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Telangana School Education Department issues strict confidentiality order

Hyderabad: The School Education department on Tuesday directed all schools and colleges not to share confidential information relating to students, including students' mobile numbers, parents/guardians' mobile numbers, and any other personal data, with any private individuals, private agencies, organisations or unauthorised persons under any circumstances. City & Local Guides in a press release, School Education director Dr. E Naveen Nicolas said such sensitive information must be kept utmost confidential and used only for official educational purposes in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations.

No question of removing driver from duty: Transport Minister

Karimnagar: Transport Minister Ponnampalapati Prabhakar said that the news being circulated about the removal of TGSRTC Jagtial depot driver B Ashok was completely false. There was no truth in it.

The minister, in a statement, said that Ashok was not an employee of TGSRTC and he was the driver of the hired bus. However, the owner of the bus was asked not to remove him from the duty. Opposition parties were trying to politicise the issue.

Top Maoist Leader Narahari Surrenders Before Telangana Police

Hyderabad, May 26

Cybercrime continued to be the single largest contributor to overall crime in the Cyberabad police commissionerate in 2025, even as the total number of cognisable offences recorded a marginal decline compared to the previous year, according to data released at the annual press meet.

Briefing mediapersons on Tuesday, Cyberabad police commissioner Avinash Mohanty said the

2,079 cases, followed by trading fraud (1,256 cases) and smishing fraud (689 cases). One of the most notable trends was the sharp fall in digital arrest fraud, where cases dropped from 1,002 in 2024 to 117 in 2025, a decline of over 88 per cent, though losses in such cases still crossed ₹15 crore.

Beyond cyber offences, property-related crimes increased their share from 12 per cent in 2024 to 15 per cent in 2025, emerging as the second-largest crime category. Bodily offences also rose from six per cent to eight per cent, while crime against women recorded a one percentage point increase, rising from eight per cent in 2024 to 9 per cent in 2025.

The economic offences wing registered 95 cases in 2025, marginally higher than 90 cases in 2024. While the value of property attached more than doubled to ₹11.50 crore, the amount frozen declined to ₹26.17 crore from ₹30.77 crore, and arrests dropped from 203 to 111, indicating a mixed enforcement outcome. Several high-value investment frauds involving real estate and stock-market schemes were detected, leading to arrests and large-scale asset attachment proceedings.

In road safety, fatal accidents declined by 6.2 per cent, from 856 in 2024 to 803 in 2025, and deaths fell from 893 to 850. However, road accidents accounted for a higher share of total crime, rising from 10 per cent to 12 per cent. The highest number of fatal accidents were reported on National and State Highways, followed by other roads, underscoring the continued vulnerability of high-speed corridors. Heavy vehicles and two-wheelers accounted for a significant proportion of fatalities, while driving errors and other human factors remained the leading causes.

Women and child safety initiatives continued through targeted enforcement and outreach. SHE Teams conducted 3,887 awareness programmes, while Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) registered 103 cases under the ITP Act, rescuing 195 victims. Under Operation Smile and Muskan, 2,298 children were rescued, most of whom were reunited with their families.



commissionerate registered 37,243 cognisable offences in 2025, a slight decline of 1.2 per cent from 37,689 cases in 2024. Despite the overall decrease, cybercrime remained the dominant crime head, accounting for 7,636 cases, though this represented a sharp 35.9 per cent decline from 11,914 cases in 2024.

While the number of cybercrime cases fell significantly, the financial impact remained substantial. The total amount lost to cyber frauds in 2025 stood at ₹404.61 crore, a reduction of nearly 49 per cent from ₹793.18 crore recorded in 2024. Police interventions helped prevent further losses, with ₹54.67 crore secured through proactive intervention (PoH), while ₹20.75 crore was refunded to victims during the year.

A modus operandi-wise analysis showed part-time job fraud to be the most reported category, accounting for



India slams China-Pakistan joint statement on J-K, rejects projects in PoK

New Delhi, May 26

India on Tuesday mounted a sharp diplomatic rebuttal to a joint statement issued by China and Pakistan, categorically rejecting references to Jammu and Kashmir and strongly opposing renewed Chinese backing for projects under the "so-called" China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan-occupied territories.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "have been, are and will always remain integral and inalienable parts of India", asserting that no other country had the "locus standi" to comment on the matter.

The strong response came after Beijing and Islamabad, in a joint statement issued during Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China, reiterated support for deeper cooperation under CPEC and referred to the Kashmir issue while calling for enhanced "trans-boundary water resources cooperation".

Reacting to the development, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India "categorically rejects unwarranted references" to Jammu and Kashmir in the China-Pakistan statement.

India also reiterated its longstanding objection to CPEC projects passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), saying such initiatives violated India's sover-

eignty and territorial integrity.

"As regards the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, some of which are in India's sovereign territory, we resolutely oppose and reject any moves by other countries to reinforce or legitimise Pakistan's illegal and forcible occupation of these territories," Jaiswal said.

India said its concerns had been conveyed to both Pakistani and Chinese authorities on multiple occasions.

The latest exchange comes amid renewed efforts by Beijing and Islamabad to accelerate work on what they described as "high-quality development" of CPEC 2.0, including infrastructure upgrades, industrial cooperation and expanded regional connectivity projects linked to Gwadar port and the Belt and Road Initiative.

The joint statement issued by China and Pakistan also referred to strengthening cooperation on "trans-boundary water resources", drawing another sharp reaction from New Delhi.

"We have also seen references to the so-called 'trans-boundary water resources cooperation' between China and Pakistan. As the two countries do not share any boundary, the question of so-called 'trans-boundary water resources cooperation' does not arise," Jaiswal said.

Centre Forms High-Level Panel to Study 'Unnatural Demographic Change' Linked to Illegal Immigration

New Delhi, May 26

Union Home Minister Amit Shah officially announced the formation of the High-Level Committee on Demographic Change on Tuesday, May 26, 2026. Multiple national media outlets and government-linked sources reported the development today.

The Union Government has constituted a high-level committee to examine demographic changes across India caused by illegal immigration and what it described as "unnatural" factors, with the Centre calling the issue a serious challenge to national security and social stability.

Announcing the decision on Tuesday, Home Minister Amit Shah said the committee will conduct a comprehensive assessment of abnormal population shifts in different parts of the country and recommend policy, administrative, and legal measures to address them.

The move follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech in 2025, where he spoke about concerns surrounding demographic imbalance and promised a "High-Powered Demography Mission."

In a statement posted on social media, Shah said illegal infiltration and demographic changes pose risks not only to sovereignty, but also to law and order, social structure, and the protection of tribal communities.

The newly formed committee will be headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar. Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra, former Bureau of Police Research and Development chief Balaji Srivastava, economist Dr. Shamika Ravi, and the Census Commissioner of India are among the members of the panel.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the committee has been tasked with scientifically studying demographic shifts at the level of religious and social communities, identifying causes behind abnormal settlement patterns, and suggesting mechanisms for identifying and



deporting undocumented immigrants through a time-bound legal framework.

The panel will also recommend reforms to strengthen border management and improve coordination between Central and State governments on population and security-related issues. The committee has been given one year to submit its report, with the possibility of a six-month extension if required.

Smoke inside IndiGo aircraft; passengers evacuated at Bengaluru airport

New Delhi, May 26

More than 230 people were evacuated from an IndiGo aircraft after smoke was detected in the cabin at the Bengaluru airport on Tuesday evening, according to sources.

In a statement, IndiGo said all customers and crew are safe and have been moved to the terminal, where they are being attended to by its teams to ensure their well-being.

"On May 26, while IndiGo flight 6E 6017 from Bengaluru to Chennai was taxiing out to the runway for departure, smoke was noticed in the aircraft. In the interest of safety, an immediate evacuation was carried out, and all the relevant authorities were informed," the airline said.

Sources said there were more than 230 people on board the A321 aircraft.

An alternative aircraft has been arranged to operate the flight, the airline said.



No Ebola cases reported in Telangana, says Health Minister

Hyderabad: Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha on Tuesday urged the general public not to

these individuals, he said.



panic, following the WHO declaring Ebola as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

The Minister, while reviewing Ebola preparedness, maintained that there are no cases of Ebola and no passengers so far have been identified with Ebola symptoms in Telangana.

As of May 25, a total of 58 passengers from Ebola-affected countries had arrived in Hyderabad at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), Shamshabad and none of them have exhibited symptoms, he said.

The passengers have been classified under Category-I and are undergoing 21 days of home self-isolation. District surveillance teams are actively monitoring

of Virology (NIV), Pune, for testing.

The Health Minister, during the review, directed health officials to ensure continuous monitoring without any negligence.

It has also been decided to immediately transfer any passengers showing symptoms to the isolation ward at Gandhi Hospital. All government hospitals have been asked to remain on high alert and strictly enforce infection control protocols.

Senior health officials including Health Department Principal Secretary Christina Z. Chongthu, Public Health Director Ravinder Naik, Medical Education Director Narendra Kumar, and Telangana Vaidya Vidhana Parishad Commissioner Ajay Kumar, were present

As part of medical preparedness, the State government has established a 10-bed isolation ward at Gandhi Hospital. A special team comprising doctors, health inspectors, field staff, and paramedical personnel are on duty at the airport.

Emergency ambulances (108 services) are available round-the-clock for emergency situations and samples from suspected cases will be sent to the National Institute

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Bengal govt must strike a cautious balance

UPPING the ante against illegal immigration, the BJP government in West Bengal has directed district authorities to set up "holding centres" for apprehended foreigners and released foreign prisoners. The move comes amid an aggressive push against people from neighbouring countries — particularly Bangladesh — who are accused of entering India without valid documents or overstaying, especially in BJP-ruled states. Framed as an administrative measure aligned with Home Ministry guidelines, the Bengal government's step is also unmistakably political. By institutionalising the "detect, delete and deport" mechanism, the Suvendu Adhikari-led dispensation is transforming a poll plank into state policy.

Bengal shares a long and porous border with Bangladesh, and concerns over undocumented migrants have persisted for decades. The state government contends that illegal immigration strains public resources, alters the demographic balance in sensitive districts and raises security concerns. The creation of holding centres appears to be aimed at streamlining deportation and reducing delays. The state's endeavour is also linked to the Centre's Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, which imposes stricter penalties on offenders. However, the new policy raises troubling legal and humanitarian questions. The most contentious aspect is the order to hand over suspected illegal migrants directly to the Border Security Force without first producing them before courts. Bypassing legal scrutiny can lead to arbitrary detention and wrongful deportation. There is also the danger of conflating illegal immigration with religious or ethnic identity. While the government insists that communities protected under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act will remain exempt.

Uppal Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy Extends Birthday Wishes to TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud



“UPPAL , MAY 26 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): On the occasion of the birthday of TPCC President Bomma Mahesh Kumar Goud, Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy met him courteously and conveyed heartfelt birthday wishes. During the meeting, Parameshwar Reddy felicitated Mahesh Kumar Goud with a shawl and presented him with a bouquet of flowers. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that Mahesh Kumar Goud has been working tirelessly to strengthen the Congress party and establish it as a people's party in Telangana. He expressed confidence that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the guidance of Mahesh Kumar Goud, the Congress party would emerge even stronger in the state. He further wished Mahesh Kumar Goud a long life filled with good health and continued success in public service. Medchal-Malkajgiri District Congress Party President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav, former TPCC General Secretary Narsa Reddy Bhoopathi Reddy, and other party leaders participated in the programme.

Parachute Launches Advanced Protein Shampoo



Hyderabad, May 26 (Indian Chronicle) : Marico Limited, one of India's leading FMCG companies, has entered the hair-cleansing segment with the launch of its new Parachute Advanced Protein Shampoo range, according to a statement released in Hyderabad on Tuesday by Ashish Gopaal. Speaking on the occasion, Vikram Karwal said the new protein shampoo range combines the benefits of coconut and natural ingredients. He noted that the launch would further strengthen the brand's position in the hair-care category. He added that, as part of Marico's strategy to significantly expand its category presence over the past few years, the company has now introduced Parachute Advanced Coconut in the hair-cleansing format. According to him, the new shampoo range addresses the growing consumer demand for natural products and reflects Marico's commitment to introducing effective coconut-based innovations.

Bharatiya Janata Party Telangana State President Shri N. Ramchander Rao addressed the media at the BJP office in Kukatpally today and raised several important issues concerning Hyderabad city

including housing for the poor, GHMC division, drinking water crisis, urban flooding, road conditions, industrial policy, real estate and overall city development. Speaking on housing, Shri Ramchander Rao said that the previous BRS government had completely betrayed the poor in the name of double-bedroom houses. He stated that the present Congress government is also following the same path by misleading people in the name of "Indiramma houses." He said that the government is merely showcasing a few incomplete houses constructed earlier and wasting time in the name of reports and reviews, while the poor people of Hyderabad continue to suffer injustice. On the proposal to divide the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and create a Cyberabad Municipal Corporation, Shri Ramchander Rao alleged that the move is being considered only to benefit the Majlis party. He said that the Revanth Reddy government is preparing to divide GHMC in an unscientific manner and hand over one portion for the political benefit of Majlis. He further stated that there is no clarity among officials regarding the proposed boundaries and criticised the government for attempting to divide the city without proper planning or transparency. Expressing concern over the drinking water situation in Hyderabad, Shri Ramchander Rao said that the water supply system in the city has completely collapsed. Even as the Rohini Karthi period is coming to an end and the monsoon is approaching, the government has failed to address the water crisis. He said that people are being forced to depend on tankers as water is not being supplied even once in three or four days in several areas. He also criticised the Water Board for its failure and said that during rains, many bastis continue to face the threat of flooding. He further added that the

condition of roads in Hyderabad is extremely poor and there is no accountability from the government. Referring to the HILT policy, Shri Ramchander Rao alleged that under the pretext of shifting polluting industries outside the city, industrial areas within Hyderabad are being converted into residential zones, paving the way for a massive real estate scam. He questioned whether the government had conducted any impact assessment on how many people would lose employment due to the shifting of industries and how many new jobs would be created. He said that while the previous BRS government depended heavily on the real estate sector, the present Congress government is harassing builders through increased commissions, resulting in a slowdown of new ventures and serious damage to the real estate sector.

Shri Ramchander Rao asserted that only the Bharatiya Janata Party can transform Hyderabad into a beautiful and truly global city. He said that under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, the Union Government has introduced several schemes for urban development. He stated that through schemes such as Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT, the Centre has been contributing to the development of Telangana. He also said that the BJP is committed to developing tourism and improving urban infrastructure in Hyderabad. He called upon the people of Hyderabad to give a fitting response to Congress, BRS and Majlis in the upcoming local body elections, including the GHMC elections. He said these three parties are playing with the lives of Hyderabad's people for their own political interests. He appealed to the people to support the Bharatiya Janata Party, which alone can bring development to Hyderabad.

CONG, BRS AND MIM DECEIVING PEOPLE FOR POLITICAL MILEAGE

Hyderabad, May 26 : BJP State President N Ramchander Rao today launched a scathing attack alleging that both the previous BRS government and the current ruling Congress government in Telangana are operating under the dictate of the MIM (Majlis) party, severely deceiving the people of Hyderabad. Speaking to the media in Kukatpally on his second day of "Rythu Gosa—BJP Bharosa" yatra, Rao accused Congress, BRS and Majlis parties together of fleecing people of Hyderabad for their own political gains. He also highlighted the major issues plaguing the city and exposed the conduct of both the Congress and BRS parties. Rao criticized that while the previous BRS government left the poor high and dry in the name of double-bedroom houses, the current Congress government was deceiving people in the exact same manner under the guise of 'Indiramma Houses'. He alleged that they are merely passing time by showing off a few incomplete houses built by the previous government. Accusing both parties of wasting time in the name of reports, he stated they have caused immense injustice to the poor of Hyderabad.

BJP state chief clarified that the idea of splitting the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits to create a Cyberabad Municipal Corporation was solely for the benefit of the Majlis party. He criticized that the Majlis party cannot win unless the city is divided into three parts, which is why GHMC is being unscientifically bifurcated into three divisions and the Revanth Reddy government is ready to hand over one part to them. He recalled that in the past, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy had created confusion during the reorganization of districts by causing a single assembly constituency to fall into three different districts, and now the Revanth government is following the same path. He lashed out, stating that when officials are asked for a map, they have no clarity, and a conspiracy is underway to piece the city apart without even knowing where the borders will fall. Rao expressed deep grief that the drinking water supply system in the city has completely collapsed. He pointed out that even though the peak summer period (Rohini Karthi) is ending and the monsoon is fast approaching on June 12, the government has failed to mitigate the water crisis. He criticized the Water Board for its monumental failure, noting that water does not even arrive once every three to four days, forcing people to rely on tankers. On the other hand, he warned that a single rainfall would submerge the colonies, recalling that during the floods under the previous BRS regime, even the Rs 10,000 assistance meant for victims whose houses were inundated ended up in the pockets of



BRS leaders. He added that the condition of roads in the city is pathetic, and there is no one to care. He alleged that under the pretext of relocating polluting industries outside the city through the 'HILT Policy', industrial areas are being converted into residential zones, setting the stage for a massive real estate scam. He said that the government has not conducted any 'Impact Assessment' regarding how many people will lose their livelihoods or how many new jobs will be created due to the relocation of these industries. He pointed out that while the previous government depended on the real estate sector, this Congress government, upon coming to power, has increased the commission percentage from 30 to 40 per cent and is harassing builders, resulting in a complete collapse of the real estate sector with no new ventures coming up in the city. Rao emphasized that transforming Hyderabad into a beautiful city and a global city is possible only through the BJP. He mentioned that under the leadership of Narendra Modi at the Center, there are numerous schemes for urban development. He stated that the central government is developing Telangana using funds from schemes like 'Smart City' and 'AMRUT City'. Furthermore, he promised the public that they would phenomenally develop the tourism sector here. BJP state president appealed to the citizens to teach a lesson through their vote in the upcoming local body (GHMC) elections to these three selfish parties—Majlis, BRS, and Congress who are playing with the lives of Hyderabad's citizens for their personal gains. He urged people to elect the BJP to transform Hyderabad into a beautiful city. He asserted that a vote for Congress or BRS is effectively a vote for Majlis, as both these parties have cohabited with Majlis in the past. Rao requested the public to realize this truth and support the BJP, which brings real development.

Reddy had created confusion during the reorganization of districts by causing a single assembly constituency to fall into three different districts, and now the Revanth government is following the same path. He lashed out, stating that when officials are asked for a map, they have no clarity, and a conspiracy is underway to piece the city apart without even knowing where the borders will fall. Rao expressed deep grief that the drinking water supply system in the city has completely collapsed. He pointed out that even though the peak summer period (Rohini Karthi) is ending and the monsoon is fast approaching on June 12, the government has failed to mitigate the water crisis. He criticized the Water Board for its monumental failure, noting that water does not even arrive once every three to four days, forcing people to rely on tankers. On the other hand, he warned that a single rainfall would submerge the colonies, recalling that during the floods under the previous BRS regime, even the Rs 10,000 assistance meant for victims whose houses were inundated ended up in the pockets of

Over 80 Lakh Sanctioned for Development of Uppal Municipal Stadium

"Development Works Begin Following Parameshwar Reddy's Follow-Up Efforts – Irshad Khan" UPPAL , MAY 26 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Birappagadda Division Congress senior leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) stated that continuous efforts made on public issues have resulted in the sanction of over 80 lakh for the development of the Uppal Municipal Indoor and Outdoor Stadiums. He said that problems prevailing at the stadiums were brought to the notice of Uppal Congress Party In-Charge Parameshwar Reddy after receiving several complaints from local residents, youth, and sports persons. Responding positively, Parameshwar Reddy took special initiative and held discussions with the concerned officials regarding the development works. As part of these efforts, officials of the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation sanctioned more than 80 lakh for development works at the indoor and outdoor stadiums, and the works have now commenced at a fast pace, Irshad Khan said. On this occasion, he expressed special thanks to Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta for promptly recognizing public needs, sanctioning the funds, and initiating the development works. Irshad Khan further stated that Parameshwar Reddy has been giving special attention to the development of the Uppal constituency and has been working continuously to resolve every public issue without delay. He described him as a leader who is always accessible to the people and committed to development. Resolving every issue raised by the people is our responsibility. The Congress Party will always stand at the forefront for public welfare, youth development, and better facilities for sports persons. Under the leadership of Parameshwar Reddy, several more development programs will be undertaken in the Uppal constituency, Irshad Khan said. He also expressed hope that once the stadium development works are completed, youth and sports persons will have access to significantly improved facilities.



Next-Generation eVTOL Aircraft Gen-2 Unveiled



Hyderabad, May 26 (Indian Chronicle) : bluj aero space has unveiled its next-generation eVTOL aircraft, Gen-2, after four years of research and development, according to a statement released on Tuesday by the company's Founder and CEO, Amar Sri Vatsava. Speaking alongside Satish Andra and Naganand Doraswamy, he said that Gen-2 is the company's first commercial-grade aircraft developed using its proprietary 'VentiS' platform architecture. The Gen-2 aircraft is capable of carrying a payload of over 200 kilograms and has a takeoff weight of less than 500 kilograms. The fully electric aircraft is currently undergoing flight testing and has been designed primarily for heavy-payload logistics operations. The company also stated that it aims to introduce long-range passenger aircraft powered by hydrogen-electric technology by 2027-28.

Solar Energy Usage Key to Economic Growth and Environmental Protection



---Awareness Seminar on PM Surya Ghar Yojana Conducted by Electricity Department Narsampet/Warangal, May 26 (Indian Chronicle) : TG REDCO DE Gandham Rajender stated that every household can transform into a self-sustained power producer by installing solar panels on rooftops and converting solar energy into electricity. An awareness seminar on the prestigious PM Surya Ghar Yojana, organized by the Electricity Department, was held grandly on Tuesday at the Citizen Club in Narsampet town. The programme, conducted under the leadership of TG REDCO DE Gandham Rajender, was presided over by Municipal Chairperson Pendem Lakshmi Ramanand. Speaking on the occasion, Gandham Rajender explained that under the Central Government's PM Surya Ghar Yojana, subsidies of Rs.30,000 for 1 KW, Rs.60,000 for 2 KW, and up to Rs.78,000 for 3 KW solar systems are being provided to beneficiaries. He further stated that through the PM Kusum Scheme, farmers can establish solar power plants on their agricultural lands and secure a stable source of income. He informed that setting up a one-megawatt solar plant requires approximately 3.5 to 4 acres of land, which should be located within a five-kilometre radius of a nearby substation. The estimated investment for a one-megawatt solar plant is around Rs.3.5 crore. He added that the State Government is taking measures to purchase the generated electricity for a period of 25 years and is also planning to facilitate loan assistance for farmers. Through this initiative, farmers are expected to earn an annual income ranging between Rs.50 lakh and Rs.52 lakh. He urged farmers to utilize this opportunity by applying immediately after the release of the second phase guidelines of the PM Kusum Scheme. Municipal Chairperson Pendem Lakshmi Ramanand stated that the usage of solar energy systems not only reduces electricity expenses but also contributes significantly to environmental conservation. She noted that consumers can earn additional income by selling surplus electricity to the grid. Highlighting that solar panels can provide nearly 25 years of free electricity, she appealed to the public to make effective use of the scheme. Municipal Vice Chairman Gandham Narendra observed that increased adoption of solar energy would reduce dependence on fossil fuels such as coal and help control environmental pollution. He pointed out that solar power can significantly reduce harmful emissions such as carbon dioxide and ash released from thermal power plants, while also minimizing the consumption of petrol and diesel. He further stated that wider use of solar energy would help the nation save valuable foreign exchange currently spent on imported fuels.

Municipal Commissioner Bhaskar called upon the public to voluntarily come forward and promote the usage of solar energy. He emphasized that installing solar panels on every household would not only generate additional income but also contribute towards building a clean and environmentally sustainable India. Collective Efforts Needed to Eradicate Child Marriages... Later, Municipal Chairperson Pendem Lakshmi Ramanand participated in an awareness programme organized by ICDS as part of the Praja Palana Pragathi Pranalika initiative.

Addressing the gathering, she urged the public to actively support the State Government's mission of achieving a Child Marriage-Free Telangana. She stressed the importance of spreading the slogan, "Child Marriage Destroys Lives," to every village. Expressing concern, she stated that child marriages force young girls to face severe mental, physical, and financial hardships, while also adversely affecting the health of both mothers and children. ICDS Supervisors Aruna and Parjitham, Municipal Councillors Banala Prasanna and Rajitha, Anganwadi Union State President Nalla Bharathi, MPMA CLRPs Ramagiri Madhavi and D. Sumalatha, along with RPs, Anganwadi teachers D. Ramadevi, Gousia, Vani, Annapurna, Madhavi, and several others participated in the programme.

A Robust Voter List is the Foundation for Electoral Victory: MP Dr. Kadiyam Kavya



Every Booth Level Agent (BLA) Must Act Like an Alert Soldier—Hanamkonda, May 26 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal Member of Parliament, Dr. Kadiyam Kavya, emphasized that a robust and accurate voter list serves as the crucial first step toward electoral victory. She stated that ensuring every eligible citizen is able to exercise their franchise is the collective responsibility of the party workers. MP Dr. Kadiyam Kavya participated in an awareness session for Booth Level Agents (BLAs) held at the Ambedkar Bhavan in Hanamkonda, alongside MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy and Hanamkonda DCC President Inugala Venkatarami Reddy. On this occasion, Dr. Kadiyam Kavya unveiled a specially designed publication titled "Booth Level Agents – Brief Information Handbook" and distributed copies to the Booth Level Agents and Division In-charges. Addressing the gathering, she underscored the pivotal role played by booth-level workers in strengthening the party at the grassroots level. She urged the booth-level workers to maintain direct contact with the voters while simultaneously ensuring the effective delivery of government welfare schemes to the public. Referring to the changes

currently taking place in voter lists in several states across the country under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, she called for heightened vigilance to prevent such situations from recurring in Telangana. She instructed every booth-level worker to maintain constantly updated voter lists and to closely monitor new registrations, deletions, and any suspicious voter entries. Dr. Kavya advised booth-level workers to coordinate with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and undertake an extensive door-to-door campaign over the next three months. She stated that the primary objective must be to ensure that every eligible individual is empowered to exercise their right to vote. Safeguarding our vote is a collective duty for all of us. Emphasizing that the voter list constitutes the first step toward electoral victory, she urged every booth-level worker to perform their duties with the dedication of a soldier. Calling for unity and coordinated efforts, the MP appealed to all party workers to work collectively to ensure the Congress Party's victory. Several BLAs, division presidents, former corporators, local public representatives, party leaders, and MRO officials attended this event.

Beerla Ayilayya and Anita couple visited Annavaram Sri Veera Satyanarayana Swamy temple to celebrate their wedding anniversary



(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... May 26):- Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilayya and Anita visited the temple along with their family and performed special pujas to mark their 25th wedding anniversary at the famous shrine of Annavaram Sri Veera Venkata Satyanarayana Swamy temple in Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh state. On this occasion, the most important Sri Satyanarayana Swamy vratham was performed with devotion and special prayers

were offered at the Annavaram temple. They prayed to the temple for the happiness and prosperity of the people of Aleru constituency and for the prosperous development of Telangana state. Also, the couple Beerla Ayilayya and Anita expressed their heartfelt gratitude to everyone who wished them in person, over the phone, and through social media on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. They said that with the blessings of the Lord, they will move forward with greater commitment in public service.

Congress Government Gives Top Priority to Women and Child Welfare: MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy

Parakala/Warangal, May 26 (Indian Chronicle): Emphasizing that the Congress people's government is according highest priority to the welfare of women and children in rural areas, Parakala MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy stated that the administration is committed to strengthening education, nutrition, and healthcare services at the grassroots level. On Tuesday, as part of the Mahila Shakti Week celebrations, the MLA, along with District Collector Satya Sharada, inaugurated the newly constructed Anganwadi building at Gunturupalli village in Sangem mandal. Addressing the gathering, Revuri Prakash Reddy said Anganwadi centres have emerged as vital platforms for the educational development of children and for safeguarding the health of pregnant women and lactating mothers. He noted that the government is placing special focus on providing nutritious food, primary education, and quality healthcare services to children in an effective manner. The MLA further revealed that the state government is preparing to establish pre-primary schools and has already enhanced diet charges in Anganwadi centres. He added that "Young India Integrated Schools" equipped with modern



educational standards are being introduced to ensure quality learning opportunities for students. Stating that women empowerment remains a core objective of the Congress government, he called upon all departments to work in coordination for the overall welfare and development of women and children. Revuri Prakash Reddy reiterated that the Congress government is extending utmost importance to the education and healthcare sectors.

Protecting Voters' Rights is the Primary Objective... Every Booth Agent Must Work Like a Soldier: MLA 'Nayini'

Hanamkonda/Warangal, May 26 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal West MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy stated that every booth agent must work like a soldier with unwavering dedication to the party, and must possess a comprehensive understanding of grassroots-level public issues, voter details, and government welfare schemes. The MLA addressed a voter awareness seminar organized for booth agents of the Warangal West Assembly constituency on Tuesday at the Ambedkar Bhavan in Hanamkonda. Warangal MP Dr. Kadiyam Kavya and DCC President Inugala Venkatarami Reddy attended the event as chief guests. Speaking at the seminar, Nayini Rajender Reddy observed that in a predominantly urban constituency like Warangal West, identifying voters and continuously updating their details has become an extremely challenging process. He noted that maintaining accuracy in the voter list has become difficult due to factors such as frequent migration of people between localities, residence in rented accommodations, and changes in addresses resulting from job changes. Under these circumstances, he remarked that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process would prove to be highly beneficial. With the SIR process set to resume in 2026—nearly two decades after it was last conducted in



2002—the MLA urged party leaders and booth agents to execute this initiative with the utmost commitment and responsibility. He instructed them to place special emphasis on voter mapping, collecting family-wise data, identifying new voters, and rectifying errors in the details of existing voters. Warning against any negligence in this process, he noted that a lack of proper mapping could result in eligible voters being left out of the electoral rolls, the creation of duplicate entries under the same name, and confusion on polling day.

Dharna at MMC Tarnaka Head Office on June 8 for GHMC Workers' Demands: CITU Uppal Secretary J. Venkanna

UPPAL, MAY 26 (Indian Chronicle): CITU Uppal Circle Secretary J. Venkanna has called upon GHMC workers to make the dharna proposed on June 8 at the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC) Head Office in Tarnaka a grand success in support of various pending demands of municipal workers. On Tuesday, CITU Uppal Circle Secretary J. Venkanna along with senior CITU leader Raju conducted meetings with GHMC workers in the Kalyanpuri area of Uppal and distributed pamphlets regarding the protest program. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders urged all municipal workers to participate in large numbers in the dharna at the MMC office on June 8. They demanded that the implementation of the four Labour Codes introduced by the Central Government be opposed and that all municipal workers be regularised immediately. They also demanded implementation of a minimum wage of Rs.26,000 for workers. The leaders further demanded that workers employed in all three corporations should immediately be paid salaries on par with GHMC workers. They also sought the introduction of an insurance scheme of Rs.25 lakh for municipal workers who die in accidents while on duty. They demanded that if workers above 60 years of age are removed from service, one member from their family should be provided employment along with retirement benefits of Rs.10 lakh, and Rs.16 lakh in cases where there are no legal heirs. The leaders also demanded payment of



Rs.30,000 towards funeral expenses for deceased workers, implementation of weekly holidays, festival holidays, Sunday holidays and an eight-hour workday. In addition, they called for promotions to SAFA workers, jawans and work inspectors working in the three corporations. They demanded that municipal workers be given first priority in allotment of double-bedroom houses and Indiramma houses. The leaders further sought changes in the biometric attendance system and demanded that attendance be taken at the respective work locations itself. They stated that the June 8 dharna is being organised to press for the implementation of all these demands.

Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy Lays Foundation Stone for the Statue of 'Telangana's Nightingale,' Belli Lalitakka



(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... May 26):- Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy lauded Belli Lalitakka—the cultural icon of the Telangana movement and a martyr—stating that her sacrifice would forever be celebrated by the entire Telangana society. He ceremoniously laid the foundation stone for the construction of Belli Lalitakka's statue at the Martyrs' Memorial in Bhongir town. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA recalled that during his previous visit to Bhongir, Chief Minister Enumula Revanth Reddy had also specifically paid tribute to Lalitakka's struggle and her sacrifice. He commended the collective efforts of various groups—transcending political party lines—including caste associations, public leaders, activists, and admirers of Lalitakka, noting that it was their united endeavor that made the foundation-laying ceremony possible on Tuesday. He expressed his joy that a long-cherished dream and a 27-year-long wait of the people of Bhongir had finally come to fruition today. He also announced that financial assistance would be provided to the five families of those who were martyred alongside Belli Lalitakka. Prominent dignitaries in attendance included Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, Vice Chairperson Pothamsetti Manjula Venkateshwarlu, and Library Chairperson Awais Chishti. Bhuvanagiri Municipal Councillors

present were Thummeti Pandu, Thotakura Vijayalakshmi-Venkatesh, Barre Pujitha Jahangir, Gurrala Santhosh-Srinivas, Kukka Duvvu Padma Somayya, Cheemala Raju, Bingi Naresh, Bontha Narsingarao, Polishetti Anil, Buran, Jalagam Vignesh, and Jangiti Vinod. The Town President, Koorla Venkatesh, was also present. Statue Committee coordinators included Belli Lalitakka's son Surya Prakash, Janni Vennela, Narala Nirmala Venkata Swamy, Paka Mallesh, and Ellamala Jangayya. Former Councillors in attendance were Udari Lakshmi Satish, Vadicherla Krishna, Kyama Mallesh, Sama Mallareddy, Bhattu Ramachandriah, Bhuvanagiri Srinivas Netha, and Belli Lalitakka's daughter Snehalatha. Other attendees included High Court Advocate Kadire Krishna, Market Committee Chairperson Rekha Baburao, Sri Krishna Yadava District President Putta Veeresham, Town President Marri Pandu, Vatte Janayya, Vanajakka, Gundaboyina Suresh, Nakkala Chiranjeevi, Shetty Balayya, Chikkula Venkatesham, Thummeti Srishailam, Yadayya, Kasapaka Mahesh, Mallareddy, Q News Sudarshan, and Mekala. Anjaneyulu, Sripathi Bikshapathi, Dandaboyina Srishailam, Kotha Jangihir, Sriram Sarath, Duduri Suresh, family members, the residents of Bhuvanagiri town, the family members of Belli Lalitakka, admirers, civil society organizations, and caste associations participated in large numbers, making the event a resounding success.

Awareness of child marriages "Everyone in the society should work together for the future of girls"

Yadadri Bhuvana District Revenue Additional Collector Venka Reddy calls (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indians Chronicle... May 26):- Women, Children, Disabled and Elderly Welfare Department in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. As part of the Public Administration Progress Plan, on the second day, the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District IDOC office premises held awareness of child marriages and "The need for the society to work together for the future of girls, Revenue Additional Collector Venka Reddy called for. Later, as part of the "Child Marriage Awareness Program" in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, a special campaign chariot was launched by Additional District Collector (Revenue) Venka Reddy to create awareness among the people on the eradication of child marriages. Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector said that this campaign is being organized with the aim of protecting the rights of girls in the society, preventing child marriages and promoting education for girls. Awareness programs will be organized in villages through this campaign chariot through cultural art groups. The people will be explained about the negative effects of child marriages on the health, education and future of girls. Parents will be especially sensitized to girls to continue their education and achieve self-empowerment. He warned that marrying girls below the age of 18 is illegal and strict action will be taken as per the Child



Marriage Prevention Act. He urged everyone to be a part of preventing child marriages and to immediately inform the Child Helpline number 1098 if any suspicious incidents are found and to inform the relevant authorities. Campaign Posters and messages related to the eradication of child marriage are being displayed in the chariot to create awareness among the people. District Revenue Officer Jayamma, District Welfare Officer Narasimha Rao, District Medical Officer Manohar, District Civil Relations Officer Arundhati, Civil Supply Officer Roja Rani, CDPO Shailaja, District Welfare Department office staff, Members of the Cultural Arts Saradhi team. Other departmental officials participated in this program.

Lorries loaded with grain at rice mills should be unloaded immediately

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanti (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... May 26):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanti said that lorries loaded with grain at rice mills should be unloaded immediately. District Collector Anurag Jayanti inspected the Kadambari Rice Mill in Bininagar Bhattu Gudem Loni and Someswara Rice Mill in Pedda Ravulapalli, Pochampally Mandal, along with Revenue Additional Collector Venka Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector inquired about how many grain-laden lorries are currently in the rice mill. The lorries that have come with loads should be unloaded at any time. They asked how many lorries were coming to the mill with a load of grain every day. They asked how long it would take to unload each lorry and asked the porters to un-



load it as soon as they arrived. They asked whether the mill had enough porters to unload the grain and if there were not enough porters, they asked for more people to import the grain.

Government Whip Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilayya visited Simhadri Appanna



famous Simhachalam Sri Varaha Lakshminarasimha Swamy Temple in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh State and performed special pujas. On the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary, the couple had a special darshan in the presence of Varaha Lakshminarasimha Swamy, also known as Simhadri Appanna, with devotion and offered special pujas to the Lord. The temple priests offered special blessings amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras and presented the Lord's Tirtha Prasadam to Beerla Ayilayya. On this occasion, the temple officials and priests explained to them the historical and spiritual importance of the Simhachalam temple. Beerla Ayilayya and Anita couple prayed that by the grace of the Lord, all the people would be blessed with good health and happiness. In this program, Telangana State Government Whip Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilayya along with district and mandal Congress party leaders and activists from Andhra Pradesh participated and wished them. Beerla Ayilayya said that it was a pleasure to have darshan of the Lord along with the devotees and that he would be more available to the people with a sense of service by visiting spiritual places.

"(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle...May 26):- Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilayya Beerla Anita visited the

Elderly Persons Should Utilize Day Care Center Services: Dr. K. Anita Reddy

"Hanamkonda, May 26 (Indian Chronicle) : Dr. Anita Reddy, a member of the Elderly Persons Tribunal Court, urged senior citizens to effectively utilize the welfare and legal aid services being provided for their well-being by the government and legal service organizations." "On Tuesday, Dr. Anita Reddy visited the Elderly Persons Day Care Center located within the District Parishad premises in Hanamkonda and reviewed the functioning of the physiotherapy and legal aid clinics established for the elderly." "During this visit, she interacted with a Para-Legal Volunteer appointed under the District Legal Services Authority and inquired about the legal advice, counseling, and assistance services being provided to senior citizens. She requested details regarding the number of elderly persons utilizing the center, the cases registered, and the counseling services being rendered." "Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Anita Reddy appealed to senior citizens to avail themselves of the free physiotherapy and free legal advice services available at the Day Care Center. She remarked that the Elderly Persons Tribunal Court has emerged as a vital support system and a boon for the elderly." "Explaining the nature of the cases being received by the Tribunal Court and the manner in which they are being resolved, she stated



that discussions were held regarding the expansion of services for the elderly in the future. She emphasized the need to organize awareness programs regarding the Senior Citizens Act. Furthermore, she called for coordinated efforts among all departments to ensure the welfare of elderly citizens." "She also advised senior citizens to consume the Ragi malt being distributed during the summer season for the sake of their health and well-being." "Dr. Usha, Para-legal Volunteer Upender, and others participated in this program.

Foundation stone laid for road expansion works from Hyderabad intersection

MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy laid the foundation stone" (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle...May 26):- Bhuvanagiri town, which is going to become completely beautiful under the leadership of MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, was laid by MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy on Tuesday for the road expansion works from Nalgonda intersection to Hyderabad intersection. Later, in a program chaired by local councillor Jaligam Vignesh, the MLA said that even though there is a 100-foot road as per the master plan, people are not inconvenienced and justice will be done to the full extent to those who have suffered losses. He said that all the people should cooperate in making Bhuvanagiri town beautiful in every way. The program was attended by Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravi Kumar, Vice Chairperson Pothamsetty Manjula Venkateswarlu, Library Chairman Avej Chisthi, former Municipal Chairpersons Pothamsetty Venkateswarlu, Barre Jahangir, Municipal Commissioner, officials, Congress Party Town President Kura Venkatesh, Councilors Tahera Bablu, Bonthala Narsing Rao, Benda Swaroop Lal Raj, Challagurugula Krishnaveni Raghu Babu, Sujayath Ali, Kausar, Pachala Jagann, Laik Ahmed, Polishetty Anil, Buran, Challa Kishore, Manish, Shivateja, Mani, Varun, Dinesh and others participated.



Education of Child Marriages" Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006" An awareness programme on the education of child marriages was conducted today in Gunjapadugu and Nagaram villages of Manthani Mandal under the leadership of District Women Empowerment Centre Coordinator Daya Aruna. "During the programme, awareness was created among MGNREGA workers, Gram Panchayat Sarpanches, ward members, villagers, and labourers regarding the harmful effects of child marriages and the objectives of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006." The officials explained the social, educational, and health-related consequences of child marriages and stressed the importance of preventing such practices through collective community participation. "Sarpanches Mallesh and Sandhya, CDPO Pushpalatha, Anganwadi Supervisor, teachers, Panchayat Secretary B. Vikas, and others participated in the programme.



Peddapalli District, "Manthani" (INDIAN CHRONICLE), "MEDAGONI VENKATESH" Awareness Programme on

Job Opportunities in UAE Through TOMCOM: District Employment Officer



Peddapalli District, " (Indian Chronicle), "MEDAGONI VENKATESH" Peddapalli District Employment Officer M. Rajasekhar stated in a press release on Tuesday that various job opportunities are being provided in the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) through Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Limited (TOMCOM). "He said the recruitment is being conducted through a registered recruitment agency

functioning under the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Factories, Government of Telangana. "Eligible candidates are required for the posts of Tile Masons, Shutting Carpenters, RCC Workers, Steel Fixers, Scaffolders, and General Helpers in the UAE. "Selected candidates for technical posts will receive a salary of AED 1453 (approximately INR 37,800), along with food allowance and attendance bonus.

Candidates selected for General Helper posts will receive a salary of AED 1200 (approximately INR 31,200). "Candidates should have a minimum of one year of experience, while freshers are also eligible to apply for General Helper posts. Applicants must be between 18 and 40 years of age.

The company will provide accommodation and transportation facilities, and the initial contract period will be for two years. "Interested candidates are advised to send their updated resumes to tomcom.resume@gmail.com. "For more details, candidates may visit the official website tomcom.telangana.gov.in?? or contact 8328602231, 9440050951, and 9440051452, the District Employment Officer stated in the release.

Economic Empowerment of Every Woman is the Congress Government's Vision: MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy



"Parakala/Sangem, May 26 (Indian Chronicle) : Emphasising that the Congress government is committed to ensuring financial independence and social empowerment for women, Parakala MLA Revuri Prakash Reddy stated that the administration aims to make every woman economically self-reliant and a strong pillar for family development. "As part of the Mahila Shakti Week celebrations, the MLA laid foundation stones for Women Federation Buildings proposed in Gavicherla, Teegarajupalli, Somla Thanda, and Pedda Thanda villages during a programme organised at the Gavicherla Rythu Vedika in Sangem mandal. The programme commenced with the rendition of the State Anthem. "Addressing the gathering, Revuri Prakash Reddy said the Congress government is implementing welfare and developmental programmes by keeping public needs and aspirations at the forefront. He stated that the government is giving top priority to women welfare and has launched several innovative initiatives with the ambitious goal of transforming one crore women into millionaires. "Recalling that the women self-help group move-

ment was initiated during the Congress regime, the MLA observed that the progress of the state and the nation is possible only through the empowerment and advancement of women. He stated that, with the objective of financially strengthening women's groups, the government has enhanced the limit of interest-free loans from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh and is also bearing the interest burden on bank loans. "The MLA further said the government is creating livelihood opportunities for women through initiatives such as free bus travel, petrol bunks, solar power generation units, rice mills, and Mahila Shakti Super Bazaars. He added that modern village women's buildings are being established to facilitate the marketing and promotion of products manufactured by women groups. "He informed that the Sangem Mandal Women Federation is generating nearly ₹65,000 per month in revenue through the operation of a purchased bus. He also stated that the proposed Parakala Women Dairy project is being established with complete confidence in women's capabilities and called upon every woman to become a part of the initiative. "Under the leadership of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the government is according high priority to women welfare, he noted. The MLA further remarked that the Congress government is committed not only to laying foundation stones but also to completing and inaugurating developmental projects. "Criticising the previous BRS government for allegedly turning a prosperous state into a debt-ridden one, Revuri Prakash Reddy said the Congress government's primary objective is to ensure economic progress for every family. He expressed confidence that the Women Federation Buildings would significantly contribute to women's financial independence and social advancement, while encouraging women to excel and emerge successful in every field.

A Strong Action Plan Must Be Prepared to Face Flood Disasters: District Collector Divakar T.S

"Protection of lives and property is the primary objective; all departments must work in coordination" "Special focus should be placed on low-lying areas, submerged roads, and weak tank bunds" "Flood-prone villages and cut-off areas must be identified in advance and rehabilitation centers kept ready" "Vigilance is needed regarding electrical accidents, collapse of old buildings, and falling trees" "Special sanitation measures should be undertaken after floods to prevent diseases" "District Collector reviewed flood disaster management preparedness with concerned officials" "Khammam, May 26 (Indian Chronicle): "District Collector Divakar T.S. directed all departments to remain alert and prepare advance action plans to effectively tackle possible flood disasters during the upcoming monsoon season. "On Tuesday, the District Collector, along with Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt and Additional Collectors Dr. P. Srija and P. Srinivas Reddy, reviewed flood disaster preparedness with officials of various departments at the Collectorate meeting hall. "Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that in view of the severe floods experienced in Khammam district in the past, a comprehensive action plan should be prepared without any negligence. He stated that advance preparedness is the key to minimizing loss of life during disasters. "He said floods are disasters for which advance warnings are generally available and can be effectively managed through proper planning. During floods, the primary responsibility is to shift people living in low-lying areas to safer locations. Preventing loss of human and livestock lives should be treated as the highest priority, he added. "The Collector instructed officials to anticipate every possible situation in advance and prepare action plans accordingly. He directed that a 24-hour control room be established at the Collectorate under the supervision of the District Revenue Officer, with key participation from the Revenue, Police, Irrigation, and Electricity Departments. Staff should be deployed in three shifts for continuous monitoring. He also instructed that the toll-free number 1077 be widely publicized among the public. A contact directory of all concerned officials should be kept ready for emergency communication, and water levels should be continuously monitored. "The Collector directed that all necessary reports during floods should be submitted immediately. Lists of flood-prone villages, government institutions, villages likely to lose connectivity, and houses at risk of collapse should be prepared in advance. Reports detailing the number of families to be evacuated, the number of rehabilitation centers required, and the facilities needed at such centers should also be kept ready. "Essential commodities should be stocked in advance in villages likely to become cut off. A special communication officer should be appointed. All petrol bunks should remain alert. The district administration will provide advance funds to departments for emergency expenditure during floods, and these funds should be used responsibly, he said. "He instructed that a mandal-level committee be formed in every mandal comprising MPDOs, MEOs, MPOs, Tahsildars, Police officials, medical staff, and officials from R&B and Electricity departments. Each mandal should prepare and implement a special action plan suited to local conditions. "As loss of life is occurring due to collapse of old houses, buildings at risk of collapse should be identified in advance and notices issued. He pointed out that people often attempt to cross culverts, cross roads, and low-lying roads carrying floodwaters, resulting in accidents. Such areas should be identified beforehand and completely closed during floods. Warning flex banners should be erected and police personnel deployed to prevent public access. "The Collector said accidents also occur due to falling trees and electricity poles. Heavy trees in every mandal should be identified and dangerous branches removed. Wood-cutting machines should be made available in every mandal. Necessary demarcation and warning boards should be installed at places where development works are underway. "Schools and Anganwadi centers with weak roofs or unsafe structures likely to collapse during the rainy season should be identified, and dangerous rooms should not be used. Depending on local conditions, holidays may be declared for flood-affected schools. "Low-lying, remote, and cut-off villages should be identified in advance so that people can be shifted immediately to rehabilitation centers during emergencies. Special arrangements should be made for people requiring emergency medical services. "Special measures should be taken to prevent electrical accidents. Poles, wires, and transformers necessary for restoring electricity after floods should be kept ready. Potholes on roads should be repaired, and damaged drinking water pipelines should be restored immediately. "Based on past experiences, flood-prone villages and danger zones should be identified and nearby rehabilitation centers kept ready. Essential rescue materials such as ropes, torches, and boats should be arranged. SDRF teams should also be kept ready at a designated center. "Lists of good swimmers in every mandal should be prepared. The Collector cautioned that behaving like a hero during disasters increases danger and advised volunteers



to work in a disciplined manner. With proper advance preparedness, 99 percent of risks can be prevented, he remarked. "Streams, tanks, water levels in upper districts, and trigger points should be continuously monitored. Water levels in tanks connected to streams should also be regularly inspected. Weaknesses in tank bunds should be identified and repaired immediately to ensure no breaches occur under any circumstances. "After floods, there is a high risk of mosquito-borne diseases, the Collector said, directing Municipal and Panchayat departments to work in coordination with the Medical and Health Department. Water stagnation should be prevented, sanitation measures implemented, and drinking water leakages controlled. Steps should be taken to ensure the availability of safe drinking water for the public. "Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt said information regarding cut-off roads where transport gets disrupted during floods should be updated continuously. Diversion boards should be installed wherever necessary. The public should also remain cautious. Village Sarpanches and local public representatives should be actively involved. Instructions will be issued to all Station House Officers to coordinate with local officials and resolve issues effectively. "He also instructed that construction sites be immediately demarcated. Low-lying and flood-prone roads should be completely blocked using tractors where necessary. Police personnel would be deployed at key locations to prevent public movement. Awareness programs should be conducted in every village, and an immediate audit of all rescue equipment should be carried out. "Additional Collector Dr. P. Srija suggested involving local youth and public representatives in mandal-level teams, which would make evacuation efforts easier during floods. She also suggested holding a special meeting regarding Gurukul educational institutions, as they too may face flood-related issues. Tahsildars and MPDOs were instructed to inspect all Gurukul institutions and identify possible flooding problems in advance. "Medical camps should also be organized at rehabilitation centers set up during floods. In cases where floodwater is released from upper regions, the Irrigation Department should provide advance information to downstream mandals, she said. "Additional Collector P. Srinivas Reddy observed that in some situations the speed of floodwater flow may be extremely high, and this factor should also be considered while preparing reports. Authorities should estimate in advance the possible flood inflow during the coming hours. Elderly people who may face difficulty in evacuation should be shifted to rehabilitation centers beforehand, he added. "Khammam Municipal Corporation Commissioner Abhishek Agastya, Kallur Sub-Collector Ajay Yadav, ZP CEO Diksha Raina, municipal commissioners, district officials of various departments, and others participated in the meeting. "Issued by the Office of the District Public Relations Officer, Khammam.



Peddapalli District, "Manthani," (INDIAN CHRONICLE), "MEDAGONI VENKATESH. "TPCC General Secretary Srinubabu to Attend Congress Review Meeting in Manthani" "Manthani Mandal President Aili Prasad stated in a press release on Tuesday that a Congress Party constituency review meeting will be held tomorrow in Manthani, and TPCC General Secretary Duddilla Srinubabu will attend the programme as the chief guest. "He said the review meeting regarding the formation of Congress Party village and mandal committees will be conducted on Wednesday at 5:30 PM at Shiva Kiran Gardens in Manthani town. "Aili Prasad informed that Srinubabu will participate in the meeting and appealed to all mandal party presidents, municipal public representatives, sarpanches, village unit presidents, single window chairmen, senior party leaders, and party aspirants from the Manthani constituency to attend the programme on time.

Fuel supply delay hits rural areas, CM says state has enough stock



GNS News Agency, May 26

From tractors idling in Vidarbha's farms to kilometre-long queues outside pumps across Nashik, Sangli and Buldhana, Maharashtra's fuel shortage is beginning to hit both rural life and urban mobility, with the estimates that nearly 20-25 per cent petrol pumps especially in rural pockets are facing supply disruptions. The crisis has been most acute in rural pockets, where diesel rationing and refusal to sell fuel in cans have slowed pre-monsoon agricultural work, forcing farmers to leave tractors idle for hours.

Even as reports of fights at pumps and panic buying surfaced from several districts, the state government insisted there was "no shortage" and blamed global supply disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict, while Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis appealed to citizens against hoarding fuel. "State has adequate stock of petrol, diesel and other petroleum products. People have started panic buying and refilling additional fuel than regular practice. This panic buying has created supply chain problem and affected the supply to pumps. I urge people not to start panic buying," said Fadnis.

Farmers have sounded an alarm that diesel shortage has already halted tilling of farms that annually takes place before the onset of monsoon. "The tilling work is largely

affected in Vidarbha where the land holding is large. The shortage of diesel in tractors is a major concern in rural parts," said Ravikant Tupkar, a farmer leader and founder of Krantikari Shekati Sanghata from west Vidarbha's Buldhana district. According to Tupkar, tractor owners usually carry large cans to buy diesel as taking tractors to pumps from farms is not economical. "Pump owners have stopped giving diesel in cans, virtually bringing the pre-monsoon agriculture works to a halt," said Tupkar. He added that the practice of using bullocks is declining due to the expenses involved in maintaining them. According to farmer leaders, from May 11, pump operators in rural areas have been rationing only 10 to 15 liters of diesel per day to tractor owners. This amount of diesel only suffices for 3 to 4 hours, leaving the tractors idle for the remaining hours. A petrol pump owner from rural Nagpur said, "Some of us are not getting the fuel supply on credit basis. Paying advance amount will not be feasible for us." Ravi Shinde, advisor to Petrol Dealers' Association, told that companies stopping giving fuel on credit has been a huge factor. "With oil companies facing monetary losses, they have stopped giving fuel on credit. Now they want advance payment. Earlier, they used give credit of 4/5 days. With less supply the cash flow is disrupted, it further delays future payments and the cycle continues," he said. According to Shinde, the high volume of fuel in Mumbai has safeguarded the city areas to some extent. "But if war continues, cities too will have to bear the brunt," he said. Explaining further, he said, when one pump runs out of fuel, it increases pressure on another in the vicinity, eventually disturbing their operations. The problem intensifies on Mondays as banks remain closed on Sundays, delaying payments. According to the state government's Food and Civil Supplies department, Maharashtra has around 8,100 fuel pumps from public sector companies. The government estimates that state requires 18 million litres of petrol per day and 34 million litres of diesel per day. Out of these, 10 to 12% is the consumption in Mumbai.

'We want a change in system, not just colour of ruling party's flag': CM Adhikari in North Bengal

GNS News Agency, May 26

CM Adhikari in North Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari in North Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari, Adhikari in North Bengal, Kolkata news, WEst Bengal news, Indian express, current affairs Besides, the government has also decided to introduce the 'Annapurna Yojana', doubling the monetary assistance to women from Rs 1,500 in former CM Mamata Banerjee's 'Lakshmi Bhandar' scheme to Rs 3,000 per month. It also announced free travel for women in government buses in the state. On his maiden visit to north Bengal after being sworn in as Chief Minister of the state, Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday asserted that the BJP government will fulfil all the promises the party made while campaigning for the recently concluded Assembly polls.

Thanking the people of north Bengal for what he said was their "unconditional support" to the saffron camp since 2019, Adhikari ordered a slew of new development works for the region. Claiming that the newly formed BJP government in the state would be one "of nationalists", which will "uphold" the Indian tradition and culture, the CM said: "We do not want just a change in the ruling party's flag's colour or the people at the helm; we want a change in the system." He claimed the government would eradicate what he called "syndicates", "a cut money culture" and "mafia raj" (gang rule) from the state, adding there would no longer be any "anti-national activity" in West Bengal. Speaking at the BJP office in north Bengal, Adhikari claimed people have already started receiving the benefits the BJP promised in its 'sankalpa patra' (election manifesto). Adhikari arrived at Bagdogra Airport from where he headed to the Uttar Kanya NBDD office to attend an administrative meeting. Darjeeling MP Raju Bista, senior BJP leaders, and a number of party workers and supporters gathered at the airport to welcome the new chief minister. The Chief Minister announced that Nisith Pramanik, Minister of North Bengal Development Department (NBDD), would hold an administrative office at Uttar Kanya once a week.

"Our ministers will hold a 'Janata Darshan' once a



week... Coordinating with the administration, they will review ongoing projects and, through regular meetings, work towards the implementation of every scheme across the entire north Bengal region," Adhikari said. Speaking at the BJP party office, Adhikari said the government will fulfil the promises of setting up of a new AIIMS, an IIT and an IIM in north Bengal, as promised in the party manifesto, apart from ordering steps for qualitative development of the lives of tea garden workers in the region. Darjeeling MP Raju Bista told PTI after the administrative meeting: "Apart from the AIIMS, an IIT, an IIM and a cancer hospital will also be set up in north Bengal." These institutes will come up in different districts of the region. The CM asked the Tea Board chairman and other officials to study the Assam tea garden worker welfare model and asked them to come up with pointers on what would be the issues involved in implementing the same here," Bista told PTI. He said that with more than five lakh directly employed people and 20 lakh indirect beneficiaries of the tea gardens dotting the northern districts of the state, the chief minister stressed the betterment of the condition of tea garden workers. Besides, the government has also decided to introduce the 'Annapurna Yojana', doubling the monetary assistance to women from Rs 1,500 in former CM Mamata Banerjee's 'Lakshmi Bhandar' scheme to Rs 3,000 per month. It also announced free travel for women in government buses in the state.

BJP worker 'denies' Valsad families access to govt borewell over poll loss



GNS News Agency, May 26

Weeks after a father and son were arrested for cutting off the drinking water supply to a Bharuch village after the son lost an election, a similar case has surfaced in Valsad district. There, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker allegedly refused people access to a gram panchayat borewell, reportedly because the party lost one seat in the recent taluka panchayat elections. Residents of Tabadmal Faliya (Street) in Valsad's Gadhi village faced drinking water woes for at least two days after BJP worker Amresh Budher denied them access to the borewell, which was sunk by the state government on gram panchayat land, since the Congress won this particular seat in the Kaprada taluka panchayat elections that were held on April 26. The taluka panchayat in question has a total of 22 seats, out of which 18 were won by the BJP's candidates and the remaining four by Congress's. Gadhi village sarpanch Babu Kharprade, who is from the BJP, said, "Our village falls under the Suliya seat of the Kaprada taluka panchayat. In the recent election, Congress candidate Manisha Gond won the Suliya seat, beating my daughter-in-law, Yashi Mukesh Kharprade, who was the BJP candidate." Kharprade added, "On Tuesday, I learnt about Amreshbhai Budher denying villagers water from the borewell, and I warned him. I was the sarpanch in 2012 when this borewell was sunk with state government funds. Amreshbhai is a hot-headed person. I and village talati (revenue official) Chetan Bhoje met him on Tuesday evening and threatened him with a police complaint, after which he apologised. Today, the people started

getting water from the borewell."

According to Bharat Surum, a resident of Tabadmal Street, "Amresh had told us that the borewell was installed on his request, and that it was his right not to allow people to use water from it. He also told us that, in the recently concluded local body elections, the BJP got fewer votes from this street, so now nobody will be allowed to get water from the borewell, except his family members and relatives. Women of the village had to walk long distances in the hilly terrain to get drinking water. We had complained about the same to the local authorities, and today we started using the borewell." According to sources, on Sunday, Budher allegedly told the residents that "35 families (around 200 people) who live on the street had not voted for the BJP in the election". The village sarpanch was away with his family at the time, so no villager had dared to challenge him (Budher), said the sources. On Monday and Tuesday, the women of Tabadmal Faliya walked in groups for around 800 metres to get water in plastic bottles and buckets. Then, the locals submitted a representation to Kaprada taluka development officer Anand Patel, who directed the village talati to intervene in the matter. Talati Bhoje told "The village's population is around 700, and it is close to the Union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Amresh admitted his mistake and wrote an apology letter to us, which we have forwarded to our higher authorities. Since Wednesday afternoon, the villagers have been getting water from the borewell." Meanwhile, BJP MLA from Kaprada Jitu Chaudhary said, "Amresh Budher is our active party worker, and we spoke to him after we came to know about the incident. We strictly told him not to act so stupidly. Later, he agreed to our instructions and allowed villagers to get water." Kamal Saiyed is a senior Correspondent for The Indian Express, providing extensive, on-the-ground coverage from Surat and the broader South Gujarat region and the Union territories of Daman, Diu & Dadra Nagar Haveli. With a reporting career at the publication spanning back to 2007, he has established himself as a high-authority voice on the industrial, social, and political pulse of one of India's fastest-growing urban hubs. Expertise Industrial & Economic Beat: Based in the "Diamond City," Saiyed offers expert reporting on the diamond and textile industries.

Ahead of polls, Yogi pushes for time-bound infra delivery, warns PWD officials against delays



Yogi Adityanath, Yogi pushes for time-bound infra delivery, Yogi warns PWD officials against infra delivery delays, infra delivery delays, Yogi Adityanath, Lucknow news, Uttar pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a review meeting in Lucknow on Wednesday. With Uttar Pradesh heading for elections next year, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday directed the officials concerned to ensure strict timelines and quality standards in various development projects, while cautioning that elected representatives should not suffer due to "departmental shortcomings" or "contractors' mistakes". Reviewing the Public Works Department's action plan for 2026-27 through video conferencing with district magistrates, ministers and public representatives, Adityanath asked all districts to send development proposals within a week so the government could approve the action plan in the first week of June.

"Development proposals should reflect local requirements and be finalised after consultations with public representatives," the Chief Minister said, adding that 'bhoomi puja' and foundation stone laying ceremonies for projects should be conducted only by the public representatives concerned. In a pointed message to the officials ahead of the election season, Adityanath said accountability for quality construction and timely completion lied with departmental

officers. "Public representatives are not responsible for departmental shortcomings or mistakes of contractors," he asserted. Calling infrastructure and connectivity the backbone of economic growth, the CM said roads, bridges and connecting routes were not merely transport facilities but instruments of trade, employment and social development. He instructed officials to avoid a "pick and choose" approach while selecting projects, and ensure balanced development across all districts. The CM also directed the district magistrates and chief development officers to appoint nodal officers for every project to monitor progress and maintain quality standards. He ordered regular reviews of projects approved last year and asked departments to submit timely progress reports to the government. Separate PWD teams will also conduct field inspections and independent assessments of works across districts. Highlighting disaster preparedness, Adityanath instructed officials to construct helpads near every block, tehsil and district headquarters, saying they would be useful during natural disasters, medical emergencies and other crisis situations. He also asked the PWD to prepare a maintenance mechanism and a fixed-fee usage system for the helpads. Referring to global fluctuations affecting fuel and bitumen availability, the CM asked the department to adopt new technologies in road construction. He directed officials to prioritise cement treated sub-base and cement treated base technologies to reduce bitumen use and improve durability. He also instructed officials to construct concrete roads on rural stretches up to two kilometres wherever required. Praising the Urban Development Department's 'CM Grid' scheme for improving urban connectivity, Adityanath said its implementation should be accelerated to ensure better roads and connectivity in every town. Officials informed the Chief Minister that more than 30,000 proposals under 17 departmental heads had already been received for the 2026-27 financial year. Adityanath directed the departments to prioritise proposals and implement them in a phased and time-bound manner, officials informed after the review meeting.

UP government forms five-member OBC panel for reservation in panchayat polls

GNS News Agency, May 26

UP government, Uttar Pradesh government, UP government OBC panel for reservation in panchayat polls, Uttar Pradesh government OBC panel for reservation in panchayat polls, Lucknow news, Uttar pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs The move comes after the Yogi Adityanath cabinet recently approved the formation of the dedicated commission in line with constitutional provisions and court-mandated requirements for determining OBC reservation in local body polls. In a late-night decision, the Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday constituted a five-member State Rural Local Bodies Dedicated Backward Classes Commission to examine and recommend reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Panchayati Raj institutions ahead of the upcoming panchayat elections.

According to a notification issued by the Panchayati Raj Department, retired Allahabad High Court judge Justice Ram Autar Singh has been appointed chairman of the commission. The commission has been constituted under the provisions of a government notification dated May 18. The other members of the panel include retired additional district judges Brijesh Kumar and Santosh Kumar Vishwakarma, along with retired IAS officers Dr Arvind Kumar Chaurasiya and S P Singh. The notification stated that the commission will function for a period of six months from the date the members assume charge of office. Sepa-



rate orders regarding honorarium, allowances and other facilities for the chairperson and members will be issued later. The move comes after the Yogi Adityanath cabinet recently approved the formation of the dedicated commission in line with constitutional provisions and court-mandated requirements for determining OBC reservation in local body polls. The commission is expected to conduct an empirical inquiry into the representation of backward classes in rural local bodies and recommend the extent of reservation to be provided in panchayat elections across the state. The development is significant as the panchayat polls will be seen as a crucial test ahead of the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, with OBC voters remaining a key electoral bloc for all major parties.

Centre provides Y category security to TMC Lok Sabha MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar

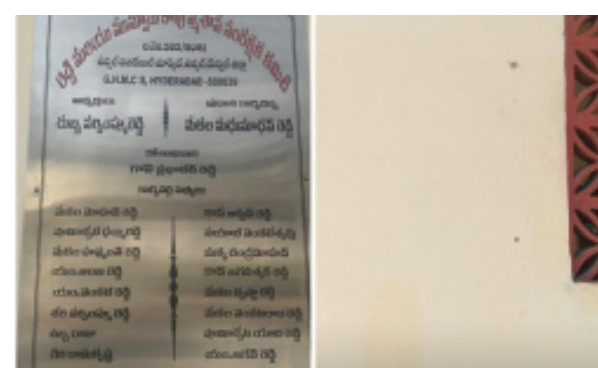
Centre provides Y category security to TMC Lok Sabha MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Y category security to TMC Lok Sabha MP, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar Y category security, Indian express news, current affairs Following the change, Dastidar took to her social media to post about her political journey and commitment to the party. "Knew them since '76, rewarded for four decades of loyalty," she wrote in Bengali on her Facebook page.

The Centre has provided Y category security to Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar after a review of her threat profile, sources said, adding the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has extended the CISF security cover to the Lok Sabha MP from Barasat. The development comes amid significant changes in the party's parliamentary leadership, with party supreme Mamata Banerjee replacing her with Kalyan Banerjee as the TMC chief whip for the Lok Sabha after the party's defeat in the Assembly elections. Following the change, Dastidar took to

her social media to post about her political journey and commitment to the party. "Knew them since '76, rewarded for four decades of loyalty," she wrote in Bengali on her Facebook page. Dastidar was made the chief whip for the party in Lok Sabha after Banerjee had a tiff with Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra in August last year. Y category security is a protective cover granted to individuals facing a moderate level of threat. The category provides a security cover with about eight to 11 personnel, which typically includes one to two commandos, along with armed police officers and personal security officers. Notably, the development comes at a time when security cover of TMC MPs, including Abhishek Banerjee has been reduced. A four-time MP, Dastidar has courted several controversies during the Narada sting operation case and the Park Street rape case. During her political career, Dastidar has played a key role in the party organisation and has been one of the oldest confidantes of Banerjee.

Removal of Former Committee Plaque at Uppal Reddy-Kapu Crematorium Condemned: Former President Mekala Madhusudhan Reddy

Uppal, May 26 (Indian Chronical): Former President of the Uppal Reddy-Kapu Crematorium Protection Committee, Mekala Madhusudhan Reddy, strongly objected to the removal of the plaque installed by the previous protection committee at the Uppal Reddy-Kapu crematorium. "Speaking on the occasion, he stated that the governing body formed in 2019 for the development of the Uppal Reddy-Munnuru Kapu crematorium had officially registered the society with government recognition in 2021. He said the committee members worked tirelessly by approaching ministers and MLAs for government funds and convincing donors to contribute for the development of the crematorium. "He recalled that the committee members regularly monitored development works, visited well-developed crematoriums such as the Fathullaguda Mukti Ghat, took suggestions from officials, and transformed the crematorium with modern facilities. "Madhusudhan Reddy alleged that some people could not tolerate the recognition gained through these development activities and, due to political influence and personal jealousy, dissolved the old committee and formed a new one. "He said that after the formation of the new committee, the focus should have been on continuing developmental activities rather than removing the plaque out of intolerance towards individuals. "People will not believe in such actions," he remarked. "He demanded



that the present governing body President Mekala Hanumantha Reddy and Secretary Giri Ramakrishna explain the reasons behind the removal of the plaque and clarify whose interests they intended to satisfy through this act. "Questioning the authority behind the removal, he stated that the crematorium does not belong to any individual but to the society as a whole, and asked who had granted them the right to remove the plaque. Calling the act illegal and high-handed, Madhusudhan Reddy warned that such actions would not lead to positive outcomes for the society in the future.

From allies to uneasy partners: BJP-Sena friction marks Mahayuti's first 100 days in BMC



GNS News Agency, May 26

Come Friday, the general body of elected representatives in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation will complete 100 days in office. Nearly 100 days after elected representatives returned to the BMC following a four-year administrative rule, the BJP-led Mahayuti's first stint in control of India's richest civic body has been marked as much by internal friction and political embarrassment as by governance decisions, from controversies surrounding Mayor Ritu Tawde and open cracks within the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance to an embarrassing defeat on the floor of the civic house and cancellation of over Rs 1,100 crore worth of tenders. Disrupting the undivided Shiv Sena's three-decade long control over the mayoral seat, BJP's Ritu Tawde, a corporator from Ward 132 in Ghatkopar, took charge as Mumbai Mayor on February 11. However, Tawde's tenure has been fraught with challenges, with the Mayor finding herself embroiled in multiple controversies.

The first controversy erupted as early as February when speculation over a high end luxury brand watch on the Mayor's wrist went viral on social media. As the allegations escalated, Tawde clarified that it was a watch gifted by her children and cost no more than Rs 15,000 to Rs 16,000. Another controversy broke out in March when red and blue flasher lights mounted atop the Mayor's vehicles raised eyebrows on social media and among the Opposition.

In 2017, the Union Cabinet had amended Motor Vehicles rules and banned red beacons on government vehicles in a move aimed at ending VIP culture. However, as flasher lights on Tawde's official vehicle surfaced online, the Opposition led by former Mayor and senior UBT leader Kishori Pednekar accused the Mayor of violating norms introduced by her own party. As the matter escalated, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis came to Tawde's defence. The BMC later removed the flasher lights and covered the designation plaque on the Mayor's escort vehicle. A fresh controversy erupted in April over Tawde's comments at a Mahavir Jayanti event in Borivali where she spoke about recovering from a chronic throat ailment with the help of a Jain godman. Amid allegations of promoting superstition,

Tawde later clarified that her comments had been misunderstood and were merely references to her faith. More recently, Tawde faced criticism after a Rs 3 crore proposal to renovate the Mayor's bungalow drew flak from the Opposition. Over the past few months, signs of tension within the ruling Mahayuti alliance have surfaced amid an open tussle between the Shiv Sena's Deputy Mayor and the Mayor. During a recent inspection of pre-monsoon preparedness works, Deputy Mayor Sanjay Ghadi openly stated that the Mayor had not informed him about her site inspection of drains the previous day. Speaking to The Indian Express, Ghadi said that while there are no fixed rules, it is customary for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to conduct joint visits. "However, the Mayor did not inform me of her visits. I don't know the reason behind it," Ghadi said. Earlier, tensions had also surfaced after Shiv Sena leader Amey Ghole wrote to former civic chief Bhushan Gagrani alleging violation of protocol after the Deputy Mayor was seated on the fourth chair in the absence of Mayor Ritu Tawde during the launch of the Mumbai Clean League initiative. Loss on the civic body's floor On April 29, the ruling administration tabled a proposal to hand over a 30,000 square metre BMC owned plot to a private real estate developer. The proposal was introduced as an urgent bill, requiring three fourths support in the House for clearance. At the time of voting, 119 members were present, including 61 from the ruling alliance and 58 from the opposition. Since the proposal required 90 votes for approval and the entire Opposition voted against it, the ruling alliance failed to secure passage of the bill. What followed was the BJP and Sena administration cracking the whip on party members. A day after the embarrassing defeat, Leader of the House Ganesh Khankar sent notices to all 89 BJP corporators seeking explanations about their absence during voting. Similar notices were issued in the Sena camp by group leader Amey Ghole to all 29 Sena corporators. BJP corporator Makarand Narwekar also wrote to the Mayor demanding biometric recording of corporators' attendance. The proposal was later tabled again on May 8 and passed after the entire bloc of ruling members remained present during voting. Within a month of the elected body being formed in the BMC, the BJP led Mahayuti administration cancelled four civic infrastructure tenders worth over Rs 1,100 crore.

The projects included a Rs 490 crore tender for expansion of Mumbai's Ranibaug or Byculla Zoo, a Rs 385 crore tender for installation of footpath railings, a Rs 150 crore tender for painting city roads and another Rs 150 crore tender for procurement of stationery for municipal schools. Together, the tenders were worth Rs 1,175 crore. All four tenders were floated days after the BJP Sena led Mahayuti formed a majority in the BMC. The Rs 385 crore railing tender was scrapped within 24 hours of being floated. The objections to these tenders were primarily raised by Mumbai BJP chief Ameet Satam, who oversees the party's political affairs in the BMC.

Canadian MLA moves motion to recognise 1984 Sikh genocide in provincial legislature

GNS News Agency, May 26

Mandeep Dhaliwal, MLA for Surrey North and a member of the BC Conservative caucus in Canada, has given notice of a motion in the British Columbia Legislative Assembly seeking formal recognition of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence as a "Sikh genocide". The motion, introduced on May 20, seeks to acknowledge what it describes as state-sponsored violence against Sikhs in India in 1984, including mass killings, destruction of homes, businesses and gurdwaras, and the lasting trauma faced by survivors and their families. "This motion is about recognition, remembrance, and standing with a community that continues to carry the pain and trauma of 1984," Dhaliwal said. "British Columbia is home to a vibrant Sikh community that has contributed immensely to the social, cultural, economic, and civic life of our province. Their history, their loss, and their voices deserve to be acknowledged with dignity and respect." The proposed motion calls on the legislature to honour those killed, the survivors and families affected by the violence, while also stressing the need for education, remembrance and vigilance against anti-Sikh hate, religious persecution and genocide denial. The 1984 violence followed the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards after Operation Blue Star, the Army action at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Thousands of Sikhs were killed in the aftermath, particularly in Delhi, with Sikh groups and rights activists alleging organised attacks and political complicity.

Dhaliwal said Sikh families in British Columbia had



worked for decades to preserve testimonies of the violence and educate younger generations. The move comes amid growing advocacy in Canada for official recognition of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence.

Earlier this month, a parliamentary reception was organised at the Senate of Canada Building in Ottawa by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Recognition of the 1984 Sikh Genocide. The event was hosted by Senator Baltej Singh Dhillon and supported by MPs, including Sukh Dhaliwal, Dalwinder Gill, Heather McPherson, and Elizabeth May. British Columbia is home to a large Sikh diaspora, particularly in the Lower Mainland region, where community organisations have long campaigned for greater public awareness and recognition of the events of 1984.

Woman, teenage son stabbed to death at Delhi home; Rs 10 lakh, valuables missing



GNS News Agency, May 26

A 40-year-old woman and her teenage son were found stabbed to death inside their house in Southeast Delhi's Govindpur area early on Thursday, police said, adding that about Rs 10 lakh worth of cash and jewellery is missing from the house. According to the Delhi Police, a PCR call regarding a murder incident at a residence in Gali No. 10, Govindpur, Kalkaji, was received at Govindpur police station around 1.11 am on May 21. Local police teams, along with the SHO, ACP and other senior officers, immediately reached the spot and secured the crime scene. The deceased were identified as Sharda Sahu, 38, and her son Khushal, a Class 7 student aged 14. Police said her husband, Vishnu Sahu, works as a fruit and vegetable vendor in weekly markets. He returned home around 12.30 am and found the front door latched from outside. On entering the house, he discovered the bodies of his wife and son with multiple stab wounds.

During inspection of the house, police found that cash and jewellery were missing from the almirahs. Preliminary estimates suggest that around Rs 10 lakh to Rs 12 lakh in

cash and valuables may have been looted from the residence. The crime team and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team inspected the spot and collected evidence. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination. Police said a case under Sections 103 and 309(6) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered and multiple teams have been formed to identify and apprehend the accused persons. CCTV footage from nearby areas is being examined and several possible angles, including robbery and personal enmity, are being probed, police said. Heavy police deployment remained in the area through the day as the investigation continued. No arrests have been made so far.

As 'Umeed' deadline nears, Waqf Board calls for completion of online registration

GNS News Agency, May 26 THE GUJARAT Waqf Board on Wednesday appealed to trustees, stakeholders and social leaders of registered waqf properties in the state to register online on the 'UMEED' portal as the time limit to do so ends on May 26. The board made the appeal in a statement issued on Wednesday and also announced a helpline number for those seeking technical guidance on online registration. The release said the UMEED portal has been brought in practice to ensure transparency, responsibility, legal protection and orderly digital management of waqf properties.

Punjab drug census or AAP's pre-poll feedback survey?



GNS News Agency, May 26

Punjab's first-ever "Drug and Socio-Economic Census 2026", launched to assess the "extent of the drug problem" in the state, has triggered a political storm with teachers conducting the exercise alleging that a large chunk of the questionnaire resembles a feedback survey on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's schemes ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. The exhaustive survey questionnaire contains nearly 120 questions — including sub-questions and drop-down options — to be asked from every household. Of the nearly 70 mandatory basic questions, at least 40 are directly linked to the Bhagwant Mann government's welfare schemes and governance record.

Defending the inclusion of such questions, Amit Talwar, Special Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayats, and nodal officer for the Drug Census, told The Indian Express: "The questions on government schemes have been included so that we can take suggestions for betterment. The drop-down questions are asked only if a person answers 'Yes' to the initial question. Only then the number of questions exceeds 100." From the 300 units of free electricity scheme and Mukh Mantri Tirath Yatra to Aam Aadmi Clinics, free bus travel for women, Mukh Mantri Maavan Dheeyan Satkar Yojana and even the CM Yogshala scheme, the survey repeatedly seeks public feedback on the government's flagship initiatives. Teachers deployed as enumerators, however, say the exercise has "little to do with drugs" and more to do with "gauging voter mood". "Hardly anyone is accepting from their own mouths that he or his family member takes drugs. So he simply says 'No' when asked if anyone in the family has a drug problem. The entire village knows that a family's son takes drugs but when the family says 'No' during the survey, we have to record 'No' as their response," said a teacher from Fazilka district. "Instead we are spending 50-60 minutes on each family to collect their feedback on the government's schemes which is not our job. So what is the authenticity or relevance of this survey?" the teacher added.

The survey asks respondents whether they support the government's anti-drug campaign "Yuddh Nasheyan Viruddh" and whether it has impacted drug abuse in their area. It also asks whether families have benefited from the 300-unit free power scheme, Aam Aadmi Clinics, pension schemes, free bus travel for women, Tirath Yatra and doorstep delivery of government services through the "Sarkaar Tuhade Dwar" initiative. One question reads: "Do you get a 24-hour power supply? Has the power situation in Punjab improved after the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government came to power?" Another asks respondents to list the "top five works" of the Bhagwant Mann government and identify issues the state government should prioritise in future.

The questionnaire also asks people which services they received "for the first time" under the Mann government and whether similar benefits were available under previous governments. In some cases, enumerators have been instructed to actively promote government schemes during the survey itself. One such question reads: "Has any family member benefitted from CM Yogshala scheme to

avail free-of-cost yoga trainer?" If the answer is "No", the enumerator is instructed to explain the scheme and ask whether the respondent would be interested in learning yoga free of cost. Teachers conducting the survey say respondents routinely deny drug use within their families, making the exercise ineffective for assessing the scale of addiction. "This is a pre-election survey which the AAP will use in coming polls, and this should have been done by AAP workers, not teachers," said a teacher-enumerator from Amritsar.

"No one says my child takes drugs. When we ask, 'Does someone in your family take drugs', they say 'No' and further drop-down questions on drugs are not even asked. Then the only questions that remain are mostly on feedback related to the government's schemes," the teacher said. Another teacher from Ludhiana said: "The survey is so lengthy that people run away when we say it will take 40-50 minutes. In some cases, the head of the family answers for all and the rest refuse to participate." "Then no one says that he or his child takes drugs. When the survey is submitted, AI software rejects it and says it is poor quality. When we request the person to redo it, he says he can't spare so much time again. It's all an eyewash going on," the teacher added.

Enumerators have been provided mobile phones with AI-enabled software that voice-records responses. Teachers say survey entries are pushed into a "poor quality" category if responses are vague or unclear, and enumerators are not paid for such submissions despite being promised Rs 250 per household. "Even the national Population Census 2027, currently underway, has just 30 questions but no one really wants to answer 120 questions," said another enumerator from Fazilka. Apart from drug-related queries, the survey also collects detailed socio-economic information from households, including religion, caste, sub-caste, income, loans and migration patterns. If a family member lives abroad, respondents are asked why the person migrated, when they left, whether loans were taken to send them overseas and whether those loans have been repaid. Questions linked to drugs include: "Are you having an issue of drug addiction?", "Is drugs an issue in your area?", and "Do you know any place in your neighbourhood where drugs are available?" If a respondent answers "Yes" to drug use, another set of questions opens up on reasons for addiction, treatment history and rehabilitation.

Opposition calls it 'AAP's pre-poll exercise'

Opposition parties have accused the AAP government of using the "drug census" to collect political feedback and voter data ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. Senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia said: "This is not a Drug Census but an election-oriented exercise to know feedback of people on its own governance, to extract voter details and to test its own waters before 2027." Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring questioned the credibility of the exercise.

"Will an addict ever say he takes drugs? Will a father ever say this about his son?" Warring said. The Punjab government has maintained that the exercise is aimed at understanding the socio-economic dimensions of drug abuse in the state. While announcing the survey on April 1, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had said it would cover 65 lakh households across Punjab within three months to "understand the extent of the drug problem in the state." Talwar said that around two lakh households had already been covered and one lakh surveys had been cleared so far. "The head of the family can answer for the entire family but the basic details of all members have to be filled. If the AI software rejects responses due to poor quality, we get them checked manually also," he said. Tarunpreet Singh Sond, the minister in charge of Punjab government's department of rural development and panchayats, which is conducting the Census, did not respond to multiple calls and messages.

Conmen pose as Delhi wholesalers, flee with Rs 3 crore jewellery from Bengaluru firm



A three-member gang posing as wholesale gold buyers allegedly made away with ornaments worth more than 1.85 kg, valued at more than Rs 3 crore. The police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Paresh Soni, Chandrashekhar Rao, and Shyam based on a complaint filed by Mahendra Kumar D Jain, sales manager of Mehta Gold Private Limited. According to the police, Soni claimed to be a Delhi-based wholesale gold trader interested in buying jewellery in bulk. The complaint states that Jain and another employee, Prakash, were asked by a senior colleague to take around 3 kg of gold jewellery samples from the company's Nagarathpet outlet to the office of Maahi Enter-

prise on Sampige Road in Malleswaram. The employees arrived at the office around 3.15 pm with a bag containing various gold ornaments. At the office, Soni allegedly introduced the employees to two associates, Shyam and Chandrashekhar Rao. While Soni selected ornaments, Shyam reportedly examined the jewellery using a testing machine and recorded the items' weights. Investigators said Soni allegedly handed around 1.85 kg of gold ornaments to Rao, who was sitting in a nearby cabin, claiming he needed to prepare a list and photograph the jewellery designs. They said Rao then fled with the ornaments. Soon after, Shyam also left, telling the complainants he would bring Rao back. Neither of them returned. "The accused appeared well-prepared and gained the confidence of the firm by posing as genuine wholesale buyers," a police officer said. The police said CCTV footage shows Rao leaving the office building carrying a bag. Investigators suspect the office may have been a temporary set-up designed to look legitimate and win the trust of the jewellery firm's employees. "The accused are currently absconding. We are examining CCTV footage and technical evidence and expect to track them down soon," the officer added. The accused have been booked under Sections 305(a) (theft), 318(4) (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

Mirzapur gym conversion case: UP Gangsters Act invoked against 10 accused

Mirzapur gym conversion case: UP Gangsters Act invoked against 10 accused Faizal Khan, who won the title of 'Mr Mirzapur' in 2019, and 'Mr Purvanchal' in 2022, is one of the accused in the case. Mirzapur gym conversion case: Police have invoked the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters Act and the Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act against 10 accused arrested over their alleged involvement in a religious conversion racket operating from five gyms in Mirzapur. All the 10 accused are currently in jail, while the gyms in question have been closed. Police said the Gangsters Act was invoked on the basis of evidence gathered during the investigation. The case was filed at the Kotwali Dehat police station in Mirzapur. The case first came to light in January after a woman lodged a complaint through the Uttar Pradesh Police Women's Helpline against a gym owner. During the investigation, police said they uncovered a group allegedly involved in harassing, blackmailing and pressuring female gym trainees to convert their religion. The accused, who are gym owners and trainers, were booked on multiple charges, including intentional insult aimed at provoking a breach of peace, extortion, criminal intimidation, assault or use of criminal force, and unlawful religious

conversion. Police said the investigation also found that the accused allegedly lured Hindu women under the pretext of providing training at gyms, drawing them into what the investigators described as a conspiracy aimed at securing financial, material and other unlawful gains for themselves and their associates. Police further alleged that the accused established physical relationships with the women, recorded objectionable photographs and videos, and used the material to blackmail them, extort money and pressure them into religious conversion. "In this case, it was found that alleged gang leader Imran Khan, along with members of his gang, was involved in the crime. Since there was sufficient grounds established for action, a case was registered against all 10 accused under the UP Gangsters' Act," said Amit Kumar Mishra, station house officer of Kotwali Dehat police station. Among the accused named in the case are Faizal Khan, who won the title of 'Mr Mirzapur' in 2019, and 'Mr Purvanchal' in 2022; 39-year-old maulvi Khalilur Rahman; KGN gym owner and "prime accused" Imran Khan (35); his brother Zaheer (32); Shadab (36); Fareed Ahmed (28); Mohammed Shaikh Ali Alam (31); and a constable, Irshad Khan (40).

Iran is consolidating control of Hormuz with island checkpoints, diplomatic deals – and sometimes ‘fees’



Iran is enforcing a multi-tiered system for clearing vessels through the Strait of Hormuz as nations try to replenish dwindling energy supplies throttled by the war. The U.S. has warned against complying with Iran's controls. Some shippers and governments are taking the risk. DUBAI - The tanker crew gathered their courage and carefully navigated along a route designated by Iran, hugging the coastline and maneuvering their hulking vessel between island checkpoints through the Strait of Hormuz.

The 330-metre-long Agios Fanourios I, laden with Iraqi crude oil and bound for Vietnam, had been bottled up off the coast of Dubai since late April. But on May 10 it set off for the strait after a direct deal with Iran overseen by Iraq's prime minister. Iran's orders to the tanker were part of a complex, multi-tiered mechanism that the country has deployed for clearing vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. With Iran now in de facto control of the strait, the system can involve government-to-government arrangements, intense vetting by the Iranian government and sometimes fees in exchange for safe passage, Reuters has found. In Vietnam, Iraq, Greece and beyond, the ship's progress was monitored closely, including by two people interviewed by Reuters. Periodically, the transponder went dark but the Agios Fanourios I sailed on. Not far away that same day, another ship was hit with a projectile, causing a small fire, according to a British maritime safety agency. Late on May 10, screens lit up with the icon for the Agios Fanourios I. But as the tanker passed Hormuz Island, it was stopped by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps speedboats, according to an Iranian official. The IRGC fighters patrolling the strait, who had initially let the vessel through, now ordered the ship to halt. The Iranian official said there was a suspicion of smuggled cargo and they wanted to inspect the ship.

Several hours later, the vessel received Iranian authorisation to continue, turning what is typically a five-hour transit through the strait into a two-day ordeal. "Once we were informed Agios passed Hormuz, we breathed a sigh of relief," said one of the people monitoring the journey. No payments were made, said the ship's manager, Eastern Mediterranean Shipping and six people with knowledge of the passage.

"We have reasons to believe that Iranians turned a blind eye to the transit of Agios Fanourios I, following pressure from Iraq and Vietnam," Konstantinos Sakellariadis, operations manager for Eastern Mediterranean Shipping, wrote in a response to questions from Reuters. Iran's government did not respond to a request for comment about the new mechanism or the journey of the Agios Fanourios I. An anti-U.S. billboard in Tehran depicts U.S. President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has consolidated its control of the strait since the start of the war. WANA/Majid Asgaripour

Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for about a fifth of the global oil supply, has thrown the world economy into turmoil. To reveal how Iran has been consolidating control over this strategic chokepoint in recent weeks, Reuters interviewed 20 people with knowledge of the evolving mechanism, including Asian and European shipping sources and Iranian and Iraqi officials, reviewed Iranian documents related to the vetting process, and analysed movements of ships. Taken together, they offer rare insight into how the Iranian scheme functions, with the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps playing a central role. All the sources asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of the subject. Some of the details of the journey of the Agios Fanourios I could not be independently verified, but they corresponded with accounts from multiple other maritime officials involved in managing and navigating the same route for both cargo ships and tankers. By early May, around 1,500 vessels with about 22,500 sailors aboard were trapped in the Gulf, according to the U.S. military. That maritime bottleneck stems from Iran's ability to strike ships in the strait from along the coast. Its grip has transformed the conflict into what the head of the International Energy Agency described as the world's worst ever energy crisis. The U.S. Navy has responded by imposing its own blockade of Iranian ships and cargo with a cordon outside the strait.

Only a trickle of vessels have passed through the waterway. Between April 18 and May 6, fewer than 60 ships made it through, according to unpublished analysis by U.S. firm SynMax Intelligence. Before the war, some 120 to 140 ships traversed the strait on a typical day, about half of them oil tankers.

American citizens are prohibited from engaging in transactions with the Iranian government under U.S. sanctions laws. Non-Americans may also face "secondary sanctions" for dealing with Iranian entities. In addition, many Western governments maintain their own sanctions and restrictions relating to Iran. The U.S. Treasury Department issued a statement on May 1 warning "about the sanctions risks of making these payments to, or soliciting guarantees from, the Iranian regime for safe passage." Reuters spoke to more than 20 people to learn how Iran is consolidating control of the Strait of Hormuz. Maritime officials involved in managing and navigating the route for cargo ships and tankers say the journey is fraught. The new Iranian mechanism includes a tiered system giving preference to ships linked to its allies Russia and China, followed by countries such as India and Pakistan with close ties to Tehran, and then government-to-government agreements that let vessels like the Agios Fanourios I pass, Reuters found.

"The department is prepared to take action against any foreign company supporting illicit Iranian commerce," the U.S. Treasury Department said in response to questions from Reuters about the system. Reuters could not independently determine how many vessels have used the scheme so far. Iran has said ships linked to the United States or Israel, which launched aerial attacks on Iran in late February, may not cross the strait. Two European shipping sources said some vessels that aren't covered by government-to-government deals are paying Iranian authorities upwards of \$150,000 to secure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

Ships are sometimes charged security and navigation fees, which vary according to cargo, two senior Iranian officials told Reuters. Neither official provided specific figures, but one said "not all countries are subject to these

charges." Reuters could not independently confirm the sums being levied on vessels or the total amount that has flowed into Iranian coffers. Crossing the Strait of Hormuz has become an ordeal for global shippers. Thousands of seafarers are now trapped in the Gulf. REUTERS/File Photo

"THE NEW NORM" Under international maritime law, governments cannot charge for safe passage through a strait. But there can be fees associated with security or services as long as ships of all countries are treated equally. These payments and the names of ship owners who have paid Iranian authorities to extract their vessels are closely guarded secrets, as such payments would violate U.S. economic sanctions on Iran's government. Reuters could not determine how the money was transferred or to which Iranian entity.

In addition to possible charges, violators would also lose their insurance coverage for making payments that could benefit the IRGC, because it is an internationally designated terrorist organisation, according to two maritime insurance experts. Some will get through because of political alliances, others will have to pay, others will be turned back. This is the new norm. Danny Citrinowicz, senior Iran researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, said ship owners' willingness to deal directly with Iran despite the risks shows the degree to which the strait is under the Islamic Republic's control, said Danny Citrinowicz, a former Israeli intelligence officer who specialises in Iran research and analysis. "The straits will be blocked or opened up only by the approval of the Iranian regime," said Citrinowicz, who is now at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies think tank. "Some will get through because of political alliances, others will have to pay, others will be turned back. This is the new norm."

In a response to the Reuters findings about Iran's new control mechanism, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called for Hormuz to be opened and said it was concerned about "future arrangements for the strait." "Such arrangements should comply with international law and practice, and take into account the legitimate security concerns of coastal states and the legitimate demands of regional countries and the international community," the ministry's statement said. The tanker Agios Fanourios I loaded a cargo of oil off Basra, Iraq, in late April. Soon after, it set sail for the Strait of Hormuz. REUTERS/Mohammed Aty. Outside of government agreements, the process to secure Iranian permission to transit involves a detailed vetting procedure conducted by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran's elite fighting force, according to three Iranian sources and a European shipping source. The IRGC reviews a so-called affiliation document supplied by a ship owner or operator and submitted through an intermediary, the sources said.

"The affiliation check is to identify if the vessel has any connection to the U.S. or Israel," said the European shipping source. It takes about a week for the Guards to review documentation, and during the process they may want to physically inspect the ship, the source said. The IRGC requires ship owners to disclose details including the value of the ship's cargo, the flag, its origin and destination, the registered owner and manager, and nationalities of the crew, according to documents reviewed by Reuters that were sent to shipping industry sources by Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority. The authority was set up in recent weeks to approve and tax vessel transits.

The vetting is carried out by Iranian state institutions including the Ports and Maritime Organization, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, the national shipping organisation, and the security overseer of the Supreme National Security Council, according to the three senior Iranian officials. The IRGC, which has broad oversight over Iranian security, is also involved in evaluating the ships, the officials said. Bilateral arrangements for passage include an additional step: Countries contact Iran's foreign minister to request permission. The minister forwards these to the Supreme National Security Council, which includes the IRGC and representatives of Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, one of the officials said.

"A decision is then made and communicated to the relevant bodies, including the IRGC," the official said. He added that the IRGC provides the coordinates and instructions needed for safe passage. For the Agios Fanourios I, Iraq's government worked alongside its state owned oil marketer, SOMO, to hammer out a deal with Iran under the supervision of then-Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, according to two sources with knowledge of the arrangement. Then-Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, left, oversaw the deal to let the Agios Fanourios I leave the Gulf. This photo from January 2025 shows him alongside Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. WANA/Handout

Three Iraqi oil ministry officials said they transmitted the manifest and crew information of the Agios Fanourios I to the Iranians before passage. The Iraqi government did not respond to a request for comment about its arrangements with Iranian authorities or specifics about the Agios Fanourios I. Other countries have worked out different arrangements. Among them is India, which imports about 90% of its oil needs and about 50% of its gas, much of which passes through Hormuz. New Delhi uses its embassy in Tehran to liaise with Iranian authorities, including the IRGC and the Iranian navy, which vets ships India wants to sail out of the Gulf, according to an Indian shipping ministry official.

"Once everything is verified, the ship captain is given a route to follow, and the ship sails out of the area with guidance from the Iranian navy. The captains are strictly told to follow the given route," the official said. Ships are told to turn off their location transponders and not use satellite communications, he added. After Iran grants permission, the Indian Navy directly contacts shipmasters of Indian-flagged vessels in the Gulf and gives them waypoints, said an Indian shipping industry source with direct knowledge of the process. "The Indian navy also told us that if the Iranians ask you to stop, then you should stop. If they ask you to move, you should move," the source said. "And we've been following those instructions." So far, 13 Indian-flagged vessels have cleared the Strait of Hormuz, while 13 remain stranded west of the waterway, India's Shipping Ministry said on May 14. India, Russia, Pakistan and Vietnam did not respond to requests for comment about Iran's controls of the strait.

FRAUGHT PASSAGE For many vessels, the route out of the Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz involves clearing multiple Iranian waypoints, often staffed by armed personnel, according to two shipping industry sources and three Iranians. The Agios Fanourios I steered past Iranian military checkpoints at Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Larak. Reuters verified those coordinates from the ship's publicly available location data and multiple sources aware of similar journeys.

Tehran reviewing latest US response as Trump suggests he can wait



DUBAI/WASHINGTON, Iran said on Thursday it was reviewing Washington's latest position on ending the war after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested he was prepared to wait a few days to "get the right answers" from Tehran but warned of renewed attacks if it did not agree to a deal. "We have received U.S. views and are reviewing them," Iranian state-run agency Nour News quoted Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei as saying. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

Pakistan, which hosted peace talks last month and is acting as the conduit for messages between the two sides, continues to mediate between Tehran and Washington, he added, with several rounds of communication having taken place. Pakistan's interior minister was in Tehran on Wednesday. Six weeks since a fragile ceasefire came into force, talks to end the war have shown little progress, while soaring oil prices have raised concern over inflation and the impact on the global economy. Trump is also under pressure at home ahead of midterm elections in November, with his approval rating dropping close to its lowest level since he returned to the White House on the surge in fuel prices. "Believe me, if we don't get the right answers, it goes very quickly. We're all ready to go," Trump told reporters at Joint Base Andrews. "Asked how long he would wait, Trump said, "It could be a few days, but it could go very quickly." Trump reiterated his determination not to allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. "We're in the final stages of Iran. We'll see what happens. Either have a deal or we're going to do some things that are a little bit nasty, but hope-

fully that won't happen," Trump told reporters earlier in the day. "Ideally, I'd like to see few people killed, as opposed to a lot. We can do it either way."

Earlier, Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned against renewed attacks. "If aggression against Iran is repeated, the promised regional war will extend beyond the region this time," it said in a statement. Iran submitted its latest offer to the U.S. this week. Tehran's descriptions suggest it largely repeats terms Trump previously rejected, including demands for control of the Strait of Hormuz, compensation for war damage, lifting of sanctions, release of frozen assets and the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Supertankers carrying 6 million barrels Middle East crude exit Strait of Hormuz via Iran transit route

CHINESE TANKERS CROSS STRAIT The Strait of Hormuz, which carried a fifth of oil and liquefied natural gas shipments before the war, has been all but closed since the war began in the most serious disruption to global energy supplies in history. On Wednesday, Iran released a map showing a "controlled maritime zone" at the strait and said transit would require authorisation from an authority set up to control the area. It says it aims to reopen the strait to friendly countries that abide by its terms. That could potentially include fees for access, which Washington says would be unacceptable. Two Chinese supertankers carrying a total of around 4 million barrels of oil exited the strait on Wednesday, while a South Korean tanker with 2 million barrels of crude loaded in Kuwait was also crossing the strait in cooperation with Iran. Shipping monitor Lloyd's List said at least 54 ships had transited the strait last week, about double the previous week. Iran said 26 ships had crossed in the past 24 hours, still only a fraction of the 125 to 140 daily passages before the war. U.S.-Israeli bombing killed thousands of people in Iran before the ceasefire. Israel has also killed thousands more and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes in Lebanon, which it invaded in pursuit of the Iran-backed Hezbollah armed group. Iranian strikes on Israel and neighbouring Gulf states have killed dozens of people. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said their war aims were to curb Iran's support for regional militias, dismantle its nuclear programme, destroy its missile capabilities and make it easier for Iranians to topple their rulers. But Iran has so far retained its stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium, and its ability to threaten neighbours with missiles, drones and proxy militias. Its clerical rulers, who put down a mass uprising at the start of the year, have faced no sign of organised opposition since the war began.

UN backs world court climate opinion; U.S. among few to oppose



WASHINGTON, - The United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday voted 141-8 to adopt a resolution backing a world court opinion that countries have a legal obligation to address climate change, with the world's biggest historical emitter the United States among those opposing it. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the vote, in which 28 countries abstained, underscored that governments are responsible for protecting citizens from the "escalating climate crisis." Jumpstart your morning with the latest legal news delivered straight to your inbox from The Daily Docket newsletter. Sign up here.

"I welcome the adoption of the General Assembly

resolution on the ICJ's advisory opinion on climate change – a powerful affirmation of international law, climate justice, science & the responsibility of states to protect people from the escalating climate crisis," he said in a post on X. The resolution, brought by the Pacific island Vanuatu, affirms a July 2025 advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that states are obligated to reduce fossil fuel use and tackle global warming. While not legally binding, the opinion is expected to be cited in climate-related legal cases worldwide. The United States joined Saudi Arabia, Russia, Israel, Iran, Yemen, Liberia and Belarus in opposing the resolution. COP31 climate summit host Turkey, India, and oil producers Qatar and Nigeria were among those abstaining.

The Trump administration has removed the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement and other major environmental accords, and has pursued policies to boost fossil fuel production. "The resolution includes inappropriate political demands relating to fossil fuels," U.S. Deputy Ambassador to the UN Tammy Bruce said, adding that Washington saw no basis for requiring the secretary-general to report on the legal issues raised. Vishal Prasad, director of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, which led the campaign for an ICJ opinion, called the vote a commitment to "making it a reality."

Trump warns Iran against nuclear weapons during Coast Guard Academy speech

Washington: President Donald Trump used a commencement address at the US Coast Guard Academy to praise the graduating class, defend his administration's immigration and economic policies, and issue fresh warnings to Iran, saying Tehran would never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon. Addressing the graduating class of 2026 in New London, Connecticut, on Wednesday (local time), Trump described the United States as "the hottest country anywhere in the world" and told cadets they were entering service at a moment of renewed American strength.

"We will not let Iran have a nuclear weapon. That's all. It's very simple," Trump said. "They will not have a nuclear weapon, and they want to make a deal so badly." Trump said the US had "hit them very hard" and added: "We may have to hit them even harder, but maybe not." The President repeatedly linked the Coast Guard's recent operations to US efforts against Iran, illegal narcotics trafficking and maritime enforcement. He said Coast Guard tactical teams had helped seize sanctioned Iranian oil vessels and claimed the service played "an important role in Operation Epic Fury to ensure that the Iranian regime never obtains a nuclear weapon".

Trump also highlighted maritime interdictions and anti-drug missions, saying the Coast Guard had seized "over 206 million lethal doses of illicit narcotics" since he returned to office. He called the service central to what he described as a maritime "Wall of Steel". In remarks blending military praise with campaign-style political rhetoric, Trump attacked the previous administration's border policies, claiming the US had gone "from the worst border in history to the strongest border we've ever had". He also promoted his tariff policies and manufacturing agenda, saying: "We have \$18 trillion being invested in our country." Trump argued that tariffs were bringing semiconductor and automobile manufacturing back to the United States. Throughout the speech, Trump frequently broke from prepared remarks to interact with cadets and praise individual achievements. He recognised Distinguished Graduate Matthew Lanzilotta for achieving the highest military and academic scores in the class and invited fitness standout Thomas Rhodes to the stage after describing him as the only cadet to earn perfect scores on every fitness test for four consecutive years. Trump also highlighted Mike Kedish, whom he described as "the first Coast Guard Academy graduate to ever go straight from the core of cadets into the Coast Guard



US President Donald Trump used his commencement speech at the Coast Guard Academy to praise graduating cadets, defend his immigration and economic policies, and warn Iran against pursuing nuclear weapons. He also highlighted Coast Guard operations, anti-drug missions and Arctic infrastructure investments.

special forces".

The President praised Coast Guard rescue operations during hurricanes and natural disasters and called the service "the only service explicitly dedicated to saving lives". He said Coast Guard personnel had saved more than 5,200 lives in the past year and assisted over 19,000 people to safety. Trump also announced major investments in Coast Guard infrastructure, including new cutters, helicopters and icebreakers. He said the US was working with Finland to develop a larger fleet of Arctic icebreakers. "Russia has 48, and we have one very old one," he said. "We're making 11 total." The Coast Guard Academy in New London is one of the five US federal service academies and trains officers for the maritime branch of the armed forces. Graduates are commissioned as ensigns in the Coast Guard upon completion of their studies. Trump, who previously addressed the academy during his first term, became the first US president to deliver a second commencement address at the institution. During the speech, he repeatedly praised the cadets' discipline, resilience and patriotism, telling them: "You will fight, fight, fight, and you will win, win, win."

Air India pilot dies of heart attack hours after medical test: What triggers a cardiac episode without warning?



Aviation medical examinations cannot always predict the precise moment when an apparently stable cardiovascular system becomes unstable. Aviation medical examinations cannot always predict the precise moment when an apparently stable cardiovascular system becomes unstable. (File Photo) The death of an Air India first officer in Bali this week has unsettled far more than the aviation community. Here was a 40-year-old pilot, who was medically cleared pre-flight, operated within prescribed duty limits, completed an eight-hour flight, with no publicly known history of disease. He had checked into his hotel during a routine layover, complained of discomfort, had a heart attack and could not be revived despite being rushed to hospital. So how does someone pronounced fit enough to command an aircraft die of a cardiac event hours later? "The uncomfortable reality is that a heart attack comes like an earthquake, without prior notice, even in people who have every outward marker of health. An electrocardiogram (ECG) may appear normal in a resting state even when the arteries are blocked 70 per cent. So the plaque could rupture and blood would clot around it, creating a bigger block and triggering a heart attack. Besides, there could be an undiagnosed condition, a family history or other behaviour-induced risk factors like lack of sleep and stress, all of which can trigger a chain reaction," says Dr Ranjan Shetty, lead cardiologist and medical director, Sparsh Hospital, Bengaluru. Speaking to The Indian Express, he says, "Just tame your risk factors aggressively." Excerpts:

Can long-haul flying be a trigger if the patient has other risk factors?

The reduced air pressure and oxygen levels in the cabin can stress the heart, while dehydration causes blood to thicken, increasing the risk of clots. Dehydration alters electrolyte levels (potassium and sodium), which are crucial for maintaining a steady heart rhythm and may lead to irregular heart beats or arrhythmia. These electrical impulses could go awry and stop the heart suddenly, what we call sudden cardiac arrest. Long-haul flights of 8–10 hours in-

crease the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) which can lead to a pulmonary embolism (a clot traveling to the lungs). Besides, if a person already has unstable or vulnerable plaque, the physiological changes during flight can increase shear stress on vessel walls, leading to plaque rupture and subsequent heart attack. The risk of cardiovascular events, including potential ruptures, is highest 24-48 hours after arrival due to the body recovering from the stressors.

Why a medical clearance is not a guarantee against sudden heart attack

Aviation medical examinations are designed to identify overt abnormalities — structural defects of the heart, uncontrolled hypertension, rhythm disorders or established disease serious enough to compromise operational safety. What they cannot always predict is the precise moment when an apparently stable cardiovascular system becomes unstable. Even an ECG only records about 10 seconds of electrical activity. If your heart receives adequate blood flow during those 10 seconds, the ECG will appear normal.

Why are younger people getting heart attacks despite leading disciplined lives?

Stress is one reason. Sometimes there is the cumulative physiological burden of sustained high-alert functioning. In professions such as aviation, the body often operates under a low but persistent elevation of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. Over time, these can promote inflammation, elevate blood pressure, and increase clotting tendency, all of which make vulnerable plaques more dangerous. Sleep disruption is another invisible accelerant. Even when duty rosters comply with regulations, circadian disruption exacts a biological cost. Irregular sleep triggers inflammation, destabilises blood pressure regulation and leads to wear and tear. Then there is dehydration, often underestimated in commercial flights. Reduced cabin humidity, irregular hydration patterns and post-flight fatigue can increase blood viscosity and impose additional stress on the cardiovascular system. Genetics may be the deepest hidden factor of all. A person may carry substantial inherited cardiac risk and not know about it because his parameters are within range.

What about prevention?

If leading a high stress life, go for calcium scoring to assess plaque deposits, continuous rhythm monitoring, and deeper family-history mapping. This will be alongside routine hypertension and blood lipid, kidney and liver function tests. Sometimes the heart offers no warning at all. It passes every test, performs every task demanded of it, and then, in the space between one ordinary hour and the next, fails. That's why regular monitoring of markers, lifestyle correction and sleep hygiene are a must.

Screen time linked to autism signs by age 3, says AIIMS study

ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting brain development, characterised by persistent challenges in social communication, interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors. ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting brain development, characterised by persistent challenges in social communication, interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors. (Image generated using AI) If you have been exposing your infant to colourful cartoons on devices, hoping they would be distracted and finish their meals, that screen time could affect their brain. A study by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi has found that children exposed to higher screen time before the age of one were more likely to show signs of autism by the age of three.

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) not only showed earlier and more problematic digital media use than peers but also had higher rates of sleep problems and reduced physical activity. ASD is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting brain development, characterised by persistent challenges in social communication, interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors. It is considered a "spectrum" because symptoms, severity, and abilities vary widely, ranging from individuals needing significant support to those who are highly independent. Dr Sheffali Gulati, professor of paediatric neurology at AIIMS Delhi, said, "The findings will help us develop structured, ASD-specific screen-time guidelines and caregiver counselling norms. The study clearly shows that exposing infants to screens before 18 months can have consequences. Future research should track people over time, use brain scans and measure hormones like melatonin and dopamine to better understand how biological changes happen." Simultaneously, there should be emphasis on balanced digital exposure and physical activity.

The AIIMS study was conducted on 250 children aged between three and six years, including 150 children with autism and 100 children with normal development milestones. They found that children with autism had higher scores for media addiction, lower scores for sleep and physical activity. The study is currently in the process of publication. Dr Gulati said that previous international research also supports this association. "A large 2022 study in JAMA



Paediatrics', involving over 84,000 mother-child pairs, found that longer screen time at one year of age was significantly associated with ASD at three years," she added. Multiple meta-analyses have similarly shown a strong association between early screen exposure (especially between ages 0 to 5 years) and increased likelihood of autism, with longer duration of screen time linked to higher risk.

Dr Gulati said that screen time falls under environmental triggers of autism, alongside genetic and epigenetic or environmental influences. "Autism has a genetic basis with heritability patterns seen in twin studies, but environmental exposures such as pollution, pesticides, parental age, and lifestyle factors also play a role by influencing genes," she added. Dr Gulati stressed that early identification is crucial. "Signs can be detected even in the first year of life, such as lack of eye contact, not responding to name, delayed speech, or loss of acquired language. Children with autism may also focus on some parts of a toy or item rather than playing with them. The term 'spectrum' means every child is different. Not all children show the same signs, and the severity also varies widely," she explained. She further argued for early screening and intervention because brain plasticity is highest in the first three years, leading to better outcomes. She pointed out that the prevalence of autism is rising globally. "Older Indian data suggested about one in 89 children, but newer international estimates, including recent CDC data, indicate much higher prevalence. The WHO estimates around 1 in 100 globally," she said.

World unprepared for another pandemic, says Ex-NIH director, expresses worry at mRNA research being scaled back in US

The world is unprepared for another pandemic like Covid-19 in the next one decade, Dr Francis Collins, the longest serving director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the main government agency for public health research in the United States, has said. "I don't have a better crystal ball than anyone else about what the next major threat to public health will be. People say, statistically, another pandemic is likely to occur within the next couple of decades. I hope it doesn't arrive soon, because at the moment, we are not well prepared to respond to it," Dr Collins said.

The physician-geneticist, noted for his landmark discoveries of disease genes and leadership of the International Human Genome Project, was responding to queries at a recent virtual interaction with reporters and incoming Fellows of the Health Coverage Fellowship at Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health.

The interaction was moderated by Larry Tye who directs the Center for Health Communication's Health Coverage fellowship at Harvard T H Chan School of Public

Health. On a query by The Indian Express as to which global health issue worries him the most, Dr Collins categorically said: HIV. "We have highly effective treatments, but no cure. These treatments only work if people can actually access them. With recent disruptions to programmes like PEPFAR and USAID, that access is being threatened, meaning people may once again die from a disease we know how to manage," he said. Six years since Covid-19 pandemic began, Collins said he was worried by the fact that mRNA vaccine research, aimed at pandemic preparedness, had been scaled back in the United States. "I think it leaves us in a very vulnerable position," he said, explaining that one of the key advantages of the mRNA technology was the speed with which it could be developed.

"It (mRNA technology) allows for rapid vaccine design, as we saw during the response to SARS-CoV2. In that case, the Moderna vaccine design was completed at the NIH Vaccine Research Centre within about 48 hours after the viral sequence was released by a Chinese scientist on January 10, 2020," he said. He said traditional vaccine development methods are slower and, in a fast-mov-

Weight-loss drug semaglutide has a surprising benefit: It may help people drink less, says Lancet study



Dr Anoop Misra says GLP-1-based agents like semaglutide not only aid weight loss but may also reduce harmful alcohol consumption. (Photo generated using AI) Dr Anoop Misra says GLP-1-based agents like semaglutide not only aid weight loss but may also reduce harmful alcohol consumption. Semaglutide, the novel drug that regulates blood sugar and aids weight loss by mimicking a hormone that slows digestion, reduces appetite and increases fullness, can reduce alcohol consumption, too, according to a new study. The findings, which were based on analysis of people with obesity (body mass index of 30 or higher) and alcohol dependence, have been published in The Lancet.

"The results suggest that semaglutide not only affects appetite but also influences the biological mechanisms underlying addiction," says Professor Anders Fink-Jensen, principal investigator of the study from the Copenhagen Research Centre for Mental Health at Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg Hospital. "This opens the door to complementing existing treatments for alcohol use disorder with a GLP-1 receptor-targeted approach," he adds. Alcohol use disorder accounts for 5% of deaths worldwide annually, and there

is an urgent need for new treatments. According to Prof Fink-Jensen, a lower price after patent expiration of semaglutide means that the drug can be accessed by people with lower incomes. Dr Anoop Misra, chairman, Fortis C-DOC for Diabetes and Allied Sciences, concurs, saying the dual problems of obesity and alcohol misuse in India's urban and semi-urban areas are intersecting. "This new study highlights a promising therapeutic convergence: GLP-1-based agents like semaglutide not only aid weight loss but may also reduce harmful alcohol consumption," he adds.

In this randomised clinical trial, 108 patients were assigned to receive either a weekly injection of semaglutide — in this case, Wegovy — or a placebo. Both groups also received psychotherapy targeting their alcohol use disorder. At baseline, participants reported an average of 17 heavy drinking days — defined as consuming at least 60 grams of alcohol for men and 48 grams for women — within the past 30 days. After six months, patients treated with semaglutide reduced their number of heavy drinking days to an average of five days per month, compared to nine days in the placebo group. The treatment was also associated with reduced overall alcohol consumption, more alcohol-free days, fewer drinks on drinking days and lower alcohol cravings. First author Mette Kruse Klausen explains that this is a patient group with a high disease burden and a substantial risk of both physical and mental complications. "Reducing the most harmful drinking pattern could make a meaningful difference for patients," he says. Despite decades of research, only three medications are approved for alcohol use disorder, underscoring the need for novel treatments. Anuradha Mascarenhas is a Senior Editor at The Indian Express, based in Pune. With a career spanning three decades, she is one of the most respected voices in Indian journalism regarding healthcare, science and environment and research developments.

'My patient wasn't losing weight on Mounjaro. Then came the fake drug bust': Doc seeks advisory on identifying real drug

Diabetologist Anoop Misra, who had been treating a 30-year-old for obesity with the weight-loss injectable drug tirzepatide (sold as Mounjaro), was surprised when the latter didn't lose as much weight. "He had been on the medication for about two months but I didn't see the change I expected despite a third dose escalation," says the chairman of Fortis C-DOC Hospital for Diabetes and Allied Sciences, New Delhi. Speaking about his non-responder patient with The Indian Express, Dr Misra says, "The patient began questioning the drug after hearing that a particular pharmacy might be dispensing fake drugs. While I dismissed his fears, saying such claims could be untrue, the lack of expected weight loss was concerning. This was my first patient who had reported such an anomaly."

Then the seizure of counterfeit versions of Mounjaro KwikPen worth Rs 56 lakh in Gurugram exposed a racket that was manufacturing and selling the injections through illegal channels. That's when he recalled a similar concern raised by another patient in Gurugram about two to three weeks earlier. "I had dismissed his fear too, assuring that the drug was internationally manufactured to high standards. But the recent case has introduced some doubt, making it harder for me to confidently reassure patients," says Dr Misra. So, he has sought clear guidance from regulators such as the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on identifying genuine batches of the anti-obesity drug tirzepatide, warning that laxity would mean that patients would be at risk from counterfeit supplies.

In his recent post on X, Dr Misra wrote, "@CDSCO (CDSCO) should clearly tell all of us who are prescribing Mounjaro how to identify fake batches." Or else the efficacy of the drugs, which have been proven to control obesity and reduce risk factors of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), would be compromised. "I strongly urge the Government of India and CDSCO to issue a physician-facing advisory on identifying genuine tirzepatide — covering packaging, pen device features and supply chain verification — so that our patients receive full therapeutic benefits without harm," he says. Dr Misra feels that in the absence of an official advisory, doctors are left relying on unverified videos and social media discussions, which are not sufficient to establish authenticity. "If there is a clear advisory, we can identify it ourselves. Clinicians could also guide pharmacists and advise patients on how to check their medicines," he adds. Such clarity, he feels, is especially important, given the high costs of these drugs, which are challenging for patients, and the potential risks posed by counterfeit products. Dr Misra says that while the CDSCO has issued advisories on who is authorized to prescribe such drugs, a similar communication focused on identifying genuine batches would be useful. "Doctors would rely on and disseminate guidance that comes from credible government sources," he says. He also cautions users against depending on information from AI tools or social media without verification, stressing that only authoritative guidance can resolve the confusion. Why identifying fake drugs is difficult



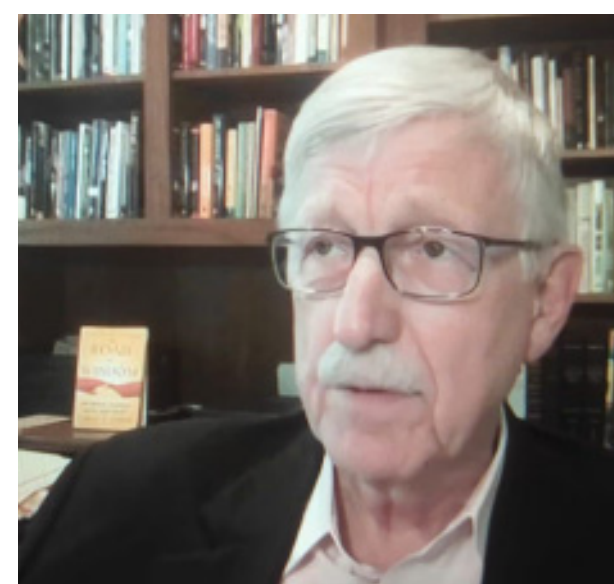
According to Dr Ravindra Goswami, Professor of Endocrinology, AIIMS Delhi, identifying fake weight loss drugs is extremely difficult, even for doctors, because counterfeit products can look identical to genuine ones and are sometimes sold unknowingly through otherwise reputable pharmacies. "Fake drugs are not a new problem and there have been earlier instances where even complex medicines, including biologics, were reportedly refilled into discarded bottles and resold, making detection very challenging. Because of this, simply issuing guidelines on visual identification may not be very effective," he says. Instead, he emphasises stronger enforcement. "Although laws and regulations already exist, they are not sufficient unless strictly implemented. The focus should be on cracking down on supply chains, tracing the source of such drugs, breaking criminal networks and ensuring strict policing. Those involved in selling fake medicines should face very severe punishment. Without strong deterrence, the problem will persist," he adds. Dr Goswami also insists on strictness in ensuring the cold chain for drug storage. This is particularly critical for injectable anti-obesity drugs such as tirzepatide because they are temperature-sensitive biological molecules that need to be stored within a tightly regulated range, usually between 2°C and 8°C. Any break in this temperature-controlled supply chain — during transport, storage at warehouses, at the pharmacy, or even after purchase — can degrade the active compound, reducing its potency or rendering it ineffective. Unlike many conventional tablets, such degradation is often invisible: the pen may look intact, the liquid may appear normal, and there may be no obvious signs that the medicine has lost efficacy. How counterfeit drugs impact patients If the product is counterfeit, it may contain no active ingredient at all or even have contaminants. If it has been exposed to improper temperatures, it may become partially inactive while appearing genuine. In both situations, the patient may continue injecting it under the assumption that treatment is working, only to experience poor weight loss, unstable blood sugar control or unexpected side effects.

At one level, patients may simply fail to lose weight or achieve metabolic control, allowing obesity-related complications such as worsening diabetes, hypertension and fatty liver disease to progress unchecked. At another, counter-

ing pandemic, time is critical. "The pandemic tends not to sneak up on you. It hits you hard," Dr Collins said. He also expressed deep concern about the way in which widespread polarisation, distrust, misinformation and disinformation shaped public perception and response during Covid-19.

That experience may leave populations more sceptical in the future. In case there is a severe influenza pandemic similar to the one that spread in 1918, one with high mortality even among young people and without an immediately available vaccine or effective treatment, again we would have to rely on traditional public health measures such as isolation, quarantine and masking," he said.

The question is whether the public would be in the mood to do that or is everybody so jaded at this point that it will be very hard to implement these standard approaches. I am really worried about this," he said. "So, both in terms of our vaccine and public health response, I think we are worse off than we were in the early days of 2020, in terms of being ready to handle what comes along," he said.



Fireworks explosion that killed 16 in Kerala: Bound by faith, economics and a way of life



THE FIRST thing you notice walking into the house that Sathesh P?built is what he didn't. The bedroom is finished. So are the living room and verandah. The kitchen, halfway done. Beyond that are cement walls left bare, floors that have never been tiled, another bedroom that exists only as an outline. He had been working on the house for years. On the wall of the bedroom that he did finish is a pencil scrawl, "Soregam". A child's spelling for "swargam" or heaven, written with the kind of confidence children have before they begin to doubt themselves. She had written it on the wall her father's shirts hang. Her father, Sathesh, died after fireworks assembled in a field for a temple festival exploded in Mundathicode village, Thrissur, on April 21, killing him and 15 others.

The cause of the explosion, one of the deadliest fireworks tragedies in the state's history, is still under investigation. Every April, on a single night in the central Kerala town of Thrissur, two rival temple committees stage what is widely considered India's loudest, most extravagant fireworks display, the climax of a centuries-old festival called Pooram, held on the grounds of the Vadakkunnathan temple, around 15 km from Mundathicode. The competition between the two committees, Thiruvambady and Paramekkavu, is the engine of the spectacle. Each side hires its own contractor to prepare the show, and the contest is settled in the sky and on the ground at dawn, judged by a crowd of lakhs and litigated for months afterwards on television and in WhatsApp groups. The fireworks have to be loud enough to make your ribs vibrate, the sky-flowers wide enough to remember. Sathesh, 46, was Thiruvambady's licensed contractor. The standard he was working towards has its own phrase in Thrissur: garbham kalakki, crackers loud enough to make a pregnant woman's womb convulse.

Thrissur fireworks explosion Kerala, Thrissur Pooram fireworks accident, Mundathicode fireworks unit blast deaths, Kerala fireworks factory explosion news, Virudhunagar fireworks factory blast Tamil Nadu, Explosives Act violations fireworks India, Thrissur Pooram festival fireworks tragedy, Pinarayi Vijayan relief compensation victims, Puttingal Devi temple fireworks disaster reference, magisterial inquiry Thrissur explosion, illegal fireworks assembly unit Kerala, fireworks safety regulations India, Indian express The field in Mundathicode where fireworks assembled in a field exploded on April 21 Sathesh, by every account, was a gentle man. The kind, his wife said, who could not hurt a fly. He drank a bit at night, which in these parts is not more unusual than drinking tea. When he was preparing a show, he took a vrutham, the oath men take before doing something religious — no alcohol, right conduct. "For him, it was like a puja," said a veteran Thrissur fireworks contractor who knew him, requesting that he not be named. Joshi lived next to the unused rice field that doubled as Sathesh's makeshift manufacturing unit in Mundathicode. He heard what felt like an earthquake, knew what it was, and ran. Sangeetha, a JCB operator working in a neighbouring field, waited for the secondary explosions to subside, then drove his machine towards the smoke and used the bucket to carve a path wide enough for fire engines to follow. By then, Joshi found Sathesh. "When I tried to lift him..." he said, and could not continue. His hands had touched what fire had done to the body and had no words to describe it. Joshi and the others drove the living, or the barely living, to hospital. One man was conscious enough to beg for his life. By the time the rescue teams arrived, there was nothing left to do but walk the ground. A hand here, a torso somewhere else.

Sathesh's house, within a few kilometres of the field, felt the tremor. Praji, his wife, was at home resting after a long day of cooking for the workers. The unit's economics were tight, and the meals came from the contractor's family kitchen, prepared by the women, who often worked till midnight or 1 am. "I ran out and saw the smoke in the sky," she said. "I knew immediately it was all over." The family rushed to Thrissur Medical College, where they were briefed by Dr Padmakumar. He told them that Sathesh had been brought in with burns that had affected even his internal organs. His right knee was mangled, his left leg fractured. Praji was advised not to see her husband in the condition he was in. He died four days later.

Praji, who works as a helper at a ration shop in the neighbourhood, spent most of this week lying on a yellow mat against the living room wall, a brass lamp lit beside her, two plastic bottles of lamp oil at her feet. Tradition asks this of the woman of the house in the five days before sanchayanam, the post-funeral gathering of the ashes. The photograph of Sathesh's father hangs high on the living room wall, garlanded, decorated with a small electric flame. Kamalakshi, Sathesh's mother, silver-haired and in a white sari, sat in a corner. Asked how long the trade had been running in the family, the mother looked up at the photo and said, "a long time". Sathesh's father had done this work, his grandfather too. The elderly woman and her brother Subramanian worked it out together and arrived at 45 years as a number that felt about right. The family had lost other members to the trade. Subramanian recounted how an uncle had once gone to inspect an amittu, a sky-flower charge, that had failed to explode. It went off just then and took his head. Another, weighed down by debt, was said to have laid himself down on top of one as it went off. When guests arrive, Praji sits up. She is, if anything, more composed than the men in the room, who keep returning to the question of tradition and money in a way that suggests they cannot stress the first enough or quite believe how little the second amounts to.

Following the Puttingal disaster of April 2016, in which an unauthorised display at a temple in Kollam killed more than a hundred people, the state cracked down on contractors across Kerala. Sathesh lost his licence and was out of work for eight years. "Even when he was jobless, he didn't really go for anything else," Praji said. He got the licence back only three years ago, and was making steady progress to finish the house. Thrissur fireworks explosion Kerala, Thrissur Pooram fireworks accident, Mundathicode fireworks unit blast deaths, Kerala fireworks factory explosion news, Virudhunagar fireworks factory blast Tamil Nadu, Explosives Act violations fireworks India, Thrissur Pooram festival fireworks tragedy, Pinarayi Vijayan relief compensation victims, Puttingal Devi temple fireworks disaster reference, magisterial inquiry Thrissur explosion, illegal fireworks assembly unit Kerala, fireworks safety regulations India, Indian express "Soregam (swargam or heaven)," Sathesh's daughter scrawled on a wall next to where her father's shirts hung Festival contractors like Sathesh are paid only at the end, the fireworks veteran in Thrissur said, unlike a band set or a drama troupe, who take most of their money upfront. To fund each show, Sathesh borrowed. Praji pointed at the gold chain around her neck and the ring on her finger: "except these, everything else is pawned." V S Sunilkumar, CPI(M) leader and a former minister from Thrissur who has spent years close to Pooram and the men who build it, said, "These contractors are not engineers, they are artists. They work from knowledge handed down. Some of it, they say, is written on palm leaf manuscripts." The grammar of these displays is very localised. Those from Thrissur, for instance,

like crackers that sound loud rather than burn bright. "Kuzhi minnal, dynamite, gund, these are all items unique to this place. They are not made in Sivakasi," he said, referring to the Tamil Nadu town that supplies most of India's fireworks. While much of it is made in Mundathicode, some are assembled from raw material brought in from Sivakasi, with workers cutting, filling and fusing the components by hand. The amittu, the sky-flower, has to be perfected at the manufacturing stage itself, the design arranged on the ground in the exact way it should bloom in the sky. Sunilkumar said Sathesh was paid in a different currency: "Janakootam nalathu parayanam. Committee kaar nalathu parayanam." The crowd should say it was good. The committee should say it was good. That is what matters. Except, when things go wrong, people like Sathesh end up paying. Migrant workers from poorer northern states, lumped together locally as "Bengalis", are not hired for the work in Mundathicode. Subramanian said the work is too technical, too wrapped in local ritual to feel like menial labour. The wages are around Rs 800 a day, lower than what construction work pays, the risk higher by any measure. Yet, getting hired is harder than the wages would suggest, with entry by recommendation from someone already inside.

So who qualifies? Elderly women, mostly, who would otherwise go for NREGA work and find this slightly better paid and seasonal enough to fit around the rest of their lives. They sit and roll wicks and stick stickers the way an earlier generation rolled beads, exchanging gossip, eating the meals provided. For elderly women, this is a means of livelihood. For those much older, it is their way of life. Thrissur fireworks explosion Kerala, Thrissur Pooram fireworks accident, Mundathicode fireworks unit blast deaths, Kerala fireworks factory explosion news, Virudhunagar fireworks factory blast Tamil Nadu, Explosives Act violations fireworks India, Thrissur Pooram festival fireworks tragedy, Pinarayi Vijayan relief compensation victims, Puttingal Devi temple fireworks disaster reference, magisterial inquiry Thrissur explosion, illegal fireworks assembly unit Kerala, fireworks safety regulations India, Indian express The field in Mundathicode where fireworks assembled in a field exploded on April 21 And then there are the young men. To understand why they show up, it helps to understand where they show up from. Mundathicode is less than a hundred kilometres from Kochi by road, but they could be different countries. Kochi is where the state's aspirations have settled. Drugs are seized in quantities measured by mothership size; billionaires fly in by helicopter; traffic chokes roads because there is always money to spend. Mundathicode is where Malayalam cinema can still credibly place the older Kerala of rice fields and cow-dung cakes drying against compound walls. Eating at a restaurant is a labourer's habit; everyone else cooks at home. Many of the men who used to live here are now in the Gulf, or coming back, or going back again. This is not, in the standard Indian sense, terrible poverty. There is a school and a hospital. But the wealth has come unevenly, and Mundathicode sits at the uneven end. Kochi is two hours away by bus, close enough for the village to know exactly what it does not have. The same phone that plays Pooram footage back to the village that built the fireworks also pipes in reels of Kochi's nightlife. For most of the year, the village watches the city. On Pooram night, the city watches back. Pooram is the one thing the deep interior produces that Kochi stops to look at. The men who build it — the contractor, the crew in his shed — are for those hours inside the only spectacle the city cannot stage for itself. "Rajesh, Vishnu, Manikandan, Hari," Sunilkumar said, listing the dead. "They were not coming for the money." One was the makeup man for a leading actress, another was a councillor's brother. Asked why they came to work in Mundathicode, Sunilkumar recalled Giri, the councillor, saying, "povathirikan patila chetta". Couldn't stay away.

Sunilkumar said the architecture of Thrissur's inner life rests on a handful of obsessions: aana kambam, padakkam, puli kali, pooram (elephants, fireworks, dancers dressed as tigers, the festival itself). The young men have grown up watching the festival. Now, WhatsApp statuses and reels keeping the noise going all year. Somewhere along the way, the watching became wanting, and the wanting became showing up. Some end up in fields like the one in Mundathicode. In the days after the explosion, the spectacle they had given their lives to was being negotiated behind closed doors. The festival went ahead on April 26. It has been held since the 18th century and 15 deaths did not change that, except in scale. The Kudamattam, the competitive umbrella display between the two temple sides, was reduced from an hour to 15 minutes. The fireworks were a more complicated matter. Each temple trust holds a licensed magazine permitting 2,000 kilograms of explosives per display. Investigators say Sathesh's unit had been storing well above permitted quantities when it exploded. The day after, the Paramekkavu operator was issued a stop memo for the same reason. So there were no fireworks to display. A crowd of lakhs still came, and assembled in front of an empty sky. That over-storage is the regulatory fact at the heart of the case, and it complicates the portrait. The same man Praji described as gentle, the man the veteran said did his job as if it were "puja", was also a man working past the limits printed on his licence. The investigation will assign blame in its own time. What is already clear is that the ceiling was set at one number and the show being asked of him required another.

Thrissur fireworks explosion Kerala, Thrissur Pooram fireworks accident, Mundathicode fireworks unit blast deaths, Kerala fireworks factory explosion news, Virudhunagar fireworks factory blast Tamil Nadu, Explosives Act violations fireworks India, Thrissur Pooram festival fireworks tragedy, Pinarayi Vijayan relief compensation victims, Puttingal Devi temple fireworks disaster reference, magisterial inquiry Thrissur explosion, illegal fireworks assembly unit Kerala, fireworks safety regulations India, Indian express Posters in Mundathicode paying respects to Sathesh There were plans, at some point, to bring the fireworks industry under a central manufacturing facility, the kind of institutional support that might have changed what happened in Mundathicode. Sathesh's uncle Subramanian, in the meantime, has been receiving calls from banks to clear his debts totalling, as far as he knew, Rs 8 lakh. The state has announced Rs 14 lakh in compensation. Pledges have come from public figures based in Thrissur. None of it has reached the house yet.

Heatwave crisis needs a vision, not just policy

The India Meteorological Department has warned that the summer of 2026 could be particularly intense, with many parts of the country likely to experience an above-normal number of heatwave days. Heatwaves are unlike sudden disasters such as cyclones or flash floods. They unfold slowly, often building over days or weeks. This means they require sustained planning rather than only emergency response. Recognising this, many Indian cities, districts and states have developed Heat Action Plans (HAPs). These plans play an important role in coordinating responses among government departments through early warning systems, public advisories, and emergency measures. In several cities, they have helped reduce heat-related mortality and illness.

However, as temperatures continue to rise, India now needs to move beyond short-term responses and begin investing in long-term strategies to cool cities in a sustainable way. In this context, the recent recommendation of the 16th Finance Commission to include heatwaves in the list of nationally notified disasters could be a turning point. By recommending their inclusion, the Commission acknowledges that climate change has fundamentally altered India's disaster landscape. This reclassification changes the financial and institutional support available to states. Until now, states could use up to 10 per cent of their State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to provide immediate relief for local disasters, including heatwaves, provided they had notified them as state-specific disasters. With heatwaves recommended for inclusion under the Disaster Management Act, states would now be able to seek support from the larger National Disaster Risk Management Fund as well as their State Disaster Risk Management Funds (SDRMF). This expands fiscal space not only for relief measures but also for financing longer-term resilience and mitigation initiatives.

While the new classification opens up financial resources, the current policy framework remains limited. This is where the real challenge lies. Most Heat Action Plans



continue to focus primarily on short-term measures such as alerts, awareness campaigns and emergency response. They do little to address the structural drivers of heat vulnerability — poor urban design, heat-absorbing construction materials, declining green cover, inefficient cooling systems, and unequal access to thermal comfort. To utilise the available funds effectively, India must strengthen its policy frameworks and provide cities and states with clearer guidance on long-term heat resilience strategies. The National Disaster Management Authority must lead the development of comprehensive frameworks that move beyond relief to support investments in heat mitigation and resilience, such as climate-sensitive planning, expansion of urban green and blue infrastructure, improved building design, infrastructure resilience and sustainable cooling solutions. Equally important is building institutional capacity that enables local governments to design and implement projects that reduce heat risks over time. Stronger coordination between urban planning and disaster management institutions, and better technical support for cities, will be critical to ensure that funds are effectively utilised.

Dropped out of school at 15, skipped college: How this young woman went from Saharanpur to Silicon Valley



Inside, 15-year-old Harshita Arora was glued to her laptop. She had stopped going to school. She had refused to attend family functions, go on trips, and even turned down visits to her grandparents. Years later, what she created inside her room, spending hours and hours behind a screen, would lead her to Silicon Valley. Harshita, now 24, is among the youngest General Partners at Y Combinator, the storied startup accelerator that has backed some of the world's most influential technology companies. Indians making it big in tech — like Sundar Pichai of Google or Satya Nadella of Microsoft — are numerous, going on to become household tales for aspiring parents dreaming the American dream for their children. Harshita's journey, though, didn't follow any of the familiar routes — school, college degrees, predictable milestones. This is her unique story. A life-altering decision Harshita was born to Ravinder Singh Arora, who works in property investment, and Jasvinder Kaur Arora, a homemaker, in 2002. She is their only child. "Our daughter was a simple (child) and a very good student. Always first in the class," Ravinder says. "Her teachers were very happy with her performance. When she was in primary school, a teacher told her mother that this child will do something different." Story continues below. The shift happened in 2016, when Harshita was in Class 9 at Pinewood School in Saharanpur. "She said she didn't want to go to school anymore," her father recalls. "She told us she didn't want to study. She said she was interested in computers."

The family says she initially complained of discomfort, dizziness during assembly, unease in classrooms, which soon turned into flat out refusal. "We were very tense," Jasvinder recalls. "It was a very strange situation." Ravinder remembers how unsettled he was. "... a 15-year-old child had said she doesn't want to go to school anymore. Anybody would have been shocked." They negotiated with her: finish Class 10, try a few more months, reduce subjects. She refused. "I don't want to study SST, Hindi, Sanskrit," she told them. Eventually, her parents relented. "I didn't have any option," her father remembers. "She didn't listen." Looking back, Harshita says that moment was not rebellion but rejection. "A lot of what happens in Indian schools is rote memorisation. It felt pointless to me." The family tried to make arrangements to home-school her but failed. "She wouldn't want to step out of her room. She would literally lock herself inside," Ravinder remembers. "We could do nothing. She was adamant." In her early teens, Harshita discovered programming. A Computer Science teacher introduced her to tools like Scratch and MIT App Inventor — and she was hooked. "I started programming when I was 13," she recalls. "I also read essays by Paul Graham, whose writing on startups and building companies appealed to my creative spirit." She also watched The Social Network, the popular biopic on how Facebook was founded. "It changed what I wanted in life," Harshita remembers. "I decided I was going to be a founder."

Soon, Harshita came up with another plan. "She told us she had been accepted for a programme in Bangalore and she needs to attend the course," Ravinder recalls. "We decided to let her go." For the next few months in 2016, she attended a one-month training programme at Salesforce in Bengaluru, gaining exposure to enterprise software environments and developer ecosystems. Then in 2017, she was selected for LaunchX, a highly selective entrepreneurship programme hosted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "They select only around 70 students," her father says. "The fee was very high, but she received financial support and we paid only about \$1,000." She was in the US for several weeks on a visitor's visa, working on startup ideas with peers from around the world. For the first time, she was

in an environment that mirrored the world she had been building for herself online.

When she returned to India in August of that year, the tension at home remained. "We still didn't understand what she would do next," her father says. "There was no fixed path." Ravinder says that the family was extremely worried about her situation. "My life was very simple," he says. "My father is an advocate, who practices tax law, my brother is also a lawyer and I do property investments. We are a traditional middle class family and we have had a very straightforward life." Over the next six months, Harshita again withdrew into her room and into a life that operated on a different clock. "I didn't go out. I was just coding, reading, learning," she says. "It was extremely YOLO. My father kept asking for a plan and I said, 'I don't have one. I'll figure it out.'" Then, in February 2018, Ravinder says Harshita asked him to check the next day's newspaper. "She said there was something about her in it." Until then, he had little idea what she had been doing. Then he saw it — she had built an app, a cryptocurrency portfolio tracker. It was live on Apple's app store as a paid product, ranking among the top apps in its category. "I was shocked," he says. Harshita remembers his shock vividly: "He said what I made in years, you made in months. His mind was blown." The app was eventually acquired. Harshita along with her parents when they last visited her in San Francisco in December 2025. (Express Photo) Harshita along with her parents when they last visited her in San Francisco in December 2025. (Express Photo)

Doors begin to open. The same year, she received the "Woman of the year" award at the CryptoChicks Hackathon Conference in Toronto, Canada. She had also applied for the O-1 visa to the US, granted to individuals with "extraordinary ability" in fields like technology, science, or business — and was issued one. In 2019, Harshita began working on what would become AtoB, a fintech and logistics startup she co-founded, which focused on fuel cards and payments for the trucking industry. The early days, though, were uncertain. "We had no startup idea," she says. "We were just like, 'what are we going to do?'" For six months, she and her two other co-founders brainstormed. Eventually, they found traction in trucking payments and building financial infrastructure for fleets. The company scaled rapidly, serving tens of thousands of customers and reaching a valuation of around \$800 million. In 2020, she received the Bal Puraskar from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for her work on the cryptocurrency app; she came back to India to receive the award.

From Saharanpur, her father watched this transformation from a distance. "Half the things she says, I don't understand," he admits. "But she kept moving forward. I feel God showed her the way." The distance was also physical. "After 2020, we met her again in 2024," he says. And he noticed what had been lost along the way. "I remember how she used to curl up on my lap, when she was very small," he says. "For me, she is still a child. I couldn't see her childhood. I miss that the most about my daughter. But I am very proud of her." Her mother says, "We don't talk every day. Only on weekends." Jasvinder still remembers evenings spent making snacks for her daughter. "She would have her lunch at 3.30 pm. And then by 5.30, she would say she's hungry again. I would say, 'You just ate!' But I would still make macaroni, sandwiches, fries, cutlets... I miss those evenings a lot." Does Harshita miss home? Her mother says no. "She is very passionate about her work." March 2025 marked another milestone in Harshita's career — she joined Y Combinator as a visiting partner. Then, on April 6 this year, she was promoted to General Partner. "You start as a visiting partner," she says. "If you do well, you get promoted."

Her role now involves identifying and backing early-stage founders, her work days stretching till past midnight. "There's just a lot to do." Outside work, there is little else. "I read about AI, and experiment with tools. I'm not really a hobbies-person," she says. Her advice to young people? "The world is changing very fast," she says. "If you're young and ambitious, you need to stay at the cutting edge. Otherwise, you'll become obsolete." Yet, she does not universalise her own path and advocates going to college. "For me, skipping college worked. But most founders meet their co-founders in college. It gives you time to explore. I had to recreate that, living in hacker houses, studying on my own."

India's high-speed rail dreams taking shape in this nondescript Adivasi village



Nearly 118-km from Mumbai, the innocuous silence of Sakhare village in Palghar is broken by the periodic thumping of massive machinery. The long, white coloured viaduct running over it stands in sharp contrast. The houses of Adivasi may be old and kutcha, yet the village is now the launchpad for one of India's biggest infrastructure projects — the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail corridor, the country's first bullet train project. Spread across 50 acres in this village, it is one of the nine casting yards in Maharashtra set up along the high-speed rail corridor to manufacture the girders that will form the project's viaducts. It is also the site where some of the most technically advanced machines operate round the clock. They are capable of lifting unimaginable weight and are so massive in size that they are visible from every corner of the Sakhare, with the Sahyadri mountains overlooking it.

The blue straddle carrier, visible at a far distance, looks like a machine straight out of the Transformer series. Weighing 380 tonnes and supported by four massive legs mounted on 80 large tyres, it moves slowly across the casting yard while lifting a 1000-tonne and 40 meters large girder of the bullet train project. In the long shot, the suspended girder from its wires appears weightless, like a bird flying with its wings spread. A girder is the precast segment that is placed between two pillars to form the viaduct at elevated level on which the bullet train will run, like most of the metro projects. Of the 508-km high speed rail project, 465-km (92%) is the viaduct, making almost the entire project at the elevated level. The work in Gujarat section (348 km) is almost complete and the work in Mumbai section (156-km) — which was delayed due to land acquisition — has gathered pace. Ajay Mane, in-charge of the casting yard operated by L&T, said daily at least one girder is launched, meaning that they are lifted and placed on the viaduct pillars. "This casting yard will manufacture the girder for 22 kilometers of the total project. It will launch a total of 527 girders for this area. We have been able to launch 58 girders so far," said Mane. A senior official of the National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL) said that for the entire project, around 11,500 girders have to be launched to make the 465-km viaduct out of which, around 8,500 girders have been launched.

"We are launching 7-8 times faster than the Japanese. The light here does not go off anytime, the work goes on round the clock," said the L&T official, as the work is being expedited for the Mumbai section. The first section of the project, from Surat to Bilimora in Gujarat, is slated for completion by August 15, 2027. The entire 508-km project is expected to be ready by December 2029. While progress for the Gujarat section was almost 68%, the progress for the Maharashtra section was only 41% till March 2026. A smaller straddle carrier moves with the 44 tonnes iron cage to begin the girder casting process, which will go on for the next 14 days. "The casting of a girder for the bullet train is very complex and technical. Even though it weighs almost 1,000 tonnes, it is relatively less heavy for its size. This is where design comes into play. It gives the girder such a shape — a rectangular opening in the middle — that it is not that heavy, to ensure that piers don't have to bear so much

weight that there is a danger of it collapsing. At the same time, the design gives it so much strength — 50 MPa (Megapascal) — that it can easily hold the movement of a bullet train over it. If you look at it from below, a girder on the pier looks like a bird flying with open wings," said Satish Chaurasia, a Chief project manager of NHSRCL at the site, as the iron cage is placed in the mould to begin the pouring of concrete.

The ready-mix concrete (RMC) truck, with boom placer mounted over, is lined up from the batching plant at a corner of the casting yard. It is not one or two trucks, it will require 65 trucks of concrete mixture — equivalent to 400-cubic meter concrete — for casting just one girder. For comparison, the roof of an ordinary house typically requires just two to three RMC truckloads. "It will take another 8-10 hours to pour the concrete in the iron cage placed in the mould. After that, we will pour water over it for the curing, like we do in the new houses. This is done so that the girder achieves strength. There is another unique aspect of these girders. While concrete is what is visible, it is the high-tensile wires placed within, stretched almost to their maximum and then locked at both ends, that hold the entire structure together and prevent it from crumbling. In a way, the entire bullet train runs on these wires," explains Chaurasia. Nearly 1,000 employees work at the site, carrying out a series of coordinated activities around the clock. Engineers say such meticulous and complex engineering was last witnessed during the construction of the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link and the Narmada Cable-Stayed Bridge. On one corner of the site, the new girders, after 14-days of strengthening work, are being stacked over one after another by the straddle carrier. The white colour on the girders is not paint, but a chemical compound sprayed on the outer surface to cure it. "Had it not been this chemical compound, we would have had to use thousands of litres of water for the curing and strengthening of one girder. This allows the concrete to retain moisture and prevent cracking by reflecting the sun," said an NHSRCL engineer at the site. Next comes the two 40-meters high Bridge Gantry — equivalent to the height of an 11 floor building. Weighing 350 tonnes each, it moves over a track laid in the yard. The wires suspended from both gantries lift the 1,000 tonnes girder from the stacking area and place it over the girder transported standing on the viaduct, almost 25 meters from the ground. Another massive machine, the girder transporter, with a self-weight of 380 metric tonnes and moved by 216 tyres, runs at a snail's pace along the viaduct carrying a 1,000 tonne girder to the launching area, extending the viaduct already formed through the placement of previous girders. "There is an interesting thing about this entire process. For the railway projects at the elevated level, the load testing is very important and this marks the completion of the project. Here, the load testing is done at the same time a girder is launched. On a girder, a 380 tonnes transporter, plus 1,000 tonnes girder weight moves across the structure. This means that the girders and piers can hold the weight of almost 1,400 tonnes. In the next 100 years, it would not have to hold this much weight, no matter whether the bullet train runs with its fullest passenger capacity or more," said a NHSRCL official. Two kilometers away, the girder which left the Sakhare casting yard is being launched with the help of a blue coloured gantry, weighing 540 tonnes, capable of holding 1,100 tonnes. After around four hours of meticulous exercise, the gantry rightly places the girder between two piers. The siren goes out loud after the completion of the work. An Adivasi man looks at the towering structure from his small house — so physically close, yet a world away from experiencing the journey himself. Almost 54-km from here and close to the Arabian sea, the Boisar station for the high speed rail is taking shape, where the viaduct will eventually connect.

Not just ringworm: India sees rise in severe, drug-resistant fungal infection



That itchy patch you thought was a routine case of ringworm may not be so routine after all. Dermatologists are flagging a rise in difficult-to-treat fungal skin infections in India caused by *Trichophyton indotineae*, a newer strain of fungus that spreads easily, causes extensive itching, and in some cases does not respond to commonly prescribed antifungal medicines. While ringworm is hardly new, this newer strain is making doctors more cautious because it behaves differently from the typical infection many people are familiar with. According to Dr Shitij Goel, Senior Consultant — Dermatology, ShardaCare Healthcity, India has seen an increase in infections caused by this particular fungal strain in recent years. "Yes, in recent years India has seen a rise in difficult-to-treat fungal skin infections caused

India's pitch to US nuclear mission: Scale up capacity, small modular reactors key



Alongside a stepped-up role for the private sector in nuclear plant operations, India is doubling down on its domestic civil nuclear programme based on its mainstay, pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs), and remains open to collaborating with external players to scale up projects built on this technology.

Less than six months after the landmark legislation opened up India's nuclear sector, a visiting high-powered American nuclear delegation has been informed, in meetings with top government functionaries, of New Delhi's two clear objectives following the legal changes: scale up nuclear power to step up base-load capacity, and progressively enter the manufacturing value chain of small modular reactors (SMRs). Based on heavy water and natural uranium, PHWRs are a technology India's nuclear establishment has mastered — but one that is increasingly out of sync with the light water reactors (LWRs), or pressurised water reactors, that are now the most dominant type worldwide. The Americans, Russians and French are among the leaders in LWR technology. The problem with LWRs, from an Indian perspective, is high project costs, which translate into a high per-unit cost of power. As a result, there is a sense in policy circles that PHWRs will remain the main focus, with the government willing to explore possibilities on the fuel front, including the potential for thorium fuel. Any foreign collaboration could largely be limited to SMRs for now, given cost concerns linked to LWRs, an executive who is part of the US delegation told after the first leg of visits concluded in Delhi. The executive said the Indian side communicated a general openness to private participation, alongside the need for funding from foreign sources. SMRs are an area where foreign expertise and funding are being actively sought. India's dominant nuclear technology — PHWRs spanning 220 MWe (megawatt electric) reactors up to newer 700 MWe reactors — has a largely unblemished operational record but has suffered from scalability issues. India's external outreach for nuclear collaborations is driven more by the need for capital than technology, a top government official had indicated at the time of the nuclear Amendments' passage. The import of LWRs at higher cost raises two important concerns: such projects should not end up stunting the growth of indigenous reactor design and production capacities; and higher capital expenditure results in higher tariffs, which must be absorbed un-

der Indian market conditions. The setting up of nuclear reactors at the Jaitapur site in Maharashtra, for instance, has been in limbo because of high tariff concerns, alongside liability concerns flagged earlier by French atomic power major Areva, which also faced its own financial troubles. The liability concerns have been addressed in the new nuclear amendments. The US nuclear 'executive mission' has a twin-pronged brief: take stock of India's nuclear energy landscape after a landmark legislation opened up this sector; communicate the US industry's interest, as well as coordinate US government messaging, on emerging opportunities. It is learnt that foreign funds, including sovereign funds from West Asia, have expressed early interest in part-financing India's stated objectives to scale up nuclear power, including entering the manufacturing value chain of SMRs. SMRs are increasingly seen as important for nuclear energy to remain a commercially competitive option in the future.

Organised by the Washington DC-based Nuclear Energy Institute — a lobby group of America's commercial nuclear energy industry — and the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, the industry delegation held meetings with Union Power Minister Manohar Lal and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, as well as top representatives from states such as Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Over the past 15 months, a handful of American nuclear companies have secured "specific authorisations" from the US government with respect to a restrictive American regulation referred to as "10CFR810" (Part 810 of Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations of the US Atomic Energy Act of 1954). This authorisation permits these companies, subject to conditions, to transfer technology to Indian entities, which is otherwise barred under 810 regulations. Most of the companies that have received this clearance are part of the visiting delegation. The delegation is currently in Mumbai for two days, with meetings scheduled with India's private sector energy players, including Reliance Industries, Adani Group, Tata Power Company, JSW Energy, Vedanta, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consulting Engineers and Hindalco Industries. In December last year, Parliament passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, marking a major shift in how India's tightly-controlled nuclear power sector will be governed. For the first time, the Act enabled private players to enter the operations side of the sector, as well as areas such as fuel management, which had remained under tight public-sector control for decades. The SHANTI Act was passed amid Opposition concerns over private participation and changes to the liability regime — particularly the dilution of provisions fixing responsibility on equipment suppliers in the event of a nuclear accident. The Act replaced two earlier legislations — Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 — and effectively redrew the rules governing India's nuclear power sector, covering who can build and operate plants, how accident liability is capped, the role of the safety regulator, and mechanisms for dispute resolution and compensation.

War overtakes civil unrest as top political violence risk for firms; critical to mitigate global risks in business ecosystems: Allianz report

Businesses are currently more worried about war as a political violence risk than civil unrest, as conflicts in Europe and West Asia disrupt global trade and increase risks for companies' operations and assets, according to Allianz Risk Barometer 2026. In the 'gray zone' between peace and open warfare, threat actors are leveraging technology, criminal networks and disinformation to attack critical infrastructure, high-profile companies and individuals, blurring the lines between state and non-state actors while undermining detection efforts, Munich-based Allianz said in its 'Political violence and civil unrest trends 2026' report.

"Deteriorating social cohesion is contributing to rising civil unrest worldwide, with protests triggered by economic, political, and social concerns," it said. While hardship is a major driver, analysis by Allianz shows unrest is not confined to fragile states, with resilient economies like France and Germany experiencing some of the most frequent protests, it said. Although terrorism fell overall in 2025, it surged in the West, driven by polarization, antisemitism, Islamophobia and far-right activities. "The war in Iran has intensified the terror risk, while extremist groups in sub-Saharan Africa continue to exploit security vacuums. Meanwhile, algorithmic amplification on digital platforms accelerates youth radicalization," Allianz report said. "The world is experiencing one of the most volatile geopolitical periods in our history since the end of World War Two. These are unsettling times. Even before the current conflict in West Asia, the risks posed by political violence and civil unrest had been intensifying, evolving into global challenges that impact companies, communities, and the wider economy," said Thomas Lillielund, CEO, Allianz Commercial. As we navigate this era of heightened uncertainty, understanding the implications of these risks and mitigating them in our interconnected business ecosystems has never been more critical, Lillielund said. Ongoing conflicts, such as the US-Iran conflict, war in Ukraine and other tensions in West Asia, have heightened global security concerns, disrupted trade routes, and strained global alliances, the report said. The rise in unilateral actions, such as the removal of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro, could embolden adversarial states, undermining geopolitical and economic stability through 2026 and beyond. The repercussions of the US-Iran conflict on the political violence and terrorism risk landscape are significant, it said. Notwithstanding the human toll of the conflict, the political violence and terrorism (PVT) insurance market in West Asia has also been severely impacted, with losses concentrated in key sectors like oil, gas and transportation, stated the report. "Damaged infrastructure could take years to repair, and the region's risk assessment has shifted to medium-to-high, with some industries now considered high to extreme. The loss quantum has the potential to result in a costlier event than PVT claims resulting from the war in Ukraine," it said. Meanwhile, height-



ened risk of strikes, riots, and civil unrest is to be expected, particularly in countries heavily reliant on Middle Eastern oil and gas, it said. "Nations with robust mechanisms to manage food and fuel price shocks may mitigate these risks, while others face elevated threats of rationing, unrest, and looting. Businesses impacted by armed conflict face significant challenges, including supply chain disruptions, loss of market access, cyber-attacks, and sabotage," it said. Even before the Iran war, it is estimated that business assets had seen over 20% rise in exposure to conflict over the past five years. "Organized crime is also on the rise, exploiting instability in conflict zones and engaging in cross-border sabotage and other 'gray zone' activities," it said. The US-Iran conflict is also likely to have a significant impact on risk mitigation moving forward, accelerating demand for PVT insurance, but also risk management and supply chain mitigation strategies such as nearshoring and friendshoring and supplier diversification, the report said.

Rupee recovers 41 paise from record low amid easing Iran tensions

Mumbai: The rupee recovered 41 paise from its all-time closing low to 96.45 against US dollar in early trade on Thursday, after US President Donald Trump indicated that negotiations with Iran were entering the final stages. Investors are still gauging the geopolitical risk and oil price sensitivity in the background with any flare-up in the Middle East tensions or spikes in crude, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.25 against the US dollar, then touched 96.45 in early trade, up 41 paise from its all-time lifetime low of 96.86 against the US dollar on Wednesday. On Wednesday, the rupee made a new low of 96.95 and later closed at 96.86 which was also a new closing low as demand for dollars continued with dollar index higher and crude oil prices remaining on the higher side near to USD 110 during the day.

Diabetes timeline: What happens inside the body in the first 10 years after diagnosis

A diabetes diagnosis often feels like a single moment in time, but its impact unfolds gradually inside the body over the years. What makes this condition particularly complex is that much of the early damage is not immediately visible. While blood sugar levels may fluctuate day to day, the long-term effects build silently. In the first decade after diagnosis, the body begins to adapt — and sometimes struggle — with persistently elevated glucose levels. Understanding this timeline is essential, not to alarm but to inform. From early metabolic changes to potential complications involving internal organs, the first ten years can set the tone for long-term health outcomes. With the right interventions, some of these effects can be delayed or even prevented, but it requires clarity on what is happening beneath the surface and when.

Key internal changes happening in the body Kanikka Malhotra, Consultant Dietician & Diabetes Educator, tells indianexpress.com, "Most people assume diabetes is simply about managing sugar levels, but what is actually happening inside the body tells a far more complex story. In the first 5 to 10 years after diagnosis, chronically high blood glucose quietly begins damaging the body's infrastructure from the inside out. She adds that one of the earliest changes happens in the blood vessels. Sugar molecules attach themselves to proteins and fats in a process called glycation, gradually making blood vessels stiffer and narrower. This affects both the large vessels supplying the heart and brain and the tiny capillaries serving the eyes, kidneys and nerves. "The nervous system begins taking hits too, particularly in the feet and hands, often without any obvious symptoms for years. The kidneys start showing early signs of stress. The eyes develop fragile, leaky blood vessels. And running beneath all of this is a steady current of systemic inflammation that silently accelerates the damage, while the pancreas continues losing its ability to produce

insulin on its own."

Which organs are most vulnerable to early damage?

What makes diabetes particularly unforgiving is how quietly it works. By the time most people feel something is wrong, significant internal damage may already have taken place over several years. Malhotra stresses, "The kidneys are often among the first to suffer. High blood sugar puts relentless pressure on their delicate filtering units, and without intervention, this progresses from early warning signs in urine tests to serious kidney disease over time." She adds that the eyes follow a similar silent path. Retinal blood vessels weaken, bleed or grow abnormally, and vision loss can set in well within the first decade if blood sugar remains uncontrolled. The heart and arteries age faster under diabetic conditions, sharply raising the risk of heart attacks and strokes. "The nerves in the feet deteriorate gradually, sometimes to the point where injuries go completely unnoticed, raising the risk of serious infections and amputations. The liver, too, tends to accumulate fat, which worsens insulin resistance and creates a damaging cycle. The sobering reality is that most of this damage builds up in complete silence." The first ten years after a diabetes diagnosis are not just a period of damage; they are genuinely the most powerful window of opportunity to change the trajectory of the disease. Malhotra notes, "Scientists call this the legacy effect, meaning the habits and choices made early on leave a lasting biological imprint on how the disease unfolds for decades to come. Food and nutrition are the most powerful tools available. A plan built around whole grains, vegetables, lean proteins and healthy fats helps stabilise blood sugar, calm inflammation and protect blood vessels. Even a modest weight loss of 5 to 10 percent of body weight can meaningfully improve how the body responds to insulin and reduce pressure on the kidneys, heart and liver."

Jofra Archer opens up on his viral tweet phenomenon: 'Gets a bit much'



GNS News Agency, May 26

There is a running joke on social media that there seems to be a Jofra Archer tweet for everything. A dropped catch, a freak collapse, a political upset, a last-ball finish, even a bizarre IPL moment from years later – somehow, an old post from Archer's account resurfaces and fits the situation uncannily well. Over time, the internet transformed Archer's old tweets into cricket folklore. During the 2019 ODI World Cup, several of his years-old posts went viral because fans felt they had "predicted" major moments from the tournament. The phenomenon returned during IPL seasons too, including when David Miller did not finish a chase for Delhi Capitals and when he smashed four sixes off Lungi Ngidi in 2020. Archer himself, though, insists there is no secret behind the posts. "When you try, it doesn't happen, so just let it happen naturally," Archer told Star Sports with a laugh while speaking about his viral tweets.

The England fast bowler admitted that the constant attention to his past social media activity has become exhausting at times, especially because fans now try to link almost every post to a cricketing event. "If you tweet something that has no relation to cricket, then you've got thousands of people just putting cricket-related stuff under it. It's a task sometimes," Archer said. "If I tweet anything, someone's like, 'I wonder how long this would take to come to pass' and stuff like that. It's funny sometimes, but once in a while, it gets a bit much." There was no frustration in Archer's tone while speaking about it. If anything, he sounded more amused by the strange internet mythology surrounding his account. But he also acknowledged that the joke has slowly changed how he uses social media now. Some of Archer's old tweets have resurfaced outside cricket as well. Earlier this year, one of his old posts even went viral during actor Vijay's political success in Tamil Nadu, further strengthening the internet joke that there is indeed "a Jofra Archer tweet for everything." The pacer also explained that many of the so-called predictions are not nearly as specific as people believe, but instead appear relevant because they can fit different situations naturally. "A lot of them just actually fit pretty seamlessly," Archer said. "One of the tweets can fit probably any cricket situation, to be honest." Archer may laugh about the phenomenon now, but the fascination surrounding his old tweets shows no signs of slowing down. Every bizarre finish or dramatic collapse still sends fans racing through his account looking for another accidental prediction. Archer insists there is no secret to it. The internet, however, appears unwilling to stop believing otherwise.

Coaches felt Kirti Sharma was too thin to hold a bow, now she's headed to Asiad



GNS News Agency, May 26

When Kirti Sharma topped the trials for the Indian women's recurve team for Asian Games with Ankita Bhakat and Kumkum Mohod, her father Vijay Kumar remembered the day in 2022 when he visited a commission agent and took a loan for Rs 60,000 to get her a new recurve bow. A small-time farmer with three acres in Jind district's Ritoli village in Haryana, he convinced the agent that he would repay the money with future yield. All that mattered to him was her daughter's joy. "Chhori aise sambal ke rakh rah thi jaise sona ho (She was taking care of it like it was gold)," he tells The Indian Express. Now he says he wants to see a gold medal around her neck in the Asian Games, and slips down the memory lane. A decade ago, Kirti had never heard of archery. She saw a bow for the first time when reputed coach Udham Singh visited the FS Convent school at nearby Pillukhera to spot talented archers and start an academy. Kirti would not go past the trials because the coaches thought she was too skinny for archery. "When I first saw Kirti, she was too thin and I told her that we will think about her enrolling after 3-4 years," says Singh.

Kumar knew why she looked thin. "Ek glass doodh se hi pura din nikalti thi (She would have only one glass of milk in the whole day). Since her childhood, she has never eaten a full meal or more than one chapati. We took her to various doctors but they all do not suffer from deficiency. Bus khana hi nahi khati thi (She would not have a full meal)," he recounts. But by 2019, she had managed to convince the academy to select her. For three years, she trained with the wooden bow. In 2022, her father bought her a recurve bow. The same year she was selected for the SAI centre at Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, where Singh had joined as a coach. "Once coaches selected me for the academy at the

village, I knew I had to do it. Whether the bow is heavy or the conditions tough, I have to master them. But then Udham went to SAI, which meant he only visited once in months and I could not have much practice sessions," shares Kirti.

When she was selected for the SAI academy, about 1350 Kms from her village, the archer faced another challenge. "I had not gone out of my district, or even the state, Haryana. Relatives and villagers asked my father why he is sending me so far," she explains. Kirti, though, had made up her mind. But at the academy, she had to begin from the basics. Singh recounts: "We had to work a lot on her strength and to make her body in alignment with the bow motion. We also worked on her bow arm strength as well as stability." At the academy, they worked on her muscle gain. "With the help of nutritionists, we helped her gain shoulder mass and more muscles. Earlier, she was scared of competing at the international level but we have spent a lot of time on her visualisation process," says Singh. Kirti Sharma with coach Udham Singh.

The bronze medal at the National Games last year was a big turning point. She then made her debut for the country in Asia Cup followed by two more editions of the tournament. In the second event, she won the team bronze. Last year, she won the team gold in the junior nationals. In the first stage trials in Kolkata this year, she finished fifth. In the second stage and final trials, from May 15 to May 18, she stood fourth in the qualification rounds with a total of 1971 followed by eight wins out of 11 matches, including a win over veteran Deepika Kumari, in the round-robin stage. Beating her idol was a dream come true. "We have all grown up seeing Deepika didi and we all dream to shoot like her. To compete against her was surreal." In the last phase of the trials, she scored wins over Ankita Bhakat, Yukta Sri and Ridhi to end with 13.5 points and topped the trial. She looks forward to the Asian Games. "I see Asian games as a challenge as well as one of the biggest platforms to show my talent. I believe I have the capability to win a medal," she avers. In the international circuit, she admires Paris Olympics triple gold medallist Korean archer Lim Si-hyeon as well as Dhiraj Bommadevara, who finished fourth in the Games. "I like the way Lim Si-hyeon shoots. The way she won three gold medals in Paris with a natural bow hand movement as well anchor movement and release momentum is something each one of us dream," signs off Kirti. Now, her own dream has a golden hue.

Esports World Cup 2026 moved from Saudi Arabia to France amid Middle East war escalation



GNS News Agency, May 26

Amid rising tensions in the Middle East following an escalation into full-blown war involving Iran, Israel, and the United States, the Esports World Cup (EWC) 2026, which was originally scheduled to take place in Saudi Arabia, has been relocated to France. The tournament will now be held in the French capital, Paris, instead of Riyadh, the Saudi capital. The competition is set to run from July 6 to August 23. The Esports Foundation (EF) announced the development late on Wednesday. "The Esports Foundation is guided by a long-term vision of growing its international tournaments and competitions through collaboration with audiences, partners, and host markets around the world over time. Following an extended evaluation process, and in light of the current regional situation, the Esports Foundation decided to accelerate that international rotation ambition for

the 2026 edition, offering clarity and stability for players, clubs, publishers, partners, and fans worldwide, while preserving the tournament's scale, structure, and competitive integrity," the EF statement read. French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the opportunity, calling it a "historic first and an honor."

In 2025, the EWC reached more than 750 million viewers worldwide and generated over 350 million hours watched, with peak concurrent viewership nearing 8 million. The event was broadcast across 28 platforms through 97 partners and over 800 channels in 35 languages, reaching fans in 140 countries. The 2026 edition of the EWC is set to feature more than 2,000 players and 200 clubs from over 100 countries. They will compete across 24 games in 25 tournaments for a share of a prize pool exceeding \$75 million. "Riyadh helped turn the Esports World Cup into a global phenomenon," said Ralf Reichert, CEO of the Esports Foundation. "Riyadh is the home of the EWC and one of the world's leading hubs for esports, powered by an incredible community of fans and long-term ambition for the future of the sport. This year, we're excited to bring the EWC to Paris for its first edition outside Saudi Arabia. Paris has hosted some of the world's biggest sporting events and is one of the great global capitals of sport, culture, and entertainment. Together with the passion of French fans and the strong support we've received locally, we're excited to bring the global esports community there for the next chapter of the EWC. Paris now becomes the first international chapter in EWC history." Details regarding the new venue for EWC 2026 in Paris will be announced at a later date.

Why intern's action could lead to 200m pound loss for Southampton

An expulsion from a game worth 200 million pounds, as punishment for an intern recording the training session of an opposition team, has rocked the English Football League and its idea of what fairness and proportionate punishment means. The context – Southampton were set to face Middlesbrough in the Championship final – a game that guarantees a paycheck of 110 million pounds to the winner and the opportunity to play in the top of the English football pyramid, the Premier League. But on the eve of the match many believe is actually the most expensive game in football, a Southampton intern named William Hall was caught on camera taking a video of Middlesbrough's training session. According to EFL regulation 127, clubs are prohibited from 'observing, or attempting to observe, another club's training session within 72 hours of a scheduled match between the two clubs.'

The punishment – In an unprecedented ruling, sanctions were placed on Southampton. They would miss the Playoff final and were docked four points from the next season of the Championships. While a one-game suspension may sound just, it triggered Southampton CEO Phil Parsons to lash out against the unfairness of the ruling. "We believe the financial consequence of yesterday's ruling makes it, by a very considerable distance, the largest penalty ever imposed on an English football club," said Parsons. He then added, "Whereas Leeds United was fined 200,000 pounds (\$267,940) for a similar 'offence, Southampton has been denied the opportunity to compete in a game worth more than 200 million pounds and one which means so much to our staff, players and supporters."

Parson's comment on the game being worth 200 million pounds is an estimation of a team gaining promotion to the Premier League and getting relegated the next season – an act that lands the team that money based on parachute payments, broadcast revenues and sponsorships over three seasons. The precedent – There is clearly no precedent. There are instances of teams spying on other



teams. There are instances of teams receiving varying degrees of punishments over the spying. But this is clearly a first for a specific reason. In 2019 Leeds were fined 200,000 pounds when they were caught spying on Derby County's training. At the time, there existed no rules in the league's playbook over what the punishment over spying a training session could be, or whether there was merit to a punishment as well. The league rules were eventually changed and Regulation 127 came into place. But even then no punishment was added to the rules, just that it was not allowed. And now this case of spying has come about, and the ruling therefore is unique, and a first – but may not be considered fair. The fallout – Southampton will have the opportunity to appeal the sanctions on Wednesday at the Independent Disciplinary Commission. "The Commission was entitled to impose a sanction. It was not, we will argue, entitled to impose one that is manifestly disproportionate to every previous sanction in the history of the English game," said Parsons. Southampton players on the other hand, are said to be exploring their legal options. Denied a chance at a promotion that could have seen increased bonuses, salaries and performance-related incentives, the players, according to the Guardian, could go to the Players Football Association for legal advice.

USA FIFA World Cup tourism boom at risk as hotel bookings fall below expectations

GNS News Agency, May 26

The 2026 Football World Cup may not bring the expected tourism boom to the United States, as hotels in nearly all host cities are seeing bookings far below expectations, a BBC report found. The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), which represents over 32,000 hotels, says the anticipated economic lift may fall short. The BBC reports that the AHLA partly blames FIFA for block-booking too many rooms for its own use. This, the AHLA claims, created artificial demand and drove up prices. After FIFA cancelled many of those rooms, hotels were left with a sudden drop in bookings. As per the AHLA, this does not align with FIFA's statement that more than five million tickets have been sold for the event, externally, and it creates a risk that "the anticipated economic lift may fall short".

"With the upcoming FIFA World Cup just 50 days away on 22 April, more than five million tickets have already been sold for this edition of the tournament, which is set to be the biggest yet as 48 teams vie for glory across 39 days of thrilling action. The cumulative attendance record of 3.5 million set at the 1994 FIFA World Cup is on course to be surpassed during this year's competition," FIFA had said in a statement

FIFA has rejected these accusations, the BBC notes. FIFA says all room releases followed agreed timelines with



hotel partners. The hotels blame high match ticket prices, local transport costs, and the political atmosphere for putting off international visitors. Many hotels made major investments based on official projections. A FIFA-commissioned study had predicted the World Cup could add \$17.2 billion to the US economy and create 185,000 jobs. However, up to 70% of rooms reserved by FIFA in cities like Boston, Dallas, and Los Angeles have now been cancelled. The FIFA World Cup will kick off on June 11 with Mexico taking on South Africa at the Azteca Stadium in Mexico City. The World Cup is being co-hosted by the US, along with Canada and Mexico.

Parul Chaudhary signals medal ambitions at CWG, Asiad with blazing Shanghai run

India's ace middle-distance runner Parul Chaudhary kicked off her season in the 3000m steeplechase event with the second-best-ever Indian timing at the Shanghai Diamond League last week. The 31-year-old from Uttar Pradesh clocked 9 minutes 12.84 seconds, slightly slower than her personal best and national record of 9:12.46. "The idea was to record a personal best in the season opener. I missed it by a whisker, but overall I am happy with the race and how my season has started," Parul told The Indian Express in an interview. "The performance has set my course for the season with many international competitions lined up."

Parul finished seventh in a distinguished field that had Tokyo Olympic champion Peruth Chemutai of Uganda and reigning World champion Faith Cherotich of Kenya. The African duo produced a dramatic photo finish with experienced Chemutai prevailing to win the title. When asked how much the competition helped, Parul said that it is always advantageous to run in a world-class field that pushes her to achieve better timings. "The advantage of competing with the world-class athletes is the constant push we get as an athlete. I have competed at World Championships and multiple Diamond Leagues, and it has helped me in improving," she said. Currently, Parul is the best Indian athlete in steeplechase. To put in context, Parul has clocked seven out of the top ten timings by an Indian in the event, and the top four belong to her. The next best among current athletes is Ankita Dhyani, who has a personal best of 9 min-

utes 27.91 seconds.

"I need to keep competing at the International level, as that is where I get a lot of push. I had planned to compete at other international competitions, but it couldn't materialise for now," said Parul, who won't be a part of the Federation Cup Athletics starting on 22nd May in Ranchi, as she has already breached the Commonwealth Games qualification mark of 9:27.41 set by the Athletics Federation of India for 3000m SC. Athletics in the Commonwealth Games is a world-class field with athletes from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Caribbean participating. It was the 2022 CWG that pushed men's national record holder Avinash Sable to the international level after he broke the Kenyan dominance in the event with a silver medal. "I have never competed in any Commonwealth Games. So, this is going to be my debut at the Games, and I am very excited for it. Commonwealth Games is a very competitive field with the presence of African athletes," said Parul. Asian Games will be relatively easier for Parul, who is one of the best in Asia and won a silver medal at the 2022 edition in the 3000m steeplechase and gold in 5000m. "Yes, CWG is going to be my priority where I'll focus on steeplechase, and I would try to do both 5000m and steeplechase at the Asian Games," said Parul. Parul, who trains at SAI Bengaluru and trains under Dr Kalyan Chaudhary, has worked on her strength and speed during the off-season. "

India's domestic cricket season to begin on August 23, U-23 events turn T20

Ranji Trophy Jammu and Kashmir Jammu and Kashmir's Vanshaj Sharma celebrates with teammates after winning the Ranji Trophy second semifinal cricket match between Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir, at the Bengal Cricket Academy Ground, in Kalyani, Nadia district, West Bengal, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2026. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday announced the schedule and venues for the 2026-27 domestic season, with the Ranji Trophy set to start on October 11. The season will begin with the Duleep Trophy, which will be played at the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru between August 23 and September 10. The tournament will continue in the zonal format after the BCCI moved away from the India A, B, C and D model used earlier. "The domestic season will commence with the prestigious Duleep Trophy from 23rd August 2026, marking the beginning of another extensive and highly competitive calendar that continues to elevate the standards of domestic cricket in India," the BCCI said in a statement. The board has also made changes to its Under-23 tournaments. The Men's U23 State A Trophy and the Vizzy Trophy have been changed from 50-over competitions to T20 tournaments. The BCCI said the move was part of its efforts to align domestic cricket with the "evolving demands of the modern game." "As part of the BCCI's continued efforts to align domestic cricket with the evolving demands of the modern game, the Men's U23 State A Trophy and the Vizzy Trophy have been converted from One Day competitions to T20 tournaments," the statement said. Another key addition is the return of the Col. C.K. Nayudu Trophy Winners vs Rest of India match, which will be played from October 1 to 4. "The upcoming season will witness the reinstatement of the Col. C.K. Nayudu Trophy Winners vs Rest of India fixture, scheduled from 1st to 4th October 2026. The match returns to the domestic calendar to provide an enhanced competitive platform for emerging U23 cricketers," the statement added. The Ranji Trophy will



once again be played in two phases. The first phase of the league stage will run from October 11 to November 5, before the tournament will pause for white-ball domestic competitions. The second phase will resume on January 17 and continue until February 4, while the knockout matches are scheduled from February 9 to March 3. The Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy will be held from November 14 to 26 across four centres – Mumbai, Vizag, Kolkata and Mohali. The knockout matches will take place in Nagpur from November 30 to December 6. The Vijay Hazare Trophy will be played from December 14 to 29 across Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Ranchi and Rajkot. The knockout matches are scheduled in Vizag from January 2 to 8. The BCCI also confirmed that the knockout matches of the Cooch Behar Trophy Elite Group will be played in Bengaluru and Mysuru. "The knockout stages of the Cooch Behar Trophy (Elite Group) will be played at Bengaluru and Mysuru. The move aims to ensure greater competitive balance for teams across all regions, particularly during the January knockout window when weather conditions can vary considerably," the statement added. The 2026-27 domestic season will feature 1,788 matches across men's, women's and junior competitions.

Margo's Got Money Troubles review: Michelle Pfeiffer is in the driver's seat in Elle Fanning's show



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Margo's Got Money Troubles review: Margo's Got Money Troubles review: Margo's Got Money Troubles is quite reminiscent of a network television show, minus the X-rated OnlyFans content. Margo is barely out of her teens, with hopes and dreams of becoming a writer, and is pursuing a college education when she finds out she is pregnant, and that's where her money troubles begin. The why and how of her money troubles are pretty self-explanatory, and the Apple TV show answers those questions early on; what actually makes up the story here is how Margo plans to get out of the said troubles, and that makes this comedy-drama one of the more enjoyable shows of 2026.

Created by David E Kelley (Big Little Lies, The Undoing, Boston Legal, Ally McBeal, Doogie Howser MD), and starring Elle Fanning, Michelle Pfeiffer, Nick Offerman, Margo's Got Money Troubles is quite reminiscent of a network television show (minus the X-rated OnlyFans content) where problems are severe, but not life-threatening; crises are tense but never unresolvable, and watching every episode makes you feel light-hearted, despite a few tense moments. Margo's Got Money Troubles review Michelle Pfeiffer and Elle Fanning in a still from Margo's Got Money Troubles. We meet Margo when she is deeply infatuated by her married professor Mark (Michael Angarano). They have an affair, one thing leads to another, and she is now at the same place where her mother, Shyanne (Pfeiffer), was 20 years ago — single and pregnant. Mark is married with children, and crawls his way out of the hard parts, but Margo decides to have her baby anyway. Soon enough, she knows why Shyanne constantly warned her before making a decision as big as this one, for she, too, was in the same spot once, where the father of her child, Jinx (Offerman), a former wrestler, was also a married man who breezed in and out of their lives as he pleased.

While Margo is the protagonist of this story, it is Pfeiffer's

Shyanne who is in the driver's seat. Pfeiffer plays Shyanne as a feisty woman who has the wisdom that only comes when you have been through some rough patches. As she watches Margo celebrate at her baby shower, she silently mourns the future that she imagined for her daughter — a future with a job that would have more prospects than her own waitress job at Hooters, and a life where she could have raised a child when she wasn't one herself. Margo takes on the challenge and finds herself an OnlyFans gig, which allows her to make money while being around her son. But like in India, here too, 'log kya kahenge?' (what will people say?) crops up in the conversation as Shyanne declares that this is no job for a respectable woman. She doesn't come across as a hypocrite, but as a concerned mother who doesn't have it in her to watch history repeat itself.

As Margo and Shyanne navigate their relationship, Jinx comes back into the picture after spending a sufficient amount of time at a rehabilitation center and becomes the kind of grandfather that one would imagine Offerman to be. At this point, one can't tell if these kinds of roles scream for Offerman to be cast, or if it's the actor who brings in this Hagrid-like energy to so many of his roles. Despite his absence in their lives, he is never villainised; in fact, Margo and Shyanne go out of their way to make him feel at home when he relapses. Amid all of this, Susie, Margo's friend/roommate, turns into an afterthought — for the writers, and also the characters. She just becomes the default nanny, and except for one scene where Jinx recognises her as a person, you just see her playing the quirky character who exists just so Margo can verbalise her feelings in front of another character, and later help design her OnlyFans outfits and sets. Nicole Kidman appears as the lawyer named Lace, who fits in this world of David E Kelley just as comfortably as she resided in all of his other worlds. Margo's Got Money Problems Nick Offerman, Elle Fanning and Michelle Pfeiffer in Apple TV's Margo's Got Money Problems. After getting over the initial taboo of OnlyFans, the show embraces Margo as she embraces herself. As she starts her work on OnlyFans, she tells herself that 'this is art,' but a few episodes later, she actually starts treating it as art that pays handsomely. You see her in body paint as she plays with her toddler son, you see her making an actual effort as she tries to put together storylines that could draw strong engagement. Her work life is a part of her life, and the show respects it enough by treating it that way. Margo's money troubles are constant, but there is a sense that things will resolve themselves, as Shyanne has already lived this life. Now in her 40s, she is on the verge of getting the white-picket fence that she always craved for, even though it is obvious that it is not meant for her. Margo isn't doomed, and neither is her baby, Bodhi, but it will surely be a ride before she can say goodbye to her troubles, monetary or otherwise.

24-carat gold dresses, pink Rolls Royce for kids: Desi Bling shows unhinged Dubai billionaire life



Netflix's newest reality series Desi Bling drops Indian TV couple Karan Kundrra and Tejaswi Prakash into the glittering world of Dubai's ultra-wealthy Indian expat circuit, that includes billionaire couple Satish and Tabinda Sanpal, Rizwan and Adel Sajan, Dyuti Parruck, Pamela Serena, Alizey Mirza, Lalili Mirza, Janvee Gaur, Sana Sajan and Iryna Kinakh. Our hosts for the episode are Satish and Tabinda Sanpal — Dubai's billionaire couple. Satish, Founder and Chairman of ANAX Holding, recalls arriving in Dubai with "1 million dirham" and building his empire through the gold business before eventually finding massive success. One of the most eyebrow-raising moments comes when Tabinda casually reveals that she has been massaging Satish's feet every morning for the last nine years because, according to his belief system, it brings wealth. "Since I have been with Satish, I massage his feet every morning. He wakes up like a prince. He believes that if a wife touches her husband's feet every morning, it brings wealth," she says. Nine years of foot massages. The wealth creation strategy no financial advisor has ever recommended.

Then there's Bella, the Sanpals' daughter, who arrived into this world at a London hospital frequented by actual royalty. We have heard of being born with a silver spoon. Bella, however, was born with an entire gold cutlery set waiting for her. Thali, glass, spoon — all 24-carat. "She was born at a very famous hospital in London where members of the royal family have also given birth. Before Bella was born, her father got gold cutlery made for her — she has a gold plate, gold glass and gold spoon," Tabinda shares. The stories only get more extravagant from there. Recalling Bella's first birthday party, Satish and Tabinda share she arrived in a princess carriage wearing a dress and jacket made of 24-carat gold while a cake descended dramatically from the ceiling before the celebrations began. And the birthday gift? Satish has ordered Bella a customised pink Rolls Royce. Like most viewers at home, Tejaswi initially assumes it's a toy car. It is not. Tabinda clarified, very calmly, that it is a full-size, actual Rolls Royce. Tabinda then reveals that Satish has promised to gift her gold equal to her body weight for their 10th wedding anniversary, before casually mentioning that she already owns "40 kilos of gold" and receives three kilos more every year on Dhanteras. At this rate, Tabinda is less a person and more a walking investment portfolio. At this point, even Karan Kundrra seems overwhelmed by the wealth flexing. "We don't come from a place where you can openly talk about these things. Humne is tarah se bolna shuru kar diya humare yahaan pe income tax ki raid pad jaati hai," he jokes. And just when you think the episode cannot possibly become more absurdly luxurious, in another scene entrepreneur and wellness advocate Pamela Sareen arrives with her dog Mochi — who is wearing a Richard Mille watch as a collar and eating caviar. Pamela and Mochi are, naturally, twinning in outfit. Episode one sets the tone with remarkable efficiency: this is a world where dresses are made of gold, cakes descend dramatically from ceilings, and even the dogs wear watches most people can only dream

Bruce Willis' daughter Rumer shares how dementia battle has changed actor's 'macho dude' personality

Bruce Willis' daughter Rumer Shares how dementia battle has changed actor's 'macho dude' personality. Bruce Willis' daughter Rumer Shares how dementia battle has changed actor's 'macho dude' personality. Hollywood legend Bruce Willis was diagnosed with dementia a few years ago. The veteran actor's daughter Rumer Willis recently shared an update about the Die Hard star, opening up about how his personality has changed since the diagnosis. In an interview, Rumer revealed that Bruce has become more tender and emotionally softer, after carrying his 'macho dude' image for years. During a chat on The Inside Edit, she shared, "I'm so grateful I get to go see him... Even though it's different now, I'm so grateful. There's a sweetness. He's always been this kind of macho dude and there's like a — fragile is not the right word but — just a tenderness that maybe being Bruce Willis might not have allowed him in a certain way."

The actor's 37-year-old daughter also accepted that until her father's diagnosis of frontotemporal dementia (FTD), she "had no idea" how "prevalent" the neurological condition is. "It's wild to me. So many people come up to me now and they say, 'My uncle had FTD. My dad had this,'" she added. In November 2025, Rumer had given an update on



her father's health, revealing that he was different but still had a "spark" in him. "The truth is that anybody with FTD is not doing great. But he's doing okay in terms of somebody who's dealing with frontotemporal dementia, you know what I mean?" she said, during a Q&A session on Instagram. Rumer Willis is the eldest child of Bruce Willis and ex-wife Demi Moore. The actor also shares daughters Scout, 34, and Tallulah, 32, with her.

'Thought meeting Jr NTR might be toxic': Prashanth Neel on first meet with 'stubborn' Dragon star



Director Prashanth Neel and Jr NTR are collaborating for the first time on Dragon, one of the most anticipated upcoming pan-India films. On Jr NTR's birthday on Wednesday, the makers unveiled the film's first teaser, introducing the actor as an assassin named Luger. Now, in a conversation with Galatta Plus, Prashanth Neel opened up about finally working with Jr NTR after admiring him for years. The filmmaker admitted that while he was excited about the collaboration, he was also initially intimidated by the actor's larger-than-life screen persona.

"For the last 25 years, I have been a huge fan of NTR and all the mass films he has done. So when Mythri Movie Makers first called me and said I had to go meet NTR, I was extremely excited. At the same time, I was also afraid. The persona I had seen on screen and the kind of energy he carries — I thought it might be toxic for me," Prashanth said. Explaining what he meant by "toxic," the director clarified that he was worried Jr NTR might be too set in his ways as an actor. "There are actors who have their own fixed patterns — what they are and what they want to do. Looking at him from the outside, it felt like you couldn't change his mind. Usually, I need to fall in love with my heroes because we are literally married to each other for a couple of years while making a film. So it was intimidating to meet him," he shared. Jr NTR is stubborn. However, Prashanth said his perception changed completely after spending time with the actor. "After we met and spent time together, I understood the practicality with which he approaches things. He is family to me now. One thing I understood about him is that he is stubborn — but in a very honest way. He is not somebody who hides his stubbornness," he said.

The filmmaker revealed that he never wanted to micromanage Jr NTR's performance as Luger because the actor instinctively understood the character. "There was no way I was going to tell him, 'You should act like this or walk like this.' He would do it naturally, and there would only be minor corrections from my side. I knew what he was giving to the character, but I didn't know exactly what he was going to do with Luger. The moment he walked out and per-

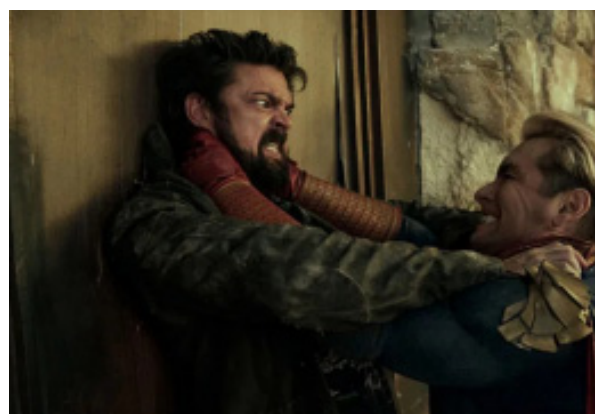
formed, I understood that he had completely understood the character. It was exactly where I wanted it to be. I was very happy, and I told him that too. Working with NTR feels like he is self-programmed to do what he has to do. He understood the character, and he loves the drama of this movie," he said.

"We have been writing this drama together"

Prashanth also revealed that the two had been discussing and shaping the film's drama for nearly three-and-a-half years before the project officially went on floors. "We have been writing this drama together for at least three and a half years before starting the film. He used to discuss so many shots with me, and that gave me a lot of confidence," he shared. Calling Jr NTR "extremely intelligent," the filmmaker praised the actor's understanding of world cinema and performance. "He watches world cinema and knows exactly how a character needs to be played. But I feel he hadn't explored that side fully all these years. I wanted him to do something different, and there was no rigidity or friction. He understood how Luger was supposed to be played, and that is exactly what he delivered," he said.

He is like a nuclear plant. Prashanth further compared Jr NTR's passion for films to the energy of a "nuclear plant." "You know, he is like a nuclear plant — he powers everything. His enthusiasm for cinema and drama is absolutely unparalleled. He looks at films as stories first. For him, the story has to be convincing before it becomes a movie," the director explained. He also said that Jr NTR was never concerned about his "mass hero" image while working on Dragon. "It never felt like I was brought in just to elevate the hero because I am known for giving heroes that mass appeal. He is not worried about that. He knows the mass moments will come naturally with the drama," Prashanth said. The filmmaker added that working with Jr NTR changed the way he looked at storytelling itself. "He is stubborn in the best possible way about what a film should be. That quality rubbed off on me — not in changing my style of storytelling, but in focusing more deeply on the story itself. With him, conversations are never like formal meeting-room discussions. We only talk about drama," he said. Prashanth also spoke about Jr NTR's emotional depth and personality. "I think his life itself has been a drama, and people close to him know why he is the way he is. I feel absolutely privileged to be around a man like that — not just as an individual, but also as a film personality. I think we are going to make a very good movie together," he said. Jr NTR's physical transformation for the role has already caught fans' attention in the teaser. Prashanth revealed that the actor lost nearly 15 kilos in just four months for the part. About Dragon apart from Jr NTR, Dragon also stars Anil Kapoor, Ashutosh Rana, Rukmini Vasanth and Biju Menon in key roles. The film is jointly produced by Mythri Movie Makers and NTR Arts. Producers include Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, Naveen Yeneni, Y. Ravi Shankar and Kosaraju Harikrishna. The film is being presented by T-Series through Gulshan Kumar and Bhushan Kumar.

The Boys Ending Explained: Who won — Homelander or Billy Butcher? Why there won't be a S6



The Amazon Prime Video's fan favourite show The Boys recently came to an end with its fifth season. The superhero web series' season 5 concluded with its last episode released yesterday. Titled 'Blood and Bone', the series finale of The Boys finally gave a major showdown to Billy Butcher (Karl Urban) and Homelander (Antony Starr). While fans had mixed reactions to the show's finale, here's a breakdown of the bloody ending, possible spinoffs, and all the deaths in this season. Seven years and five seasons later, fans took a sigh of relief after wrapping up The Boys. In a gory standoff towards the end, Homelander begs Billy to end the constant fights, as Billy stabs him in the stomach, causing him to die in his arms. Kimiko had actually taken away Homelander's powers for a moment, giving Billy the upper hand to beat him.

Then, Billy tried to release a deadly virus to kill all the Supes, and went down the same path like he did in the comics. His mentee Hughie Campbell (Jack Quaid) shot him with a gun during a physical fight to stop the virus. While Hughie went into immediate regret and guilt for what he had

done, Billy told him not to worry as he left him with no other option. Other villains like the Deep and Oh Father were also killed. While Deep gets into a battle with Annie January aka Starlight (Erin Moriarty), in which she pushes him into the water. An octopus tentacle wraps around him and bursts through his mouth. It was a gruesome death as the superhero had romantic and physical relationships with octopus' in the past. On the other hand, Oh Father is killed during a fight with Hughie and Mother's Milk (Laz Alonso). The episode finished with Hughie and Annie starting a family together, while Kimiko moved to France to honour his love Frenchie's memory. Mother's Milk took Homelander's son Ryan to care of him.

Why there won't be The Boys 6?

A prequel series of the modern superhero franchise, Vought Rising, was already announced earlier. Set to premiere in 2027, the series will be behind a 1950 background, showing Soldier Boy (Jensen Ackles) in his peak. Aya Cash, who played Stormfront on The Boys, will also be reprising her role. Another live-action spin-off 'The Boys: Mexico' is in development. Set in Mexico, the plot details have been kept under wraps. No other spin-offs or prequels of The Boys have been announced. However, it is noteworthy that social media was flooded with fans demanding a spin-off of their favourite twisted character Homelander. Moreover, there will not be a next season of The Boys. While some fan theories speculated a possible season 6 of The Boys, the series creators and Prime video officially confirmed that the show ends with Season 5. The plot was always meant to conclude, without dragging the web series further. Developed by Eric Kripke for Amazon Prime Video, The Boys is a superhero web series, which initially premiered in 2020. It quickly gained popularity for its cinematography, acting and a different take on the superhero genre. The show is based on a comic book series of the same name by Garth Ennis and Darrick Robertson.

Mouni Roy shares glamorous Cannes moments amid separation buzz

Mumbai: Actor Mouni Roy recently turned heads at the prestigious Cannes red carpet with her stunning appearance. The actress shared a glamorous photo series from the French Riviera amid ongoing news of trouble in her marital life. Taking to her social media account, Mouni dropped a carousel of pictures and videos looking dreamy. Sharing the post, Mouni captioned it, "en route to the Croisette" along with hashtags "#Cannes2026".

The actress used the viral track "I Don't Chase, I Attract" by Affirmation Club as the background song, particularly the trending line, "I love money, money loves me." In the pictures, Mouni Roy was seen posing inside a luxury car in an elegantly designed off-shoulder gown featuring a netted crystal pattern and silhouette. She completed her look with a sleek bun, on point make-up, and dazzling diamond jewellery. The actress also shared videos of herself stepping out of the car and walking through the streets near the Croisette. The post comes amid ongoing speculation around Mouni Roy's personal life and news regarding trouble in her marriage with businessman Suraj Nambiar. A few days ago, Mouni and Suraj officially announced their separation through a joint post on social media.

A day later, Suraj had put up a note firmly putting an

end to the chatter around alimony, internal disputes and third party involvement. "Recent baseless reports surrounding our separation have been made in bad taste and are absolutely malicious. Let me set the record straight once and for all. There is no alimony. There are no disputes. There is no third party involved." He added, "Mouni and I chose to part ways together, with mutual respect and with full consideration for each other's wellbeing. That is the truth. Everything else being reported is fiction, and in some cases, a deliberate attempt to vilify two people who have done nothing but ask to be left alone." He further added, "I want to state this clearly and finally: there is no truth to any of the claims being made about either of us, or about any third party. Dragging other people into this is not cool. Specially innocent friends who have nothing to do with this. Mouni and I have both conducted ourselves with dignity through this period and we expect that same dignity to be extended to us by those reporting on it." Suraj further wrote, "Media houses have chosen to fabricate narratives that do not exist. These reports have been published without a shred of verification, which is highly unfair. I am calling this out clearly and directly, because staying silent in the face of deliberate misinformation is not something I am willing to do."