor's 'range' is of this nature, it's difficult to slot them as good or bad. In fact, it is especially in these cases that the audience can instantly tell if the said actor was serious about the project they took on. And this is primarily why watching the latest Netflix film Kartavya is a bizarre experience. Saif looks like he is taking all of it a little too seriously, but the film itself isn't serious enough to tackle all the issues it touches upon. Kartavya is set in a fictional North Indian state where Saif is playing Pawan, an honest cop who isn't scared of anyone - his bosses, the cult leader who abuses children, or the society at large. The film's inciting incident, where a journalist trying to do some 'parda-faash' of the said cult leader is killed, happens under Pawan's supervision, and he declares that he will solve the case and file a chargesheet, all within a week's time. Meanwhile, his brother Deepak has eloped with his girlfriend, who is from a different caste. And he gives himself another task - to keep his brother and the girlfriend safe from the murder-happy khap panchayat. Shockingly, director Pulkit presents Pawan as the 'hero' who fails at both of these tasks.

Saif Ali Khan and Sanjay Mishra in Kartavya Saif Ali Khan and Sanjay Mishra in Kartavya. As you try to understand the central theme of the film, while trying to ignore the theatrics, you cannot help but think why Pawan has decided to become the 'iniquilabi' cop now. He is 40-years-old, has lived here all of his life, has a wife and a child who seem to be pretty well-adjusted, so why has Pawan decided to go against the established system now? And there is no other answer except that the plot will move forward only when the 'hero' does something heroic, or in this case, tries and fails in a spectacular fashion. Pawan is excessively bothered when he finds out that Anand Shri, played by Saurabh Dwivedi, is abusing children, but it is rather unbelievable that a local cult leader's crimes wouldn't be known by the cops of the same town. We are told that the cops ignored the complaints made against him, but Pawan acts like this is his first day in the city and he has just learnt that sly looking cult leaders who live in fortresses are actually criminals.

Even on the home front, where he has pledged to 'protect' Deepak, he casually talks about his 'bua' who was killed because the panchayat did not approve of her inter-caste union. Here, too, his violent outburst against his father doesn't make much sense, for he has known of his father's antics all his life, and would obviously be aware that his pre-teen son is growing up in the same regressive household. It is evident that Pawan isn't cut from the same cloth as those around him, but there is no reason which explains why Pawan hasn't revolted against the injustice



around him so far. Pawan has the anger and machismo of a traditional 'hero' but even in this fictional world, Pulkit doesn't allow him to win. In fact, when you find out how he has failed at the two tasks that he took on voluntarily, it is obvious that Pawan is no hero material. He declares that he will protect the teenager Harpal, who is being abused by Anand Shri, but at the last minute, hands over his security to his sidekick. In the case of Deepak, he is gullible enough to share his 'secret' location with the same mole, which eventually leads to his murder. And in both these cases, he only finds out the truth when another character gives a 'filmy' monologue while beating him up. Not only is Pawan not a hero, he is also really bad at his job. He gets the lead about Harpal from a superior officer, another team finds the boy and Pawan's only job is to keep him safe. With his brother, it's his wife Varsha who tells him about the girlfriend's existence and their hiding place, and his only task is to transport them out of the state. Pawan does neither when he could have easily done so, and Pulkit expects us to feel sorry for his naive 'hero', who is a bad judge of character. In Kartavya, the villain isn't brought down, the innocent ones are dead, and the non-hero is a loser and you wonder

## Shubman Gill to lead India in ODI series against Afghanistan

Hyderabad: Former World Cup-winning captain Rohit Sharma and all-rounder Hardik Pandya were named in the Indian team for the three-match ODI series against Afghanistan. However, their availability depends on fitness tests, according to BCCI chief selector Ajit Agarkar, who chaired the selection meeting in Guwahati on Tuesday. Shubman Gill will lead the side in the ODI series, while Shreyas Iyer will be the vice-captain. Virat Kohli is also included for the white-ball series, while KL Rahul and Ishan Kishan are the wicketkeeping options. There are some new faces in the squad, with Gurnoor Brar, Prince Yadav and Harsh Dubey also included in the 15-member team.

## Randeep Hooda on how fatherhood has changed him: 'I want to live longer for her'



Actor Randeep Hooda got married to Lin Laishram in 2023, and the couple welcomed their first daughter in March this year. While Randeep is still settling into fatherhood, the feeling has surely changed him as a person. In a recent interview with SCREEN, Randeep spoke about how he has changed ever since his daughter Nyomica was born. During the promotions of his latest web series, Inspector Avinash, Randeep shared how being a father comes with its share of fierceness and tenderness.

Randeep Hooda on fatherhood Randeep Hooda's daughter Nyomica was born on 10th March 2026. The actor had shared a picture of his father holding his daughter and wrote, "Today, as I become a father, my appreciation for you has only grown deeper, Papa. And most importantly, Lin, thank you for making me a father and for bringing our little girl into this world. A little girl and a lifetime of love." Recently, while talking to SCREEN, when Randeep was asked what had changed in him after becoming a girl-

## Salman Khan calls out paparazzi for 'enjoying his pain' in explosive posts: 'Ladna nahin bhoola'



After losing his cool at paparazzi on Tuesday night, Salman Khan took to Instagram to share a series of posts expressing his anger and disappointment over the media's behaviour outside a hospital. The actor also issued a stern warning to the paps, making it clear that he was upset about people trying to profit from his personal pain. Salman Khan was coming out of a hospital when he had a tense exchange with paparazzi after photographers followed him and shouted "Maatrubhumi." The actor lost his temper and asked them if they had "lost their minds."

What Salman Khan posted In his first post, the actor wrote, "If I see any press at a hospital enjoying my pain.

## Jr NTR's Dragon glimpse drops on his birthday, reveals his leanest, deadliest avatar yet

The makers of Dragon released the film's first glimpse on Tuesday, just minutes before Jr NTR's 43rd birthday. The glimpse was released across multiple digital platforms and also screened in selected theatres, with the makers simultaneously confirming the project's official title as Dragon. The film had previously been referred to by the working title NTR Neel. The world of Dragon in a glimpse

The film is set in 1967 and revolves around the opium trade, with an organisation called the Afghan Trading Company at the centre of the story. Rukmini Vasanth, who plays the female lead, provides the narration in the glimpse, laying out the contours of this world before NTR's character appears on screen. NTR plays Luger, the Assassin-in-Chief of the Afghan Trading Company. The name itself drew attention online. In his previous films, Neel gave Yash the name Rocky in KGF and Prabhas the name Deva in Salaar. Luger marks a departure from that pattern, taking its name from a German pistol rather than following the route of a conventional mass-hero name. The dialogue NTR delivers in the glimpse, "Devudu naako varamichchaadu. Trigger nokkagaane marchipovadam. (God gave me a boon, whenever I press the trigger, I can forget)" has been among the most shared moments from the video on social media since the release. The glimpse introduces a large number of characters in a short span. The cast includes Anil Kapoor, Biju Menon, Guru Somasundaram, Ashutosh Rana, Khushbu Sundar, Rajeev Kanakala, Anshuman Pushkar, Sidhant Gupta, Prabhas Srinu, Shatru, Shiva, Bhimal Jeet Oberoi, Ntuthuzelo Prince Grootboom, Aleksandr Mizev

dad, the actor said, "Apart from the fact that my first instinct was to buy a gun, definitely there is a bit more tenderness that has come about. I want to be fitter and live longer for her, and I want to make her prouder than possibly my mother was." In an interview with Hindustan Times, Randeep Hooda shared, "I did not have a reason, or rather an excuse to go home, but now I find excuses to go home as soon as possible. Earlier, I used to go for shoots, then bas ni kartha tha, and reach home after months. But now I have a sweet daughter whom I always desire to see. Of course, I am engaged in work, but ek nazar ghar ki taraf bhi rehti hai." Randeep also revealed how his wife Lin and daughter Nyomica joined him on a film set recently. "They got bored quickly, but I really enjoyed myself," Randeep added.

Inspector Avinash has returned with its second season; the first season was released in 2023. Interestingly, Randeep Hooda had initially turned down the offer for this show. Revealing why he said no to this web series initially, Randeep told SCREEN, "Because I had done quite a few cop roles, not that I believe one cop is similar to the other, and I have never played a similar kind of cop roles. At that point in time, I had played a lot of cop roles, so I was trying to avoid it. Then Neeraj Pathak asked me to listen to the story a little bit, and I found the writing very interesting. In my opinion, I have read a lot of long-format shows, and this was one of the best writings I came across. I found it very intriguing." Inspector Avinash has been released on JioHotstar. Written, directed, and produced by Neeraj Pathak, the show also stars Urvasi Rautela, Amit Sial, Abhimanyu Singh, Shaleen Bhanot, Rajnesh Duggal, and Freddy Daruwala in important roles.

The press that I have stood for interacted with taken care made sure that they also earn their bread n butter..." He continued the message in another post, saying: "But if they wanna make money from my losses.... keep quiet don't enjoy. bhai bhai matrubhumi picture ki maaa ki aankh, pic imp hai ya life. (What is more important? Movie or life?)" In a third post, where he was seen smiling, Salman wrote: "Aise main sau jala doonga (I will burn 100 such things). Bhai k ek bhai k dukh par agli baar try kar lena mere sath. Buss try kar lena.... Jab bhi tumhara koi hospital mai hoga kya mai aisa react karonga? (Just try me one more time when I am grieving. Do I react like this when you guys go through a personal loss?)" In his final post, the actor added: "Saath saal ka ho gaya hoon lekin ladna nahin bhoola yeh yaad rakh lena, jail mein dalo ge haaa haaa. (I might be 60, but haven't forgotten to fight. Will you jail me for that?)"

Why Salman Khan got upset The posts came shortly after Salman Khan lost his temper with paparazzi on Tuesday night while visiting someone at a hospital. As he stepped out of the hospital, photographers began shouting his name along with the title of his upcoming film, Maatrubhumi. Clearly irritated, Salman walked towards the paparazzi, gave them a stern look, and said: "Pagal ho tum!" The video quickly went viral on social media, following which the actor shared his side of the story through Instagram posts. In the videos, Salman Khan can be seen confronting the photographers and reminding them to be sensitive, asking how they would react if someone from their own family were hospitalised. The paparazzi were later heard apologising to him. Salman Khan's upcoming projects Salman Khan is currently gearing up for the release of Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace, previously titled Battle of Galwan. The film is inspired by the real-life 2020 Galwan Valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops. The makers are yet to announce the film's release date. Salman Khan also has SVC63 in the pipeline alongside Nayanthara. Directed by Vamsai Paidipally and produced by Dil Raju, the film marks Salman's first collaboration with the Jawan actor and is reportedly eyeing an Eid 2027 release.



and Benedict Paul Garrett, alongside NTR and Rukmini Vasanth. When Prashanth Neel released the Salaar glimpse in 2023, the criticism that followed was fairly specific: Prabhas was barely visible, and the video prioritised mood over actually showing its lead actor. With Dragon, Neel has taken a different approach. The glimpse uses its extended runtime to walk the audience through the film's world, the power structure within the Afghan Trading Company, and the central conflict, before building toward NTR's introduction. Similarly, the visual grammar is unmistakably Neel's. The colour palette, the framing of action, the layered background score, the way violence is treated on screen all carry the same markers of his previous films. Dragon is produced jointly by Mythri Movie Makers and NTR Arts. Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, Naveen Yerneni, Y. Ravi Shankar and Kosaraju Harikrishna are the producers.

## Salman Khan snaps at paparazzi outside Mumbai hospital

Mumbai: Bollywood superstar Salman Khan lost his cool at the paparazzi stationed outside a hospital in the city. On Tuesday, the actor was seen coming out of the Hinduja hospital in the Mahim area of the city when he was surrounded by the paparazzi. As he walked towards his car, he took a step and firmly told the paparazzi to behave after which, they apologized and stopped filming the video. He told the paparazzi, "Pagal ho kya?" However, it's not yet confirmed as to whom the actor paid a visit at the

hospital. Earlier, Salman had assured his fans that he has plenty of attention from his vast social circle. The actor took to X, formerly Twitter, and penned a long note in which he said that his previous statement about loneliness was simply a musing, and not the reflection of something that he is dealing with in life. He wrote, "Arre yaar Mai apne bare mai nahai baat kar raha tha (Hey, I wasn't talking about myself). How can I be alone when I have such a large amazing family n friends n how can I be lonely when I have u guys.