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## Bhatti's failure to review procurement issues in his constituency irks farmers

Khammam: Even as the farming community was under distress in Khammam, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka failed to pay attention to the issue during his official review meeting held here on Wednesday. He held a meeting with district Collector Divakara TS, Commissioner of Police Sunil Dutt, Additional Collector P Sreeja and others. The meeting was confined to reviewing Gurukul and welfare residential educational institutions. Minister Seethakka, who was supposed to accompany the Deputy Chief Minister during his district tour, did not turn up.

## Heavy rain damages paddy at procurement centres in Sangareddy

Sangareddy: Rains coupled with gales lashed several parts of the erstwhile Medak district on Tuesday night, causing huge losses to farmers who kept their paddy at procurement centres. The harvested paddy was swept away by floodwater at several places even though the farmers woke up at midnight to save the harvest by covering it with tarpaulins. The farmers, who woke up early in the morning, were inconsolable as the paddy was completely soaked in water.

## Tamil Nadu CM Vijay meets PM Modi; seeks action on Mekedatu project, fishermen arrests

New Delhi/Chennai, May 27

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday and discussed matters concerning the state, including the Mekedatu dam issue, fishermen arrests and the Tamil invocation song row.

Vijay also met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and handed over a memorandum to prioritise funding for ports, national highways, railway projects and industrial corridors that are crucial for Tamil Nadu's development.

This was Vijay's maiden official visit to the national capital after assuming office. His meeting with the PM and Sitharaman comes days after his party TVK secured an upset win in the April 23 Assembly polls, defeating Dravidian heavyweights DMK and AIADMK and formed its government with the support of allies including VCK.

he CM raised the issue of the Tamil Thai Vazhthu (invocation) song, as a controversy had broken out over the sequence of playing it third- after Vande Mataram and national anthem in the swearing-in ceremony of his government as well as the expansion of his cabinet.

In a letter addressed to PM Modi, Vijay said, "At the outset, I wish to affirm that the government and people of Tamil Nadu hold the National Anthem and the National Song in the highest esteem."

"Tamil Nadu has consistently upheld the dignity and decorum associated with all national symbols and remains deeply committed to the unity, integrity and constitutional values of India. I would also like to bring to your kind notice the long-established position of Tamil Thai Vazhthu in the public life of Tamil Nadu," he said in the letter.

For several decades, it has traditionally been rendered at the commencement of government, educational, cultural and public functions across Tamil Nadu and the practice has also been formally recognised by the Tamil Nadu government, he said.

"Following the issuance of the above Ministry of Home Affairs order, Lok Bhavan has adopted the sequence of Vande Mataram, National Anthem and thereafter Tamil Thai Vazhthu. The placement of Tamil Thai Vazhthu subsequent to the National Anthem has led to widespread public concern and opposition from various sections of society in Tamil Nadu, as it departs from the long-standing and officially recognised practice followed in the State."

"It is submitted that Tamil Thai Vazhthu occupies a unique position in Tamil Nadu as the State invocation song symbolising the linguistic heritage, cultural identity and collective sentiments of the people of the state. Traditionally, it has always occupied the opening position in official functions as a mark of respect, pride and glory to the Tamil language and culture," the CM added.



This practice has been changed in certain functions after the communication from the Ministry of Home Affairs, he contended. The Home Ministry letter does not bar the singing of State Song at the beginning of the functions. "However it is observed that in recent functions held at Lok Bhavan, Tamil Thai Vazhthu was sung at the end."

"In this background, I request your kind intervention for issuance of a suitable clarification/modification to the Ministry of Home Affairs Order No.14/2/2025-Public, dated 28.01.2026, enabling State Invocation Songs, including Tamil Thai Vazhthu, to be sung at the commencement of government functions. Such a clarification would harmonise the Home Ministry's order with the established practice prevailing in Tamil Nadu and avoid administrative ambiguity, while duly respecting the cultural sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu," Vijay requested the PM.

According to a government press release, Vijay expressed serious concern over Karnataka's announcement of a ground-breaking ceremony for the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project across the Cauvery river, saying the move was completely against the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) and the verdict of the Supreme Court.

He added that the announcement has caused widespread distress among farmers in Tamil Nadu, and requested that the Prime Minister instruct the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Central Water Commission not to permit any such project without the concurrence of the riparian states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry. The Mekedatu project envisages meeting the twin objectives of drinking water requirements and power generation.

Vijay, during the meeting, urged PM Modi to take strong measures to secure the immediate release of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu who are languishing in Sri Lankan prisons, and their boats. As many as 12 instances of fishermen arrests occurred in 2026, and currently 58 fishermen are in custody in Sri Lanka while 266 boats have been seized.

## CM Siddaramaiah Decides To Quit Over His "Commitment" to High Command

Bengaluru, May 27

: Senior Congress leader and MLA R.V. Deshpande on Wednesday met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at his official residence "Kaveri" in Bengaluru city, where the visiting Congress MLA was told by Siddaramaiah over his decision to "step down" following a commitment he has made to the party high command during his meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday.

One of the leaders close to Siddaramaiah, Deshpande said he asked Siddaramaiah to continue as Chief Minister but he has already made up his mind to quit the position and that he might resign from the post either tomorrow or on Friday. However, Deshpande said Siddaramaiah did not explain the circumstances which made him arrive at the decision to quit the post of Chief Minister nor "I evinced interest in knowing the reason behind his decision to quit."

Deshpande said he did not see any displeasure in Siddaramaiah while he stated his decision to quit as Chief Minister. Even MLAs supporting Siddaramaiah wanted him to continue in the post but Siddaramaiah is firm on quitting the post.

"Siddaramaiah stated he is committed to the high command to resign and will abide by it," Deshpande said over his interaction with the Chief Minister.

Deshpande said he was "surprise" by the decision of Siddaramaiah to quit the post but Siddaramaiah reiterated his decision to quit.



Another Congress MLA Ashok Pattan stated he has information that Siddaramaiah would resign as Chief Minister on Thursday after 3 pm and said "The decision by Siddaramaiah was unexpected one."

Meanwhile, general secretary of All India Congress Committee and Karnataka party incharge Randeep Singh Surjewala arrived in Bengaluru and speaking to reporters he said "No decision has been taken by the party high command on convening Congress Legislature Party meeting yet or no other decision has been taken." He appealed "Don't speculate on change of leadership."

## erabad



## Revanth seeks negotiations with Maharashtra CM on Tummidihatti barrage

Hyderabad, May 27

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has written to his Maharashtra counterpart, Devendra Fadnis, seeking time to discuss the Tummidihatti barrage, now part of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS).

Reddy informed Fadnis that the Telangana irrigation officials needed time to prepare for the discussion and urged the latter to fix a date for discussing the issue.

The letter mentioned that the Maharashtra government had agreed to allow a height of 148 meter for Tummidihatti barrage's full reservoir level (FRL), not enough to fulfill the irrigation needs of Telangana.

If Telangana is allowed to increase the dam's height, it would allow the flow of Godavari waters through gravity. This would not cause any submergence on the

Maharashtra side.

The state government has been considering building the Tummidihatti barrage at a height of 150 meter FRL, as a possible middle ground for negotiations with the Maharashtra government.

Originally, the Dr BR Ambedkar Pranahita-Chevella Sujala Savanathi project drew Godavari from Tummidihatti. However, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) government redesigned the project to source the river water from the Medigadda barrage, which is now defunct.

The then Maharashtra government declined K Chandrasekhar Rao-led government's offer to raise the height to 152 meter, following which the BRS agreed in principle to maintain the Full Reservoir Level (FRL) at 148 metres. KCR had termed it a win-win situation for both states.

However, the Congress has been claiming that if the Kaleshwaram project had been constructed at Tummidihatti instead of Medigadda, there would have been no need to lift water to such great heights.

Congress leaders have repeatedly argued that building the project at Tummidihatti, as originally proposed, would have allowed Godavari waters to flow by gravity to the Yellampalli Project, from where irrigation could have been extended up to Chevella in Rangareddy district.

Even the Justice PC Ghose Commission of Inquiry constituted by the Congress government had found fault with the decision to shift the Kaleshwaram project from Tummidihatti to Medigadda.

In recent times, the Congress government has been aggressively moving towards constructing the project at Tummidihatti, as the Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla barrages under the Kaleshwaram project have been declared defunct.

It needs to be seen how the Congress government negotiates an increase in the height of the FRL of the Tummidihatti barrage with the Maharashtra government, which has, on multiple occasions, rejected the previous BRS government's proposals after the formation of Telangana in 2014, as well as the Congress government's proposals in the undivided Andhra Pradesh.

## 'Won't contest elections if...': Ponguleti challenges KTR over Indiramma houses

Hyderabad, May 27

A 'confident' Revenue and Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, on Wednesday, May 27, declared that he would not contest the next Assembly Elections in Telangana if the government failed to construct more Indiramma houses than the previous Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) regime.

His challenge came in response to BRS Working President KT Rama Rao's (KTR) recent allegations that the Congress government failed to construct a single house for the poor in Hyderabad.

On Wednesday, Reddy inspected Malakpet, Gaddiannaram, Nampally and Bahadurpura areas to check the feasibility of constructing 1 lakh Indiramma Houses inside the Outer-Ring Road's (ORR) limits as announced during the recent cabinet meeting.

Addressing the media at Dr BR Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat after the inspection, Ponguleti said that there were 39 locations inside the ORR where land parcels measuring anywhere between 1,000 square yard to 25 acres were available.

He said the 1 lakh Indiramma houses within the ORR limits will be built on an in-situ development basis. "We are going to construct Indiramma houses at the very location where the poor people are residing, because we don't want to disturb the livelihood of the poor by constructing houses some 30 km away like the BRS government did," Ponguleti said.

He alleged that only 46,000 houses were constructed in and around Hyderabad under the ten-year BRS rule, while 21,000 houses were left incomplete. "There are no basic facilities like electricity, water and sanitation. Out of these, 16,000 houses were being re-allotted because people did not want them," he claimed.

Ponguleti said that in the second phase of Indiramma houses in the rural areas which will be launched from June 1, another 2.5 lakh houses will be constructed across the state, with each constituency being allotted 2,000 houses.

By the end of first and second phases combined, he said there would be 5,500 to 7,000 Indiramma houses



that would have been constructed in each constituency in the rural areas.

## Bengaluru hospital isolates Ugandan woman with Ebola-like symptoms

Bengaluru, May 27: Amid global Ebola scare, a 28-year-old woman from Uganda, who developed symptoms for the virus, was shifted to the state-run Epidemic Diseases Hospital here on Tuesday, Health Department officials said.

According to the officials, the woman, who had arrived from an Ebola-affected region, was moved from a hotel to the designated hospital as a precaution after she developed mild symptoms like body ache.

Her samples have been collected and sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune for testing, they said, adding that reports are awaited. As per protocol, a repeat test will also be conducted.

Health authorities are monitoring her condition closely. Since she recently travelled from an Ebola-affected region and later developed mild symptoms like body ache, she was shifted to the Epidemic Diseases Hospital as a precautionary measure, a health depart-

ment official said. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the ongoing outbreak of Ebola disease (ED) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern" (PHEIC) on May 17.

In response to an Ebola outbreak in several African countries, the Karnataka Health Department on Friday had advised individuals who have recently travelled to affected nations to undergo health monitoring and self-observation for 21 days after their return.

The department said those developing symptoms should immediately report to the nearest health facility, while Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) will undertake surveillance activities.

In Bengaluru, the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases (RGICD) has been identified as the isolation centre, while the Epidemic Diseases Hospital has been designated as the quarantine and treatment facility.

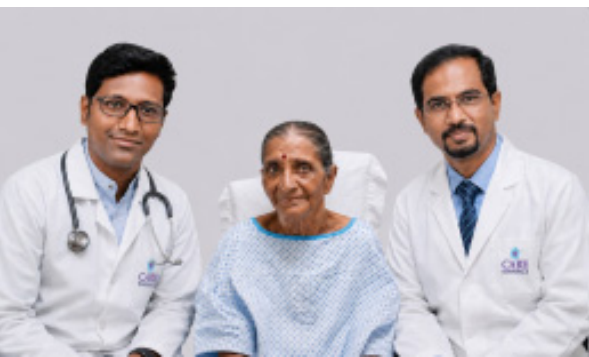
# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Systemic reform is the way forward for CBSE

AFTER the NEET-scarred National Testing Agency, it's the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) that has come under nationwide scrutiny. The board's On-Screen Marking (OSM) system has been beset by complaints of glitches and discrepancies. Some Class-12 students have flagged a mismatch between their answer sheets and the scanned copies uploaded under the re-evaluation process. This is much more than a technical problem; it's a warning about the growing fragility of India's exam ecosystem, which determines the future of millions of students. The case of a student, Vedant Srivastava, is especially alarming because the CBSE itself admitted that the wrong answer sheet had been shared (it subsequently sent him the correct one). Another examinee, Sanjana, reportedly received a similar response from the board. The acknowledgement of these embarrassing errors is welcome, provided it is followed by strict action against erring officials. The larger concern is that students had to resort to social media campaigns before corrective steps were taken. In a fair and transparent education system, grievance redressal should not depend on public outrage, political intervention or online visibility. What's worse, Vedant was brutally trolled for questioning a potentially flawed system. Some Netizens chose to brand the teenager "anti-national" and even "Pakistani" for raising concerns about his marks. It's shocking that a genuinely aggrieved Indian citizen was treated as a traitor. Should students face harassment merely because their complaints leave premier national organisations red-faced? Rapid digitisation without adequate testing creates vulnerabilities that disproportionately harm students.

## Valve Replacement Surgery Successfully Performed at CARE Hospitals



Hyderabad, May 27 (Indian Chronicle): Doctors at CARE Hospitals Hitech City successfully performed a minimally invasive mitral valve replacement surgery on 84-year-old Subbaratnamma from Anantapur. The patient was suffering from severe heart complications, pulmonary hypertension, and kidney disease. While other hospitals reportedly considered the surgery highly risky, the CARE medical team successfully carried out the treatment and helped her recover to a walking condition within a few days. The surgery was led by senior cardiac surgeon Dr. Raviraj Chikullapalli. Senior interventional cardiologist Dr. V. Vinod Kumar stated that advanced minimally invasive cardiac treatments are emerging as a new hope for elderly patients.

## LED Lights Worth 93 Lakhs for Sadashivpet Town — Nirmala Jaggareddy



Indian Chronicle Sangareddy Announces Speaking at Gandhi Chowk in Sadashivpet town. Sangareddy district, on Wednesday, TGIIC Chairperson Nirmala Jaggareddy announced that 200 LED lights would be installed across the town under the auspices of TUFIDC. On this occasion, she laid the foundation stone for the installation of these lights and gave an assurance that the project would be executed using funds amounting to ₹93 lakhs. Sadashivpet Municipal Chairperson Anjamma, municipal councilors, and municipal officials participated in this event.

## Heavy rain damages paddy at procurement centres in Sangareddy

Sangareddy: Rains coupled with gales lashed several parts of the erstwhile Medak district on Tuesday night, causing huge losses to farmers who kept their paddy at procurement centres. The harvested paddy was swept away by floodwater at several places even though the farmers woke up at midnight to save the harvest by covering it with tarpaulins. The farmers, who woke up early in the morning, were inconsolable as the paddy was completely soaked in water. At places where the grains were swept away by floodwater, the farmers tried to salvage them. Holding the ruling Congress responsible for their struggles, the farmers took to the roads at several places and staged rasta-rokos and dharmas.

## In Uppal Bhagayat, foundation stone for MMC Corporation building soon to be laid by the Chief Minister



Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy— Construction of compound walls worth ₹3.10 crore for protection of vacant lands in Uppal Bhagayat. UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy extensively toured Uppal Bhagayat on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said, "Very soon, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will lay the foundation stone for the construction of the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC) building in Uppal Bhagayat. The Chief Minister has already

sanctioned 10 acres of land along with ₹100 crore for the project. "We are also undertaking construction of compound walls at a cost of ₹3.10 crore to protect vacant lands in Uppal Bhagayat. On Wednesday, we inspected the ongoing compound wall works and newly proposed borewell works. The Congress Party and the government led by Revanth Reddy are committed to the development of Uppal Bhagayat. "Soon, we will also take up several other development works including: "A multi-level sports complex worth ₹10 crore, "A community hall worth ₹3.5 crore" along with various other infrastructure and welfare projects," he stated. "He described the development initiatives as "Revanth Anna mark development" and said they would bring a new phase of progress to Uppal Bhagayat. "The programme was attended by colony residents and local leaders including Vakkanti Srinivas Rao, Bizzula Ravinder Reddy, Vamsi Chandar Reddy, Gona Arjun Reddy, Vishwanath, Eega Santosh Mudiraj, Poojala Prabhakar, Viplav Reddy, Shiva Prasad Rao, Ravali, Swapna, Sujatha, Surya Gopal, Chari, Murthy, Manohar Reddy, Mahesh, Murali, Raghavendra Reddy, Mallikarjun, Sandeep, Yadavalli Raju, Srinath Rao, Sridhar Reddy, Venkatayya, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Lingampalli Ramakrishna, Tummaladevi Reddy, Manda Murali Krishna Reddy, Varakala Madan Goud, Khaja Moulana, Alugula Anil, Venkatesh, Bheem Sen, Upender, Nagi Reddy, Linga Reddy and others.

## PRIME MINISTER MODI'S HISTORIC GOVERNANCE

Hyderabad, May 27 : BJP state president N Ramchander Rao today asserted that Narendra Modi has created a historic record as the first Prime Minister in the history of India to be directly elected by the people and to successfully completed a continuous tenure of 12 years. " He was speaking to media after welcoming of some prominent personalities in the party. " Rao reminded everyone that although Jawaharlar Nehru was the first Prime Minister, he was not directly elected by the people but was an appointed Prime Minister. " Expressing confidence that Modi will become the Prime Minister again, he said that after completing 12 years of continuous governance, he is leading the country towards 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India). " BJP state chief explained that during this 12-year rule, India has been positioned as the fastest-growing economy in the world and was progressing to become the 3rd largest economic power. He detailed that banking services for the poor through the PM Jan Dhan Yojana, an investment support of Rs 6,000 per year for farmers through the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and the free distribution of 5 kg of rice or wheat to the poor under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana were running successfully. In the defense sector, under 'Make in India', our country has reached a level where we manufacture our own fighter jets and advanced weapons. " He said that while lakhs of crores in corruption scams took place during the previous Congress (UPA) tenure ranging from Bofors (Rs80 crores) onwards, Modi's 12-year rule has provided transparent governance without a single blot of corruption. " Earlier, a mega joining program was held today at the Bharatiya BJP State Headquarters here. Several prominent

leaders from the Huzurnagar constituency joined the BJP in the presence of BJP State President N Ramchander Rao. " Shri Sudhakar Reddy, a former IRS officer who took Voluntary Retirement (VRS) after serving as an Assistant Commissioner in the Central Excise, Customs, and GST departments under the Central Government, and who was also a national-level volleyball player and multiple gold medalist, was warmly welcomed into the party by state party chief, who draped him with the party's saffron scarf. " Along with him, Smt. Maheshwari, Lingaiah, Narasimha Rao, and several other prominent individuals from Hanumanthulagudem and Tallamallapuram villages of Mattampally mandal, as well as the Huzurnagar-Suryapet regions, joined the BJP. They took this decision with a firm resolve to serve society and the nation through politics. " The event was attended by Party State General Secretary Gautam Rao, BJP SC Morcha National Secretary S. Kumar, State Chief Spokesperson and Media In-charge N V Subhash, SC Morcha State President Krantikiran, Huzurnagar BJP Senior Leader Smt. Srilatha, and other senior leaders. Speaking on the occasion, the leaders stated that people from various sections of society are turning up in large numbers, drawn by the public programs undertaken under the leadership of Ramchander Rao in the state, the party's ideologies, and the developmental schemes of the Central Government. " On the occasion of the 91st death anniversary of Ramabai Ambedkar, grand tributes were paid at the BJP State Office following the directives of the national party. Remembering the sacrifices made by the wife of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, they stated that the BJP officially organizes her birth and death anniversary programs every year.

## Kalyanpuri Welfare Association Appeals to MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy for Community Hall Construction



UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Under the leadership of BRS party state leader Bannala Praveen

Mudiraj, the office bearers and members of the Kalyanpuri Colony Welfare Association from Chilkhanagar Division met Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy at his residence and felicitated him warmly. "During the meeting, the association representatives submitted a memorandum requesting allocation of funds for the construction of a community hall in Kalyanpuri Colony. "Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that nearly 80 percent of development works in Chilkhanagar Division have already been completed, while the remaining works include community halls and sewerage pipeline projects. Responding positively to the request made by the Kalyanpuri Welfare Association, he assured the members that funds would be allocated and the construction of the community hall would be taken up at the earliest. "The programme was attended by Kalyanpuri Welfare Association President Shivarama Raju, General Secretary Ganesan, representatives Vikas, ASN Murthy, Prakash Rao, Ashwaddham, Abdullah and others.

## Government Has Abandoned Farmers: BJP LP Leader Maheshwar Reddy



Peddapalli District, "Manthani," (INDIAN CHRONICLE), "MEDAGONI VENKATESH" BJP Legislature Party leader Maheshwar Reddy alleged that the state government has completely neglected the procurement of paddy, maize, bengal gram, and red gram cultivated by farmers. "As part of the BJP's "Rythu Gosa - BJP Bharosa" campaign, he, along with MPs Eatala Rajender, Raghunandan Rao and bjp manthani constituency incharge Ch.Sunil Reddy visited a paddy procurement center at Gunjapadugu village in Manthani mandal of Peddapalli district on Wednesday. "Speaking on the occasion, Maheshwar Reddy said that although Chief Minister Revanth Reddy claimed that 80 percent of paddy procurement in the state had already been completed, the ground reality was entirely different. He stated that lakhs of quintals of grain were still lying in heaps at procurement centers across the state. "He further pointed out that even procurement centers in the constituency of Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu were facing the same situation. He alleged that illegal cases were filed against farmers in the Kataram area who staged protests demanding faster procurement of grain. "Maheshwar Reddy also said there was a severe shortage of lorries needed to transport the procured grain from procurement centers to rice mills. As a result, grain stocks were piling up and farm-

ers were facing serious hardships. "He demanded that the government immediately respond by speeding up the procurement and transportation processes and ensure justice for farmers.

## Invitation for Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao Birth Anniversary Celebrations in Manthani TDP Manthani

Peddapalli District, "Manthani," (INDIAN CHRONICLE), "MEDAGONI VENKATESH." Invitation for Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao Birth Anniversary Celebrations in Manthani TDP Manthani: The 105th birth anniversary celebrations of former united Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and founder president of the Telugu Desam Party, late Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, will be celebrated grandly tomorrow at 8:00 AM in the Manthani constituency headquarters of Peddapalli district. "On the occasion of the Telugu Desam Party foundation day and the birth anniversary of NTR, the prestigious "Mahanadu" program organized by the party is being conducted virtually following the call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "As part of the celebrations, floral tributes will be offered to the NTR statue in Manthani town, followed by cake cutting and party flag hoisting at the Telugu Desam Party flag post located opposite the Junior College. "Party leaders appealed to all mandal presidents, secretaries, active members, leaders of affiliated organizations.

## Accreditation Cards Sought for Eligible Journalists in Uppal Constituency



Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Submits Representation to Information & Public Relations Commissioner. UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy on Wednesday met Information and Public Relations Department Commissioner Mukund Reddy and submitted a representation seeking accreditation cards for all eligible journalists working in the Uppal constituency. "Speaking on the occasion, the MLA stated that journalists play a crucial role in bringing public issues to the attention of the government. He said that providing accreditation cards to journalists working from rural to urban areas would ensure them official recognition, security, and access to various facilities. "Bandari Lakshma Reddy urged the Commissioner to take necessary steps to ensure that every eligible journalist receives an accreditation card without delay. "Former Corporator Kotha Rama Rao, BRS State leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior journalist Venkat and others were present during the meeting.

## CONG IS AGAINST INDIA :NRR

Hyderabad, May 27 : Lashing out Congress party, Telangana State BJP President N Ramchander Rao said this grand old party is not just opposed to Modi or the BJP, but has turned against India itself. " Speaking to media at state party office here, Rao criticized that going abroad and insulting our country's democracy and culture has become the nature of Congress leaders. " He reminded that when our leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani were in the opposition, they criticized government policies but never criticized the country. However, he slammed the Congress party for its arrogance, stating that because they feel they have a permanent right to rule, they cannot digest a common man from an OBC community becoming the Prime Minister. " He pointed out that this was why people across the country are moving towards a 'Congress-mukt Bharat' (Congress-free India), and currently, except for three states, all other states in the country have BJP or NDA governments. " On the issue of allotment of funds to Telangana state, BJP state chief said that the central government has so far allocated nearly Rs 13 lakh crore in funds and projects for the development of state. As part of this, the revival of the Ramagundam Fertilizers Factory, the Warangal Coach Factory, the Sammakka-Sarakka Central Tribal University in Mulugu, the AIIMS Hospital, and several National Highways were sanctioned. " He stated that the entire funding for the Hyderabad Regional Ring Road (RRR), a 50-50 partnership for Metro expansion, MMTS services, and eco-friendly electric buses came through the Center. The central government was providing crores of rupees for the completion of pending irrigation projects under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and the Center is reimbursing the complete funds for paddy procurement taking place in the state. " Rao criticized that despite all this, the BRS and Congress parties were blindfolding themselves and running a false campaign that the center has given nothing, adding that they have done nothing for the people except plundering the state. " Alleging that the state Congress government has failed to resolve farmers problems, Rao questioned Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who bragged before the elections that they would "buy till the last grain," as to why he has now abandoned the farmers to face distress on the roads. " He expressed deep grief that due to the unseasonal rains last night, crops across the state were damaged and paddy in IKP centers has become soaked and is sprouting. He slammed the government stating that there were no tarpaulins at procurement centers, no warehouse facilities, and procurements were not being carried out properly. He expressed anger that farmers were being forcibly sent to rice millers, and even the hamali (labor) charges were being collected from the farmers themselves. " BJP state chief castigated the government, saying that since BJP leaders started visiting procurement centers, they have scripted dramas to shift the grain overnight. " He clarified that the 'Rythu Gosa - BJP Bharosa' yatra undertaken by the BJP for farmers will continue uninterrupted. While the first phase of the yatra concludes tomorrow in Nirmal under the leadership of BJLP leader Maheshwar Reddy, the BJP's fight on behalf of farmers will not stop. He demanded that the state government immediately form special teams with Collectors and Agriculture Department officials to assess the crop damage caused by the unseasonal rains and pay immediate compensation to the farmers of damaged horticulture (mango orchards) and other crops. "

NOTICE FOR REGISTRATION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTY (Published as per the directions of Telangana State Election Commission)

NOTICE

Lr.No. 745/TGSEC-L/2026 Dated: 25/5/2026

Notice is hereby given to the general public that Sri Vaddi Srinivas Reddy President of Praja Sainyam Party Telangana State intends to register a political party without reserved symbol with the State Election Commission, Telangana, under the name and style of Praja Sainyam with location of its head office Flat No. C2, 2nd Floor, Sukhmani Apartments, under the registration of political parties and allotment of symbols order, 2018. The main office bearers of the party are 1). Sri Vaddi Srinivas Reddy, President, 2) Sri Vaddi SaiKrishna Reddy, Gen. Secretary, 3) Smt. Vaddi Manjula Reddy, Treasurer. Objections, if any, for such registration from the general public, shall be sent to the Secretary, State Election Commission, Telangana, 1st Floor, DTCP Building, Opp: PTI Building, A.C. Guards, Hyderabad-500 004 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objections are received within the time stipulate, the Commission will proceed to register Praja Sainyam Party as a Political Party to contest elections to Local BODies (Sthanika Samsthalu) held on party basis in Telangana State.

Sd/- G. Lingya Naik, Secretary

## HYDRA Development Works Worth 19 Crore for Ramanthapur Pedda Cheruvu



Uppal Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy inspects Lake Development Works. UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy on Wednesday inspected Ramanthapur Pedda Cheruvu along with HYDRA officials. He assured local residents and poor families living in temporary huts around the lake that the beautification works would be carried out without causing inconvenience to them or nearby colonies. "He stated that no constructions around the lake would be demolished under any circumstances and assured that families residing in huts would be provided double-bedroom houses." "Pedda Cheruvu Will Be Developed as a Mini Tank Bund" "Speaking on the occasion, Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy said that with the support of Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, lakes in the Uppal constituency are being developed with an allocation of 150 crore. "He informed that the government has sanctioned 19

crore for the development of 18.23 acres surrounding Ramanthapur Pedda Cheruvu. The funds will be utilized for the construction of walking tracks, lighting, greenery, and other beautification works to transform the lake into a "Mini Tank Bund." "Parameshwar Reddy alleged that during the previous BRS government, areas such as Habsiguda's St. Joseph School surroundings, Ravindra Nagar Colony, Sai Chitra Nagar, and Maheshwari Nagar frequently faced flooding problems. He said public representatives of that time failed to address the issue despite residents suffering severe hardships." "He further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, SNDP works worth ?16 crore are currently being undertaken to divert floodwater flowing from Osmania University, and that the works are progressing rapidly. "Once completed, these colonies will no longer face flooding issues," he added. "Special Thanks to CM Revanth Reddy" "Former Medchal-Malkajgiri District Youth Congress President and senior Habsiguda Congress leader Kandi Shrawan Kumar Reddy expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Uppal Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy for sanctioning ?19 crore for the development of Pedda Cheruvu. "Former Floor Leader Kandi Aagi Reddy said it was a matter of happiness that the area was finally receiving long-awaited development due to the special initiative of the Chief Minister. "Residents of Maheshwari Nagar, Sai Chitra Nagar, and Ravindra Nagar colonies also expressed happiness after HYDRA officials assured them that their constructions would not be removed. "Several Congress leaders, local residents, party workers, and HYDRA officials participated in the programme.

## Former Uppal Reddy-Kapu Crematorium Committee President Expresses Anguish Over Removal of Plaque

UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Former president of the Uppal Reddy-Kapu Crematorium Protection Committee, Dubbha Narasimha Reddy, expressed deep anguish over the removal of the commemorative plaque of the previous governing committee (Register No. 383/2021). "Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Dubbha Narasimha Reddy stated that he, along with former secretary Mekala Mohan Reddy, former president Mekala Madhusudan Reddy, and other committee members, had worked selflessly for the development of the crematorium. He said it was unfortunate and condemnable that such unjust actions were being carried out by "uncultured individuals" despite their dedicated service. "On this occasion, he suggested that the newly formed governing committee president, Mekala Hanumantha Reddy, along with the members, should reinstall the plaque and uphold the dignity and respect of the former committee. "He questioned the intention behind removing the old committee's plaque, stating that changes in committees are a natural process. He advised that whenever new committees are formed, they should



work together with former committees for the development of the institution rather than encouraging hatred and differences. "Dubbha Narasimha Reddy further questioned whether the present committee members would accept it if the plaques installed during their tenure were removed by future committees after their term ends.

## Garrepalli Satyanarayana Appointed as State Secretary of Bharath Vishwakarma Mahasabha

Peddapalli District, "Manthani" (INDIAN CHRONICLE), "MEDAGONI VENKATESH." "Manthani, Bharath Vishwakarma Mahasabha State President Noundia Santosh Chari announced on Wednesday that Garrepalli Satyanarayana has been appointed as the State Secretary of the organization's state committee. "Speaking on the occasion, newly appointed State Secretary Garrepalli Satyanarayana said that the new responsibility has increased his commitment towards the community and assured that he would actively undertake social service activities. "National President Dr. Ashwini Kumar, General Secretary Subhash Chandra Bose, National Affairs President Ram Raj, National Youth Wing President Dilip Kumar Sharma, and Advisory Committee Member Chinmaya Chari congratulated the newly elected committee members.



## SIR Issue Should Not Be Viewed Through a Political Lens: Former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar



removing the votes of deceased persons and eliminating duplicate voter entries from multiple locations was necessary and questioned why such actions were being opposed. He remarked that the SIR issue is directly connected to public welfare and should not be unnecessarily dragged into political controversies. "He further stated that politicizing every issue reflects the narrow-minded approach of certain political parties. According to him, Congress and TRS (BRS) are attempting to use the issue only for their political survival, which he termed inappropriate. "Prabhakar urged all parties to avoid cheap politics and instead work sincerely towards resolving public issues. He emphasized that public welfare should remain the ultimate objective of all political leaders. "The meeting was attended by BJP State Executive Member Gorige Krishna, State Council Member Satish Kumar, Division President Datta Sai, senior leaders Balachander, Gone Anjaiah, Gone Srikanth, Bharath Reddy, BLA-2 members, key leaders, and a large number of party workers.

UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Former MLA N. V. S. S. Prabhakar stated that the SIR issue should not be viewed from a political angle and criticized Congress and TRS (BRS) parties for allegedly politicizing a matter related to public interest. "He was speaking as the chief guest at a meeting organized under the leadership of BJP BLA-1 Pothagani Gopal Goud in Chiluka Nagar Division of Uppal constituency. "Addressing the gathering, Prabhakar said that

## Bandari Lakshma Reddy Inaugurates Alphabets International Preschool

UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Bandari Lakshma Reddy inaugurated the newly established Alphabets International Preschool at GR Reddy Nagar, Jammigadda. "Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that preschool education lays a strong foundation for the future of children. He appreciated the institution for providing quality education through modern facilities, play-way teaching methods, and experienced teachers. "He stated that the availability of Playgroup, Nursery, LKG, UKG classes, along with daycare facilities, would be highly beneficial for parents. He also remarked that such educational institutions contribute significantly to the creativity and mental development of children. "BRS State leader Soma Shekhar Reddy, school management, parents, local leaders, and others participated in the program. [18:01,



## 'Gotte Pullayya' Demonstrates Humanity by Distributing Water Bottles



Hanamkonda, May 27 (Indian Chronicle): "Gotte Pullayya—a BRS leader and social activist renowned for his active participation in welfare initiatives—distributed bottles of chilled water in Division 61 of Kazipet, located within the limits of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation. This initiative, carried out in the Prashanth Nagar area, received an overwhelming response from local residents." "Speaking on the occasion, Pullayya noted that the prevailing severe summer heat is causing significant

distress to poor and middle-class families, many of whom are unable to afford to purchase cold drinking water. He pointed out that consuming water that has become excessively hot during the summer season often leads to various health complications. With these concerns in mind, and as a humanitarian gesture, he distributed approximately 25 bottles of chilled water. "He stated that the primary beneficiaries of these water bottles included Greater Warangal Municipal workers, passenger auto-rickshaw drivers, roadside vegetable vendors, and workers operating juice stalls under the scorching sun. "Pullayya further remarked that his deep commitment to social service is what inspires him to undertake public welfare initiatives. He affirmed that he would continue to take the lead in organizing and spearheading programs that benefit the community. The service activities he is currently undertaking are garnering praise from local residents and members of the community. "He also unveiled plans to establish a charitable trust in the near future to support economically disadvantaged students by providing assistance such as school fees, uniforms, books, pens, and other educational necessities.

## Former MLC Konda Muralidhar Rao Inspects Site for Munnuru Kapu Community Hall

Warangal, May 27 (Indian Chronicle): Former MLC Konda Muralidhar Rao inspected the site allocated for the construction of the Munnuru Kapu Community Hall at Ursu Karimabad in the Warangal East constituency on Wednesday. During the visit, he reviewed the site conditions along with local leaders and representatives of the Munnuru Kapu community and discussed various development aspects related to the proposed facility. "Speaking on the occasion, Konda Muralidhar Rao stated that steps are being taken to commence the construction works of the Munnuru Kapu Community Hall at the earliest. He said the initiative is being undertaken with the objective of promoting the welfare and development of the community. "He further remarked that the proposed community hall would serve as a valuable venue for social, cultural, and community-related activities of Munnuru Kapu families. He emphasized that efforts would continue towards providing essential infrastructure facilities for the betterment of society. "Konda Muralidhar Rao also assured that all possible measures would be taken



for the development of the community hall and that the building would be constructed with modern amenities to effectively serve the needs of the community.

## Construction Workers Facing Employment Crisis, BNRKS Calls for 'Atma Gaurava Sabha'

KEESARA, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Leaders of BNRKS expressed concern over the growing employment crisis faced by traditional masons and centering workers due to the increasing use of modern machinery in the construction sector across Hyderabad. BNRKS state president Kamalla Aylanna and state vice-president Morugu Yadagiri stated that thousands of skilled workers who once formed the backbone of the building construction industry were now struggling to find regular employment, making it difficult to support their families. The leaders said the growing dominance of machinery, changing contract systems and poor implementation of labour welfare schemes had pushed traditional construction workers into severe financial distress. They demanded immediate intervention from the government to ensure employment security for building construction workers and called for effective implementation of welfare board benefits for all eligible labourers. To highlight these issues and draw the government's attention, BNRKS announced that an "Atma Gaurava Sabha" would be held on June 8 at 12.30 pm at Sundarayya Vignana Kendram in Baghlingampally, Hyderabad. The organisation



said masons, centering workers and construction labourers from across the state were expected to participate in large numbers to voice their concerns and demand protection of their livelihood, dignity and labour rights. BNRKS leaders stated that the meeting would serve as an important platform for safeguarding the interests and welfare of construction workers.

## Radhika Gupta directed officials to complete the census process transparently and within the stipulated deadline.

UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Uppal Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta, IAS, on Wednesday conducted a meeting at the Uppal Zonal Meeting Hall with Deputy Commissioners, Coordinators, and Supervisors of all circles regarding the census programme. "On this occasion, she instructed the officials to carry out the census works with accuracy, transparency, and within the prescribed timeframe. She emphasized the need for continuous monitoring at the field level to avoid any errors and advised the officials to responsibly undertake house listing and data collection activities. "The Zonal Commissioner further stated that officials should work in coordination to ensure that the public does not face any inconvenience and strictly implement the guidelines issued by the government.



## Police Commissioner Inaugurates Hydraulic, Electro-Mechanical Vehicle Lifter



Khammam, May 27 (Indian chronicle): "To improve the maintenance of police vehicles and speed up repair works, Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt inaugurated a hydraulic and electro-mechanical vehicle lifter installed at the MT Section Workshop. "The Police Commissioner stated that since police patrol vehicles are constantly on the roads, vehicle lifters play a crucial role in ensuring repairs are



completed within minutes instead of taking several hours at mechanic workshops. He added that this would not only increase the

lifespan of police department vehicles but also reduce maintenance costs. "Additional DCP (AR) Kumaraswamy, AR ACPs

Sushil Singh and Narsayya, and RIs Kamaraju, Srisailam, Suresh, and Nagul Meera participated in the program.

## 'Indiramma Housing Scheme' – A Boon for Needy Families : MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy

Narsampet/Nekkonda, May 27 (Indian Chronicle) : Narsampet MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy stated that the Congress-led "Praja Government" (People's Government) is implementing the 'Indiramma Housing Scheme' as a flagship welfare program for the economically backward sections of society. He made these remarks on Wednesday while attending the housewarming ceremony of an 'Indiramma' home sanctioned to Cheruku Sunitha and Raju, a couple hailing from Panikara village in Nekkonda Mandal. "Attending the event as the chief guest, the MLA inaugurated the housewarming ceremony by cutting the ribbon and extended his heartfelt best wishes to the beneficiaries." Addressing the gathering, Donthi Madhava Reddy reiterated that providing housing to needy families who do not own a home remains one of the government's primary objectives. He emphasized that the government is taking all necessary measures to ensure that the benefits of the welfare schemes introduced under the 'Praja Government' administration reach every eligible needy family. "He noted that the various welfare programs launched by the government are paving the way for socio-economic development in rural areas. He once again affirmed that the government remains fully committed to the welfare and upliftment of the poor. Participating in this program were Market Committee Chairman Ravula Harish Reddy, Block Congress President Pendyala Hariprasad, Mandal President Lavudya Thirumal, Working Presidents Madati Srinivas, Avula Srinivas, and Konijeti Bhikshapathi, Town President Idunuri Sai Krishna, Challa Sripral Reddy, Narsampet Court AGP Bandi Siva Kumar, former Society Chairman Kommareddy Ravinder Reddy, Garikapati Krishna Rao, Bhanu Prakash, Youth Congress President Singam Prashanth, Social Media Convener Ravula Thirupati Reddy, Birru Kamal, Ramesh, Akhil, Balu, Kola Lakshman, Balu Cheruku Yakayya, Kotha Ravinder Reddy, Deshu Kumaraswamy, Garnepalli Ram Reddy, Inugala Srinivas Reddy, Ramasahaya Upender Reddy, Garnepalli Sammireddy, Akhil, and several other public representatives and Congress leaders.

## Bakrid Festival is a Symbol of Sacrifice and Humanity : MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra



Warangal, May 27 (Indian Chronicle) : On the occasion of the Bakrid festival (Eid-ul-Adha), BRS Parliamentary Party Deputy Leader and Rajya Sabha Member Vaddiraju Ravichandra extended his heartfelt greetings to the Muslim community. In his message on Wednesday, he noted that Bakrid is one of the major festivals celebrated with immense devotion by Muslims across the globe, standing as a profound symbol of sacrifice, faith, and devotion. "MP Ravichandra emphasized that the values of humanity, love, peace, equality, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness—as taught by Prophet Muhammad—remain eternally relevant and worthy of emulation for all of humanity. He lauded BRS President and Telangana's first Chief Minister, Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao, for his leadership in treat-

ing all religions with equal respect and impartiality. "He highlighted that the KCR government has introduced and successfully implemented numerous welfare schemes and development programs aimed at the welfare and upliftment of minorities. He further noted that due respect was accorded to the Muslim community by entrusting Mahmood Ali with the responsibilities of the Home Ministry, in addition to the post of Deputy Chief Minister. "He stated that under KCR's administration, law and order have been maintained smoothly in Telangana, and the culture of 'Ganga-Jamuna Tehzeeb' (composite culture) has been further strengthened. He stated that, in addition to providing financial assistance of Rs. 1,00,116 to poor Muslim families for their daughters' marriages through the 'Shaadi Mubarak' scheme, the government has made quality education accessible through specialized residential schools. He noted that, as a result of these measures, the incidence of child marriages has declined. "He recalled that the KCR government sanctioned funds for the welfare of orphaned children—both boys and girls—at the historic 'Anees-ul-Ghurba' building located in Nampally, Hyderabad. He further mentioned that minority youth pursuing higher education abroad are provided with financial assistance of up to Rs. 20 lakhs, along with a free air ticket, through the 'Chief Minister's Overseas Scholarship' scheme. "Similarly, he noted that cars, vans, and auto-rickshaws were distributed to unemployed youth to facilitate self-employment opportunities. He stated that, during the holy month of Ramadan, funds are allocated not only for the repair and modernization of places of worship but also for the distribution of clothing to the poor. He recalled that honorariums are provided monthly to approximately 10,000 Imams and Muezzins, and that official Iftar dinners are hosted at the LB Stadium. "Extending his wishes that the festival of Bakrid be celebrated with joy and enthusiasm alongside family members, relatives, and friends, MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra expressed his hope that, with the grace of Allah, every family would prosper in peace and happiness. He conveyed his Eid-ul-Adha greetings to Muslims from Telangana—both within the state and abroad.

## Illegal Transportation of Jaggery and Alum Seized

Seized Nelakondapalli, May 27 (Indian chronicle): "Two persons were arrested for illegally transporting raw materials used in the preparation of illicit liquor (country liquor). A case has been registered and investigation is underway. "According to Nelakondapalli Excise CI Ramesh, the accused were transporting 500 kilograms of jaggery and 50 kilograms of alum (patika), which are commonly used in the manufacture of illicit liquor, from Guntur in Andhra Pradesh to Mahabubabad district in Telangana. "During vehicle inspections conducted by local excise police near Vallabhi village in Mudigonda mandal, the car carrying the materials was intercepted and seized. "The accused, identified as Karlapati Swami and S. Yakob from Mahabubabad district, were allegedly supplying these raw materials from Guntur to various tribal hamlets (tandas) in Mahabubabad district for the preparation of illicit liquor. "Police registered a case against them and seized the car along with two mobile phones.

## Ponguleti Srinanna's Compassionate Support

Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy Extends Help to Bereaved Families: "Khammam, Kusumanchi, May 27 (Indian chronicle): "Kusumanchi: Under the 'Atmiya Bharosa' initiative of the PSR Charitable Trust, financial assistance of ₹10,000 each was provided to 118 bereaved families from various villages in Kusumanchi mandal of the Paleru constituency, where deaths occurred due to different reasons. "The villages include Dharmathanda, Keshavapuram, Jeelacheruvu, Gopalraopeta, Chegomma, Muthyalagudem, Pocharam, Kishtapuram, Turkagudem, Narasimhulagudem, Kothur, Erragadda, Gaigolapalli, Choutapalli, Bodiya Thanda, Lal Singh Thanda, and Sandhya Thanda. "The financial assistance was distributed by Kusumanchi MLA Camp Office In-charge Bhimireddy Srinivas Reddy on behalf of Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy (popularly known as Sheenanna) to the family members of the deceased. "Recently, ₹10,000 was also handed over to the family members of Talluri Sarasamma from Gopalraopeta village, particularly to her son Talluri Venkateswarlu, following her demise. "Speaking on the occasion, the affected family members said that the support extended during their difficult time brought them great relief.



They appreciated Sheenanna's services, describing him as a symbol of humanitarian values. They also praised Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy for standing by people in their hardships and happiness. "The program was attended by Kusumanchi Mandal Congress Party President Bajjuri Venkata Reddy, district Cheruvu Vice-Sarpanch Nallamala Shekhar, Inturi Pullayya, Gade Upender, Jonnalagadda Ravi, Gade Venkateswarlu, Nallamala Naveen, Battula Satyanarayana, Bellam Sunil, Aithagani Rangopal, Mokka Upender, along with village leaders and party workers.



Two Arrested While Transporting Goods from Guntur to Mahabubabad — Car and Mobile Phones

## Officials Must Work Committedly for Protection of Consumer and Human Rights

"Distribution of Anniversary Diaries by National Consumer & Human Rights Protection Committee in Manuguru: "Manuguru, May 27, Indian Chronicle: Under the aegis of the National Consumer & Human Rights Protection Committee, a special programme was organized today in Manuguru by the Telangana State Committee on the occasion of the recently held 22nd Annual Celebrations at Constitution Bhavan, Delhi. "On this occasion, anniversary diaries of the organization were presented to several officials, public representatives, and prominent personalities including Mandal Revenue Officer Nares, Singareni Collieries Company Limited Manuguru Area General Manager Durgam Ramachander, Manuguru Circle Inspector Nagababu, SI Nagesh, Telangana Boggu Gani Karmika Sangham Central Vice President Vookanti Prabhakar, and senior journalist Pindiga Venkat. "The programme was conducted under the leadership of Telangana State Secretary Edelli Bhavani Shankar. State Senior Vice President Mandadi Sanjeeva Rao, journalists Odelu and Esampalli Shivakumar attended the event as chief guests. "Speaking on the occasion, the leaders and officials stated that the protection of consumer rights and human rights is the responsibility of every official. They urged government authorities to work with commitment to ensure justice for the people and safeguard their rights. They also emphasized that creating awareness in society would further strengthen the protection of consumer and human rights. "They fur-



ther advised people to be aware of their rights and to come forward legally whenever injustice occurs. The programme concluded successfully in a cordial atmosphere.

## Man Arrested for Murder of Labourer in Gabbilalapeta



JAWAHAR NAGAR, May 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Police arrested a man identified as Rajput Ajay Rai alias Zeenath, aged 30, in connection with the murder of Anil Kumar at Gabbilalapeta, Donda Thota area. According to police, the body of Anil Kumar, aged around 40 to 45 years, was found on May 22 following a complaint lodged by house owner Ashok, after which a case was registered. During the investigation, police received cred-

ible information on May 26 and traced the accused Rajput Ajay Rai, a native of Maharaj district of Uttar Pradesh and employed as a painting worker. During interrogation, the accused allegedly confessed to killing Anil Kumar on the evening of May 18. Police said that on the day of the incident, Anil Kumar and Ajay Rai had attended a gathering and consumed alcohol before returning to Anil's house in Ambedkar Nagar at around 4 pm. Another individual identified as Rohit was already present there in an intoxicated condition. At around 5 pm, Anil Kumar reportedly demanded payment of pending wages amounting to ₹8,000 from Ajay Rai and asked him to send the money home. Police said an argument broke out after Anil allegedly abused Ajay Rai verbally. Following the altercation, Ajay Rai allegedly assaulted Anil Kumar with his hands and later attacked him repeatedly with a wooden stick on the head, back and spine. Rohit also allegedly joined the assault and struck Anil Kumar on the back of the head and body using the same stick. Police said Anil Kumar collapsed on the spot and died due to the injuries. Believing that he was dead, both accused fled from the room. While escaping, Ajay Rai allegedly took away Anil Kumar's mobile phone. Based on mobile phone signal analysis, police traced and arrested Ajay Rai and later produced him before the court for judicial remand. Police said efforts were underway to trace and arrest the second accused, Rohit, who remains absconding.

## Subsidised Seed Distribution Brings Relief to Farmers

"KEESARA, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Subsidised distribution of jilugu and janumu seeds was organised under the aegis of the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society as part of efforts to support farmers and reduce cultivation expenses. Farmers who participated in the programme said the subsidy provided by the government was offering much-needed relief at a time when agricultural input costs were steadily increasing. Speaking on the occasion, society chairman Ramidi Prabhakar Reddy advised farmers to adopt modern farming methods to achieve higher crop yields. He urged farmers to make effective use of various welfare schemes being implemented by the government for the agriculture sector. Among those who participated in the programme were Pannala Bucchi Reddy, directors K. Anji Reddy, Mallesh and Dharna Nayak, Agriculture Officer Madhaveelatha and AEO Manoj Reddy. A large number of farmers attended the event and collected the subsidised



seeds. Organisers stated that the cooperative society would continue extending necessary support and assistance to farmers whenever required.

## Chiluka Nagar Congress Division President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj Inspects Government School Facilities



"Will bring the issues to the notice of Parameshwar Reddy and ensure solutions" – Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj: "UPPAL, MAY 27 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "Chiluka Nagar Congress Division President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj said that government schools in the state are being strengthened under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and that students are receiving quality education on par with corporate institutions. "Following the directions of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, Rajesh Mudiraj, along with Division In-charge Agam Reddy, visited the Government High School in the division and inspected the facilities while interacting with school authorities regarding existing problems. "Speaking on the occasion, Rajesh Mudiraj stated that due to the efforts of the headmaster and teachers, students are receiving quality educa-

tion and are successfully competing with students from corporate schools. He said that the problems identified in the school would be brought to the notice of Parameshwar Reddy. "He further stated that Parameshwar Reddy would take the issues to district-level officials and government authorities to ensure their resolution. Later, he appreciated the headmaster for guiding students effectively and achieving excellent results in the Class 10 examinations. "Division In-charge Akiti Agam Reddy, Amareshwari, Nallavelli Mahender Mudiraj, Gandikota Ganesh, Dundagula Shankar, Pastam, Sriramulu, Amar, Pallati David, Ramcharla Balaram, Palnati Kishtaiyah, Marapakka Nagaiah, Satyam, Jagadeesh, Shiva and others participated in the programme.

## UPSC releases Civil Services prelims 2026 provisional answer key for first time

Hyderabad: For the first time, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Wednesday released the provisional answer key for papers I and II of the Civil Services Preliminary Examination, which was conducted on May 24. Candidates can verify their answers with the key provided by the Commission. Objections, if any, on the provisional key have to be submitted through the website https://upsonline.nic.in by May 31 (6 pm).

## Himachal Pradesh Gram Panchayat elections: Sirmour tops polling in Phase 1 with 20.22% voter turnout

GNS News Agency, May 27

Himachal Pradesh recorded 18.90 per cent voter turnout by 9.45 am in the first phase of Gram Panchayat elections across 1,293 panchayats on Tuesday, with Sirmour district leading at 20.22 per cent. The lowest turnout of 14.21 per cent was recorded in the tribal district of Lahaul-Spiti, where polling is being conducted in 17 panchayats. "Lower districts, including Kangra, Una, parts of Bilaspur, Sirmour, Baddi, and Nalagarh in Solan, witnessed early morning enthusiasm to avoid scorching heat and heatwave conditions," an official said. State Election Commission (SEC) officials said that 16.10 lakh of the 50.79 lakh voters cast their votes in the first phase of the panchayat elections.

Himachal Pradesh Gram Panchayat elections Women wait in a queue at a polling booth in Mandi district to cast their votes in the first phase of the Himachal Pradesh Gram Panchayat elections. (Express Photo by Saurabh Parashar) The Gram Panchayat elections will be held in three phases, with the second phase on May 28 and the third on May 30. Voting for the first phase of the Panchayat elections in Himachal Pradesh began at 7 am on Tuesday, with long queues seen outside polling booths since early



morning. The SEC has introduced colour-coded ballot papers for different posts to avoid confusion among voters. While light green ballot papers are being used for the panchayat pradhan posts, yellow are for up-pradhan, and white for panchayat member. Other colours, including pink, will be used for Panchayat Samiti members and light blue for Zila Parishad members. The SEC said that there are 50,79,048 electors, which includes 25,67,770 men and 25,11,249 women.

## 'As AI advances, theatre's future will become even brighter': Paresh Rawal at Shreeram Lago National Theatre Festival

GNS News Agency, May 27

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape entertainment, veteran actor Paresh Rawal said theatre's future would become "even brighter", while he and Naseeruddin Shah reflected on acting, live performance and theatre traditions at the inauguration of the Shreeram Lago National Theatre Festival in Pune on Monday. "The future of theatre is very bright. In fact, as AI advances, theatre's future will become even brighter," Rawal said during a media interaction at the inaugural edition of the week-long festival at Shreeram Lago Rang-Avakash.

The two actors also spoke during an on-stage conversation at the festival's inauguration, reflecting on theatre traditions, their acting journeys and evolving performance practices. Speaking about acting training, Shah said institutions offer opportunities to learn, but added that formal education alone does not shape an actor, emphasising that observation, experience and continued engagement with theatre remain central to a performer's growth. "Life is the best teacher," Shah said, adding that many accomplished performers developed their craft through observation and experience. Reflecting on his years at the National School of Drama (NSD), Shah said that while the institution provided exposure and opportunities to perform, his understanding of acting evolved further during his time at the Film and



Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. Rawal also recalled discovering theatre through Gujarati drama competitions before gradually expanding his engagement with Marathi theatre. Both actors also praised Marathi theatre traditions. "The acting in Marathi theatre has always been top-notch — absolute perfection," Rawal said, while Shah added, "Some of the finest theatrical performances I have seen in my entire life have been in Marathi plays, particularly in Pune." Shah also expressed optimism about younger audiences engaging with theatre, saying he had "great faith" in younger generations and encouraging them to utilise spaces dedicated to theatre and performance.

## Breather for Punjab as HC adjourns hearing to July 1, issues notice on stay plea

GNS News Agency, May 27

Punjab The court also asked the government to submit the timeframe within which the remaining amount can be released. The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Monday adjourned the hearing in the matter pertaining to release of pending dearness allowance (DA) arrears of Punjab government employees and pensioners till July 1. The court also issued notices to the respondents on the Punjab government's plea seeking a stay on the April 8 order of the single bench, wherein the court had directed the State to release 58 per cent DA to the employees and pensioners.

As the matter came up for resumed hearing before a division bench of Justices Jasgurpreet Singh Puri and Amarjot Bhatti, Senior Advocate DS Patwalia, appearing for the Punjab government, submitted a sealed report of the Cabinet sub-committee outlining the proposed roadmap for releasing the pending DA arrears. Patwalia submitted that the State is acting on the recommendations of the Cabinet sub-committee regarding the release of pending DA installments and implementation of revised DA rates for employees and sought a stay on the single Bench's April 8 order. A single judge bench on April 8 had directed the Punjab government to grant 58 per cent DA alongwith arrears to all employees and pensioners at par with officers from the IAS, IPS, IFS and judicial services. While hearing the challenge to the order, the division bench on May 21 had agreed to consider extending the June 30 deadline, provided the State submits a plan detailing the amount it is willing to pay. The court also asked the government to submit the timeframe within which the remaining amount can be released. During the resumed hearing, Patwalia placed before the Bench a recommendation of the Cabinet sub-committee constituted to assess the financial condition of the State for granting arrears of the 6th Pay Commission and DA/DR instalments to state employees. The Bench, however, orally observed that it did not want recommendations and wanted practical efforts on the ground, not on paper.



Patwalia submitted that the state was not in a position to comply with the single bench directions to release arrears of more than Rs 15,000 crore to employees by June 30, 2026. In its appeal, the State contended that the single bench judgment proceeds on the premise that employees and pensioners have an enforceable right to claim DA/DR at par with the central government or All India Services officers. The appeal states that such a premise is "fundamentally erroneous" as neither the Punjab Civil Services (Revised Pay) Rules, 2009 nor 2021 provide for automatic or time-bound parity with Central Government DA rates. The State has further submitted that the grant, timing and manner of disbursement of DA/DR is a matter of executive policy, dependent upon financial capacity and budgetary prioritisation. It has stated that it has not denied DA/DR or acted arbitrarily, but has extended the benefit in a phased manner. The appeal also states that DA up to 119 per cent has already been released and that a structured liquidation plan involving liability of approximately Rs 14,191 crore has been approved by the Cabinet. The State has argued that the single bench judgment "travels beyond the permissible limits of judicial review" by entering into fiscal policy and financial administration, and that implementation of the directions would impose an immediate and substantial financial burden on the state.

## Sign that Gujarat's people want change: Kejriwal on AAP's Narmada panchayat win

GNS News Agency, May 27

Accusing the BJP and Congress of being "partners in looting Gujarat," Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Monday thanked voters in the tribal-dominated Narmada district for helping the party secure control of the district panchayat — calling the victory the beginning of a political "revolution" that would "spread across Gujarat ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections." Addressing a public rally in Rajpipla on Monday, Kejriwal said that Gujarat had, for decades, remained "trapped" between the BJP and Congress, whom he accused of secretly working together while pretending to be rivals in public. Kejriwal said, "People used to say that no third party could survive in Gujarat. But for the first time, the people of Narmada have brought in a third party... This shows that the people of Gujarat want change. What the people of Narmada district have shown today, tomorrow the whole of Gujarat will show."

Projecting the Narmada victory as a symbolic breakthrough in Gujarat's tribal belt, Kejriwal said the "spark" ignited by tribal voters in the district would spread across the state. In a sharp attack on both BJP and Congress, Kejriwal alleged that the BJP and Congress routinely supported each other during elections by informally sharing candidates in areas where one side lacked organisational strength. Kejriwal alleged, "They have brotherhood between them,

joint businesses, even family relations... During these panchayat elections, BJP leaders themselves said that wherever Congress did not have candidates, 'We gave them candidates.' The Congress also said that wherever they did not have candidates, BJP gave them candidates. Together they are looting Gujarat." Kejriwal also referred to AAP tribal leader Chaitar Vasava, accusing the BJP government of "targeting opposition voices through arrests and intimidation". He claimed that the Narmada verdict was a "strong slap" on the BJP after Vasava was jailed for several days. "For 30 years, BJP's corruption and oppression have caused so many atrocities. Whoever they catch, they put in jail, they frighten people, threaten them, file false cases... If someone has to go to jail, Congress leaders do not go to jail — he is your leader, (AAP's) Chaitar Vasava, who goes to jail. This time, by electing AAP in Narmada district, after they kept Chaitar Vasava in jail for many days, you people have delivered a strong slap on the face of BJP — the entire tribal community has slapped BJP in the face. Urging newly elected local representatives to govern honestly, Kejriwal said the Narmada District Panchayat administration would now be closely watched across Gujarat and the country. "People have trusted us. We must work honestly and serve them well so that the whole state talks about the work done in Narmada," he said. Kejriwal is on a three-day visit to Gujarat

## Declare cow as national animal, stop mob lynchings: Muslim group

GNS News Agency, May 27

Moolnavasi Muslim Manch in Pune has demanded that the cow should be declared as the 'national animal', in an appeal to reduce mob lynchings. Activists led by the president of the Manch Anjum Inamdar on Monday submitted a memorandum to District Collector Jitendra Dudi demanding the same. A press release by the group said, "In our country, which not only regards the cow as sacred but also accords her the status of a mother, it is deeply distressing to witness the shedding of innocent human blood in her very name. The mob lynching (violence by crowds), the politics of hate, and this malicious game of defaming a specific community (Muslims)—all perpetrated in the name of the cow—must cease immediately. To find a permanent resolution to this issue, the Central Government should urgently declare the cow a 'National Animal'."

Inamdar told The Indian Express, "Our religion has not made it compulsory to eat meat. If the cow was to legally receive the status of a National Animal, she would be accorded her rightful respect, and the entire responsibility for her protection would officially devolve upon the designated state machinery. This measure would significantly aid in curbing mob lynching." He added that Chief Minister



Fadnavis has said that action under MCOCA will be taken. "MCOCA will not be put on the farmer who sold the barren cow, but it will be put on the transporter. All of this is false love of the government, be it the Maharashtra government or Union government. Our demand is that all these religious issues where religious tensions and riots are created... all these won't happen. Hindus will also not die and Muslims will also not die. So we demand that the cow should be declared as a national animal," he said.

## 2 men arrested for crushing Delhi guard with SUV, tore off FASTag to fake accident

GNS News Agency, May 27

The Delhi Police said Tuesday they have arrested two men and apprehended two minors for the murder of a 60-year-old security guard in West Delhi's Peeragarhi area Sunday, which the accused allegedly tried to portray as an accident. While the police are yet to establish a clear motive, they suspect the accident may have been triggered by road rage. They said they are examining the role of each individual present in the vehicle at the time of the incident. Police sources said the accused attempted to destroy evidence and avoid identification after the incident. The FASTag installed on the SUV had allegedly been removed to prevent investigators from tracing the vehicle's movement through toll data and electronic surveillance systems.

According to the police, the incident took place early Sunday after an argument reportedly between the victim, Vijender Bharadwaj, and the occupants of a black SUV near the tempo stand in Peeragarhi village. The police found Bharadwaj critically injured after they reached the spot following a PCR call regarding a road accident around 4 am. He was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead. CCTV footage from the area allegedly showed the victim being hit by the SUV multiple times. Investigators sus-



pect the vehicle was deliberately used to crush the guard as the driver ran over the victim twice. The footage also shows the occupants coming out of the car, having an argument with the victim, and then beating him up, after which they ran the car over him. The police scanned footage from several CCTV cameras across adjoining roads before tracking down the suspects. The killing triggered outrage in the area after CCTV visuals of the incident surfaced online. Senior officers said forensic examination of the vehicle and technical analysis of digital evidence are part of the ongoing investigation.

## BJP picks OBC, tribal members for Surat district panchayat top posts

The BJP has picked Sameer Modi, a first-time member and an OBC leader, as the president of the Surat district panchayat, sidelining several senior leaders. The party has also selected Umed Chaudhary, a tribal leader, as the vice-president of the Surat district panchayat. The BJP won 35 of the 36 seats in Surat District Panchayat in the April 26 elections. While Modi, 52, a commerce graduate, won from the Kholvad seat, which has a sizable Muslim population, Chaudhary, 55, a double graduate in economics, was elected from the Jankhavav district panchayat seat. Modi and Chaudhary submitted the party mandate for the posts to the Surat District Collector on Monday.

Surat district BJP president Bharat Rathod said that it is for the first time that an OBC leader and a tribal leader become the president and the vice-president of the Surat District Panchayat. "New faces have been selected to lead the Surat District Panchayat. We are hopeful that they will work for the welfare of people and take the state and central government policies and schemes to the beneficiaries," Rathod said. Talking to The Indian Express, Modi, who contested the elections for the first time, thanked the party for making him the president of the district panchayat. "Kholvad seat has a sizable number of muslim voters. The AAP candidate, Rekhaben Sanghani, has divided the BJP's strong vote bank, but the same gap was filled by muslim voters," Modi said. Modi, who has seven automobile showrooms in Vadodara and Surat, said that over 60 per cent of the staff in his firm are muslims. "My company has an annual turnover of Rs. 2,200 crore," he said. "My father was president of Kamrej Taluka Panchayat for two terms. He died on May



24, 2015 and the party selected me as the president of the Surat District Panchayat on the same day 10 years later — May 24, 2026," he said, thanking the BJP for giving him the top post. "After my selection, I have made an appeal to the party workers and leaders to bring notebooks instead of bouquets and garlands to me. In a single day, I got over 1,300 notebooks and stationery items, which I will distribute to poor students in the government school in Kamrej taluka when the new academic year starts," Modi said. Thanking the BJP, Chaudhary, a farmer by profession, said he never expected that the party would pick him ahead of the elected senior leaders. "I was elected a member of Jankhavav Taluka panchayat for the past two terms, and my wife has been the sarpanch for the past 20 years in Jankhavav. My first priority is to carry forward public welfare works. I plan to do something for tribal youth and others in my community in Surat district," Chaudhary said.

## Dera chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh gets 30-day parole, 16th since 2020

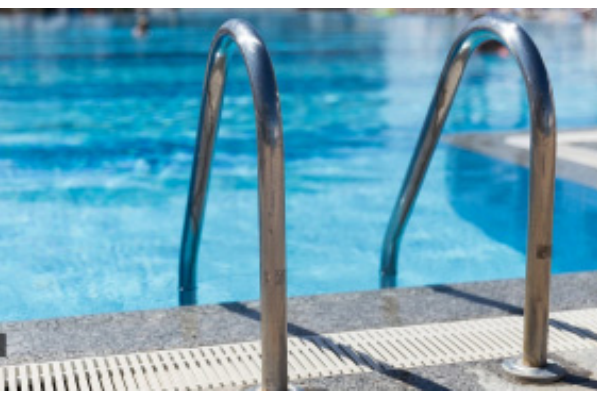


GNS News Agency, May 27

Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, serving a 20-year sentence for raping two of his disciples, Tuesday walked out of Rohtak's Sunaria prison on a 30-day parole. It will be the 16th time Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh will move out of the prison since his conviction in the rape case in August 2017. The district administration and police authorities have deployed additional security outside the prison complex. According to officers, Ram Rahim will stay at his Dera headquarters in Sirsa during the parole period. He is not allowed to assemble his followers at his Deras, but he can address them virtually. Ram Rahim last walked out of prison on January 5 on a 40-day parole. Before that, he got a 40-day parole on August 5, 2025, to celebrate his birthday on August 15. In April 2025, he was released on a 21-day furlough. In January, 2025, he was released on a 30-day parole a week before the Delhi Assembly elections, and stayed at the Dera's headquarters in Sirsa. In earlier instances, when he was out of jail, he mostly remained at the Dera's ashram in Uttar Pradesh's Baghat

and twice at Sirsa. In August 2017, a Panchkula court found him guilty on two counts of rape and sentenced him to 20 years in prison. The court also ordered him to pay a fine of Rs. 15 lakh to each victim. Reacting to the conviction, his followers went on a rampage and entered into a fierce clash with the armed forces. The confrontation resulted in the deaths of over 40 people in Panchkula and Sirsa. The Dera chief was airlifted in a chopper from Panchkula and taken to Rohtak's Sunaria prison. Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh first came out of prison on October 24, 2020 (1-day parole); then on May 21, 2021 (12-hour parole to meet his ailing mother); February 7, 2022 (21-day furlough); June 2022 (30-day parole); October 14, 2022 (40-day parole). He was then released on January 21, 2023 (40-day parole); July 20, 2023 (30-day parole); November 21, 2023 (21-day furlough); January 19, 2024 (50-day furlough); August 13, 2024 (21-day furlough); October 2, 2024 (20-day parole); January 28, 2025 (30-day parole); April 9 2025 (21-day furlough) and August 5, 2025 (40-day parole). In March, the Punjab and Haryana High Court acquitted Ram Rahim Singh in the high-profile murder of a journalist, Ram Chander Chhatrapati, in 2002. In May 2024, he and four others were cleared in the killing of former sect manager Ranjit Singh, with the court citing flaws in the investigation. In May 2024, he and four others were cleared in the killing of former sect manager Ranjit Singh, with the court citing flaws in the investigation. The Dera chief is currently serving consecutive convictions of 10 years rigorous imprisonment each for raping two of his disciples. He was convicted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court in Panchkula in August 2017. Ram Rahim Singh is facing another case for allegedly being involved in enforcing the castration of hundreds of his followers.

## Cricket diploma student drowns at Haryana sports university swimming pool



GNS News Agency, May 27

A 20-year-old student of the Sports University of Haryana in Rai in Sonapat allegedly drowned in the university's swimming pool late Thursday, raising concerns about safety measures at the pool and whether all required protocols were properly followed. The deceased has been identified as Nishant Gautam, a resident of Palwal and a

final-year student pursuing a PG Diploma in Cricket at the university. According to reports, the incident occurred around 8.30 pm when Gautam entered the swimming pool and drowned in deep water. Officials said he was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital by university staff and fellow students, but doctors declared him "dead on arrival".

His maternal family hails from Chirawata village, which is also the native village of Haryana Sports Minister Gaurav Gautam. Students and staff expressed shock over the tragedy, particularly since the swimming pool had reportedly resumed operations only earlier this week. Initial reports indicate that university authorities were informed of the accident after a delay, which may have hampered rescue efforts. The Sonapat police are examining CCTV footage, security arrangements at the pool, and the presence of staff members at the time of the accident. Authorities are also investigating whether a lifeguard was present at the time. The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team was inspecting the site, and the swimming pool area has currently been sealed as part of the investigation. The police said they have sent the body for postmortem examination. An investigation is underway to determine the exact circumstances surrounding the incident, they added.

## Six months on, ESIC worker awaits disability benefits after losing leg in road accident



GNS News Agency, May 27

An ESIC-insured worker in Punjab is awaiting disability benefits, medical reimbursement and approval for an artificial limb nearly six months after losing his right leg in a road accident. An ESIC-insured worker in Punjab is awaiting disability benefits, medical reimbursement and approval for an artificial limb nearly six months after losing his right leg in a road accident. Nearly six months after losing his right leg in a road accident, an insured worker under the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme is still waiting for disability benefits, medical reimbursement and approval for an artificial limb, forcing him to run from one office to the other for relief. Sanjay Ahirwar (27), a resident of Kurawala, Derabassi, had been working as a CNC operator with a private engineering firm at Bhagwanpur on Barwala Road through a contractor and was registered under the ESI scheme. Speaking to The Indian Express, Ahirwar said the accident took place on December 3, 2025, when he was returning home on a motorcycle with a friend after duty hours. Near Pir Baba at Hansa Park, Kurawala, a stray animal allegedly hit the motorcycle, causing both riders to fall on the road. Moments later, a speeding tractor-trolley

reportedly ran over Ahirwar's right leg. Passersby rushed him to Derabassi Civil Hospital from where he was referred to the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGI), Chandigarh. He remained admitted there from December 3 to December 19, during which doctors amputated his right leg. Ahirwar alleged that despite spending over Rs 1 lakh on treatment from his own pocket, he has not received reimbursement, leave salary, disability pension or financial assistance for an artificial limb. "I have visited the ESIC local office in Derabassi several times, but no one is listening. Officials behaved rudely and even warned me not to visit repeatedly," he alleged. According to his counsel, advocate Jasbir Singh, three quotations for an artificial limb were forwarded to the Senior Medical Officer, Mohali, and later sent to the Director Health Services (ESI), Punjab, Chandigarh, on March 20, 2026. However, approval for the amount is still pending. Singh said Ahirwar is the sole earning member of his family and has remained unemployed since the accident. "If the ESIC authorities fail to release the disablement benefits within 15 days, we will move the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Mohali," the advocate said. When contacted, Dr Anil Goyal, Director Health Services (ESI), Punjab, said disability-related cases under the ESI scheme are handled by the central ESIC authorities and referred this correspondent to the ESIC regional office. Responding to the matter, Deepak Malik said the issue had "just come to his notice" and assured that the case would be examined immediately. "We will check why the matter is pending and where exactly it has been held up. If treatment was taken in an emergency at a non-ESI hospital, reimbursement can be processed after submission of the required forms. We will also examine the delay in approval of the artificial limb and ensure relief is provided to the beneficiary at the earliest," Malik said.

## Mumbai Metro Aqua Line disrupted for nearly an hour, commuters stranded

GNS News Agency, May 27

Services on Mumbai Metro's Aqua Line were disrupted for nearly an hour from 8 am Friday during peak office hours, stranding hundreds of passengers. "Due to a technical issue, train services on both downline and upline routes experienced delays earlier today. The fault has since been rectified, and normal train services have now been restored," an official from the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL) said. Passengers inside metro stations were left waiting for trains for over an hour, without mobile network access, while metro staff restricted entry at stations to prevent overcrowding. Commuters also complained about the lack of proper communication from metro staff.

"Absolute chaos at Aqua Line Metro stations with commuters stranded and confused, and no communication from authorities. Services have been disrupted for over 40-50 minutes with no clarity on when operations will resume. The least commuters deserve during such situations are timely updates and basic communication," Ishan Tanna posted



on X at 9.40 am. Some commuters reported turning back from the metro stations because of the crowds to use the local trains. Others noted that cooling at the stations was not working properly, and the lack of a phone network made it difficult to communicate with others and obtain information.

## Pune police probe if jailed gangster Bandu Andekar plotted attack on murder accused's brother

GNS News Agency, May 27

A day after the attempt on the life of the brother of an accused in the murder of former corporator Vanraj Andekar, Pune police are probing whether the leader of the Andekar gang and Vanraj's father, Bandu Andekar, orchestrated the attack from inside prison. "Eleven people have been booked so far. Five people have been arrested and one minor has been detained. Further investigation is underway," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Gauhas Hasan said on Thursday.

Officials said that apart from the six apprehended, the other accused booked in the case include Bandu's son Krushna as well as some gang members and family members lodged in various prisons across the state. Sources said police were probing the visitors who had met Bandu and his associates in prison. The five arrested suspects have been identified as Aftab Sharif Sayyed (20), Rushiprasad Moham Ambat (21), Awez Ashpak Shaikh (26), Vedant Shrinivas Temgire (19), and Aman Farukh Bagwale (21). On Wednesday morning, 26-year-old Akshay alias Bala Mhaske had gone to Balajinagar on Pune-Satara Road for breakfast. While he was standing near Rajarshi Shahu Bank Chowk, assailants arrived on two-wheelers and opened fire at him. One bullet struck his leg. The attackers then allegedly assaulted him with a machete before fleeing the scene. Akshay underwent surgery at a private hospital on Wednesday night and is currently undergoing treatment. Police said Akshay does not have any known criminal antecedents. Akshay is the brother of Akash Mhaske, who was earlier arrested in connection with the 2024 murder of former NCP corporator Vanraj Andekar. Police had alleged that Akash procured pistols from Madhya Pradesh for the accused involved in his murder.

Vanraj was shot dead on September 1, 2024, at Doka Talim Chowk in Nana Peth. Police said the murder stemmed from rivalry over dominance as well as a property dispute. Several accused, including Vanraj's sister Sanjeevani Komkar, her husband Jayant Komkar, and brother-in-law Ganesh Komkar, were arrested in connection with the murder. Later, on September 5, 2025, the Andekar gang allegedly killed Ayush Komkar (18), son of Ganesh Komkar, in retaliation. Ayush was shot dead inside a residential society premises on the eve of the Ganesh immersion procession that year. The 68-year-old Bandu,



who is Ayush's grandfather, is currently in jail in connection with the murder along with two of his family members. Investigators suspect that a deepening rift within the family over the patriarch's illicit wealth and control of the gang's criminal network is the central reason behind the murders of two family members, a year apart. Investigators said the feud has split the once-unified Andekar gang into two factions.

The gang has allegedly been involved in various criminal activities, including collecting protection money, or hafta, from small businesses and extorting larger sums from commercial establishments in areas under their influence. Police said the gang has also been involved in running gambling dens and using muscle power in land and property deals. Officials added that the family acquired several commercial and residential properties and held stakes in various contracts through its criminal influence. While the gang battled rivals for supremacy in Pune over the years, members of the family also entered politics in the 1990s. Police said that while Bandu allegedly handled gang operations, his brothers Udaykant and Ramakant became corporators in the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). Vatsala Andekar alias Akka became Pune mayor in 1998. Bandu's wife Rajashree Andekar won civic polls in 2007 and 2012. The family had links to the Congress and the NCP with Vanraj winning the Pune Municipal Corporation elections in 2017 on an NCP ticket.

## Mohali youth jumps into Bhakra canal, family alleges harassment

A 21-year-old youth allegedly died by suicide after jumping into the Bhakra canal following a dispute over parking in Mohali's Phase 4 area. The deceased, identified as Pawan, was undergoing police recruitment training and was staying in a PG accommodation at House No. 636 in Phase 4. Divers later recovered the body from the canal. The body has been kept in the mortuary for postmortem examination. The deceased's father, Prem Kumar, a resident of Nihal Khara village in Abohar, alleged that his son took the extreme step after being "harassed" by a municipal corporation election candidate of a political party, his son and the police. He claimed that before the incident, Pawan had sent video and audio recordings to one of his friends. According to information, the dispute began over parking a vehicle outside the residence of an MC election candidate in Phase 4. Allegedly, the candidate, contesting from Ward No. 8, and his son asked Pawan, who lived in another locality, to remove the vehicle parked there, leading to a heated argument.

The family alleged that Pawan and his friend, Madhav Shah, were later assaulted and taken to the police station after police were called to the spot. Prem Kumar said he was in Ganganagar to purchase medicines when he received a phone call from his son. "My son told me that he was badly beaten by the MC candidate and his son at the spot and was humiliated at the police station as well," he alleged. According to the father, Pawan told him over the



phone: "Papa, first I was beaten at the spot, then taken to the police station and humiliated badly. Now I am going to die." Pawan's friend, Madhav Shah, a national-level baseball player, also alleged that both of them were assaulted and later harassed at the police station. He further claimed that they were falsely accused of consuming and selling drugs. The incident triggered tension in the area, with the family demanding strict action against the accused. Police said an investigation is underway. DSP City-1 Gurcharan Singh said no suicide note had been recovered so far. "Statements of the family members are being recorded and all aspects are being examined. Further action will be taken based on the findings of the investigation," he said.

## UPSC clears one of Haryana's biggest IPS appointment batches, 21 officers promoted



GNS News Agency, May 27

In one of the largest batches of promotions to the Indian Police Service (IPS) from the Haryana Police Service (HPS) in recent years, as many as 21 officers have been elevated to the IPS, with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs issuing a notification on Thursday. The promotions, cleared by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on May 14, mark a major career milestone for the officers and cover vacancies spread across six years between 2020 and 2025. The newly promoted officers include Rajeev Deswal, Mukesh Kumar, Dharambir Singh, Baljinder Singh, Jaibir Singh, Dhyan Singh Poonia, Tahir Hussain, Rajesh Kumar, Ravinder Kumar, Naninder Singh, Vijay Singh, Siddharth Dhanda, Mamta Kharb, Karan Goel and Sandeep

Kumar. Apart from the confirmed promotions, the UPSC has also cleared provisional inductions for two HPS officers. Sumer Singh's promotion will take effect only after clearance in the disciplinary proceedings pending against him. In a separate case, Tanya Singh's promotion has also been made provisional, subject to the outcome of both disciplinary and criminal proceedings. Four officers — Suresh Kumar, Virender Singh, Krishan Kumar and Raj Kumar Walia — have already retired, though sources said they may still join the IPS as the retirement age in the IPS is 60 years, compared with 58 years in the HPS.

The promotions cover five vacancies from 2020, four each from 2021 and 2022, one from 2023, three from 2024 and four arising in 2025. Officials awaiting promotion have urged that the exercise be conducted annually, arguing that regular career progression boosts morale among field officers. The development comes against the backdrop of a parallel issue in the civil services. In July 2025, the UPSC's Departmental Promotion Committee recommended the promotion of 18 Haryana Civil Service (HCS) officers to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). However, eight others were granted only provisional promotions due to a vigilance chargesheet filed in Hisar over alleged irregularities in the 2001 HCS examination. Although the Punjab and Haryana High Court quashed the chargesheet in February this year, the Supreme Court stayed the order in March, leaving the future of those officers uncertain.

## Wary of voter deletions during SIR, Karnataka mulls petition in Supreme Court

GNS News Agency, May 27

Amid concerns over the likely deletion of a large number of voters during the upcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise to be carried out by the Election Commission of India (ECI), the Karnataka Cabinet Thursday held preliminary discussions on approaching the Supreme Court on the issue. According to Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil, the petition will likely challenge the ECI's legal immunity, apart from a prayer for directions to ensure that the final electoral roll is submitted to the Supreme Court. "SIR has caused problems across the country. In West Bengal, 27 lakh voters lost their voting rights. Serious objections have been raised in states like Tamil Nadu... Any citizen of the state, country should not lose his right to vote for any reason, unnecessarily or deliberately," Patil said. Responding to a query, the minister said the objective of the proposal to approach the Supreme Court was to ensure the ECI's transparency. "This is a question of the rights of citizens of the country. If ECI commits a mistake, they have complete immunity right now," he said, adding that the state was still discussing how the issue could be sorted. Sources told that the petition to submit the final electoral rolls to the Supreme Court was a measure proposed to ensure that political parties had access to the rolls, as



they had been denied access in other states. "Moreover, there are also fears that a large number of votes could be deleted in Karnataka," the source said.

While voter mapping was conducted in districts with high migration rates, such as Raichur, estimates indicate that about 66 per cent of voters will be deleted. "Similarly, a higher rate of deletion is expected in Bengaluru, which is estimated at 46 per cent," the source said, adding that districts with low migration rates would see a relatively lower number of voters being deleted.

## Punjabi University BTech student found dead in hostel room; probe on: police

AB Tech student of Punjabi University has been found dead inside one of the hostel rooms, police said. Police have identified as Varunpreet Singh (24) and was from Tarn Taran's Kang village. Although, Varunpreet was staying in a rented accommodation outside the university campus, he had come to room 340 of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur hostel of the university on Wednesday, they said. The students were studying in different hostel rooms in various study groups for the ongoing university examinations, officials said. However, Varunpreet was reportedly alone in one of the rooms. One of the students found Varunpreet lying unconscious when he accidentally entered the room. Following this, he was immediately shifted to the university dispensary in an ambulance, but the doctors declared him brought dead. The family members of the deceased had not arrived till the time of filing this report and therefore the post-mortem examination could not be conducted on Thursday. SSP Patiala Varun Sharma told "Postmortem will be conducted Friday morning only afterwards we will get to know the cause of death." Preliminary investigation has not revealed any visible injury marks on the body, police said, adding that further investigation is underway.



The students were studying in different hostel rooms in various study groups for the ongoing university examinations, officials said. However, Varunpreet was reportedly alone in one of the rooms.

## Trump, Rubio intensify pressure on Cuba, call it a failed state and security threat



GNS News Agency, May 27

Washington: US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio intensified pressure on Cuba, describing the island nation as a failed state and a continuing national security threat to the United States. Speaking separately in Florida and at the White House, both officials signalled a tougher posture towards Havana while also leaving open the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Trump, responding to questions about Cuba during an Oval Office event on deregulation, said the United States wanted to help the Cuban people and Cuban Americans reconnect with the island. "It's a failed country. Everybody knows it. They don't have electricity. They don't have money. They don't have really anything they don't have food," Trump said.

"We're going to help them along and we're going to help them because the people — because, number one, I want to help them, you know, on a humanitarian basis," he added. Trump said Cuban Americans in Florida wanted to invest in and rebuild Cuba. "They want to go back to their country. They want to help their country. I hope they're going to stay here, but they want to go back," he said. He added: "Other presidents have looked at this for 50, 60 years, doing something, and it looks like I'll be the one that does it." Hours earlier, Rubio had delivered a far sharper assessment

during remarks to reporters at Miami Homestead Airport before departing for India. "Cuba has consistently posed a threat to the national security of the United States," Rubio said. "The other thing that poses a threat to the national security of the United States is to have a failed state 90 miles from our shores run by friends of our adversaries." Rubio said Cuba hosted "Russian and Chinese intelligence presence" and had acquired weapons systems from both countries over the years.

He also accused Havana of supporting destabilising groups in Latin America. "They have been one of the leading sponsors of terrorism in the entire region," Rubio said. The administration's concerns were echoed by White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, who warned that Cuba could become a platform for hostile actors close to American territory. "You could have an adversary of the United States send, for example, attack drones to Cuba that would then be within very short reach of the United States Territory and its citizens," Miller said during a White House gaggle. "We can't have a foothold for enemies, adversaries, or terrorists that close to American territory," he added. Rubio said Washington was prepared to provide humanitarian assistance to Cuba, but only through independent groups and not through Cuban military-linked entities. "We're prepared to do more, but it has to be distributed by groups that are not linked to the regime," he said. He accused Cuba's military-linked company GAESA of diverting resources meant for ordinary citizens. Rubio also dismissed suggestions that the administration was pursuing "nation building". "The future of Cuba belongs to the people of Cuba in terms of how they're governed," he said. "But the national security component, that's 100 per cent something we're going to focus on because that's about America." The Trump administration has steadily tightened its Cuba policy in recent months through sanctions, criminal indictments and diplomatic pressure. Cuba has also faced worsening economic conditions, rolling blackouts and shortages of food and fuel over the past several years.

## Mob burns Ebola treatment centre in Congo amid outbreak fears

GNS News Agency, May 27

Bunia (Congo): People set fire to an Ebola treatment centre in a town at the heart of the outbreak in eastern Congo on Thursday after being stopped from retrieving the body of a local man, a senior police officer said, as fear and anger grow over a health crisis that doctors are struggling to contain. The arson attack in Rwampara reflects the challenges of health workers trying to curb a rare Ebola virus by using stringent measures that might clash with local customs, such as burial rites. The disease has been spreading for weeks in a region lacking in health facilities and where many people are on the move to escape armed conflicts.

The dangerous work of burying suspected victims is being managed wherever possible by authorities because the bodies of those who die from Ebola can be highly contagious and lead to further spread when people prepare bodies for burial and gather for funerals. That policy can be extremely unpopular with victims' families and friends, who aren't given the chance to bury their loved ones. The centre in Rwampara was burned by local youths who became angry while trying to retrieve the body of a friend who had apparently died of Ebola, according to a witness who spoke to The Associated Press by telephone.

"The police intervened to try to calm the situation, but unfortunately they were unsuccessful," said Alexis Burata, a local student who said he was in the area. "The young people ended up setting fire to the centre. That's the situation." An AP journalist saw people break into the centre and set fire to objects inside and also to what appeared to be the body of at least one suspected Ebola victim that was being stored there. Aid workers fled the treatment centre in vehicles. Deputy Senior Commissioner Jean Claude Mukendi, head of the public security department in Ituri Province, said the youths had not understood the protocols for burying a suspected Ebola victim. "His family, friends, and other young people wanted to take his body home for a funeral even though the instructions from the authorities during this Ebola virus outbreak are clear," Mukendi said. "All bodies must be buried according to the regulations." Hama Amadou, field coordinator for the humanitarian organisation ALIMA, which had teams working at the centre, said later that calm had been restored and that aid teams were continuing their work at the centre. The flash of anger underlined the complications faced by both Congolese authorities and an array of aid agencies trying to stem an outbreak that the World Health Organisation has declared a public health emergency of international concern.

There are 148 suspected deaths and nearly 600 suspected cases, according to the UN, with two cases including one death in neighbouring Uganda. But the head of the WHO has said the outbreak is almost certainly much larger and has also expressed concern over the speed of the spread. "We are still in the phase where we are intensifying



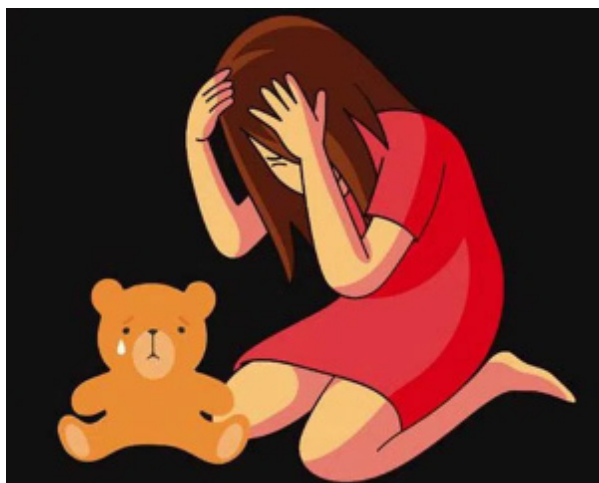
the investigation, searching for cases," said Jean Kaseya, Director-General of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. "I expect the number of cases to increase as surveillance becomes more and more rigorous." The risk of the outbreak spreading globally is low, the WHO has said, but high regionally with the Ituri Province at the centre of the outbreak bordering Uganda and South Sudan. Health workers and aid groups have said they are in dire need of more supplies and staff to respond. Also, there is no available vaccine or medicine for the Bundibugyo strain responsible for the outbreak. An expert said this week it would be at least six to nine months before one would be available. "The priority now is to act quickly and work closely with communities, as the coming days are critical," said Ariel Kestens, the head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies delegation in Congo. Ebola is highly contagious and spreads in people through contact with bodily fluids such as vomit, blood, feces or semen. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and at times internal and external bleeding. Ebola disease is caused by a group of viruses. Three of them are known to cause large outbreaks: Ebola virus, Sudan virus and Bundibugyo virus, according to the WHO. The Bundibugyo virus was first identified in a 2007-2008 outbreak in Uganda. This is the largest known outbreak of that species of Ebola.

On Thursday, the M23 rebel group that controls parts of eastern Congo reported that a person had died of the disease near the city of Bukavu, some 500 kilometres south of the outbreak's epicentre in Ituri Province. It was the first case confirmed in South Kivu Province, and another case was reported there later in the day. Previously, cases had been reported only in Ituri and North Kivu provinces and in neighbouring Uganda. The virus spread undetected for weeks following the first known death in late April as Congolese health authorities tested for a different Ebola virus more commonly responsible for outbreaks in the country. Health officials have not yet found "patient zero," according to the WHO. The scale of the outbreak so far suggests it "started probably a couple of months ago," said Anais Legand, a viral hemorrhagic fevers expert at the WHO.



police vehicle and yellow tape blocked a dirt road leading to the home. While the investigation was ongoing, Mountainair Mayor Peter Nieto said in a social media post that indications were pointing toward drugs as a possible factor in the deaths at the home. He added that there was no threat to the public. Residents, however, took to social media to voice their frustrations about drug use in the community and elsewhere. The mayor said the town's law enforcement officers and first responders work every day to protect the community and respond to difficult situations. "But the reality is that addiction and substance abuse are issues affecting communities all across our state and nation,"

## Christian minor kidnapped, forcibly converted and married off



Islamabad: A 41-year-old married Muslim man kidnapped a 14-year-old Christian girl suffering from epilepsy and mental health challenges in Lahore, forcibly converted her to Islam and married her while exploiting her health condition, a report has revealed. Abbas Masih, a daily wage labourer and member of a local Brethren church in Lahore's Gulbahar Colony, said his daughter, Nisha Bibi, who worked as a domestic helper at a Muslim household did not return home from work on May 12, Christian Daily International reported. "When Nisha did not return home from work, we went to her employer's house, where we were told that she had already left," Masih told Christian Daily International-Morning Star News. Masih said that he contacted the police after he was unable to find her. He said that police lodged a First Information Report (FIR) for abduction after CCTV footage obtained from the employer's residence showed Nisha leaving with an unidentified middle-aged man. He said the family also tried to identify the man by sharing a screenshot taken from the CCTV footage among residents in the area where his daughter worked.

"A woman employed in a house opposite my daughter's workplace immediately recognised the man as her 41-year-old husband, Arshad Habib," he said. The woman mentioned that Habib had disappeared the same day along with their two minor children without informing her. Masih said that his daughter is suffering from epilepsy and faces mental health challenges and her health condition made her an easy target, Christian Daily International

reported. He further said, We later learned that the accused had already been married three times and has children from those marriages. "According to him, police later showed the family documents claiming that Nisha had converted to Islam on February 15 and married Habib after three days. We were shocked to see an alleged conversion certificate and marriage documents presented as proof that my daughter willingly converted and married the accused," said Masih. He stated that these documents appear to have been fabricated to protect Habib from criminal prosecution.

The family's lawyer, Zunara Patrick, said Habib had allegedly maintained several marriages simultaneously. The legal team, said Patrick, found Habib in Rahim Yar Khan district of Pakistan's Punjab province, where he was allegedly staying with Nisha and two children he had taken from his third wife. Patrick said that she has filed a habeas corpus petition on behalf of his third wife seeking recovery of her two children and has nominated Habib as the principal suspect in Nisha's kidnapping case. According to Patrick, Habib has prepared fabricated legal documents to mislead investigators. "A statement purportedly submitted before a magistrate in Lahore on March 2 claims that Nisha is 18 years old, converted to Islam voluntarily and married Habib of her own free will," said Patrick while rejecting the authenticity of the statement and accused Habib of using religion to avoid accountability.

Earlier in April, a report revealed that police in Pakistan have refused to recover a 15-year-old Christian girl, who was kidnapped at gunpoint, forcibly converted to Islam and married to the kidnapper, according to her father. Afzal Javed Masih of Jaranwala city of Pakistan's Punjab province said that his daughter, Sidra Bibi, was abducted from their home by a Muslim man named Ali Murtaza, and his two accomplices on March 27. He added that the men entered the house by climbing the wall and abducted Sidra at gunpoint, Christian Daily International reported. Masih said police lodged the case, however, they inaccurately mentioned Sidra Bibi's age as 17-years-old instead of 15 which is stated on her official birth certificate. He added, "I am illiterate and only learned of this discrepancy later, when a rights activist pointed it out." He said that police initially arrested relatives of the suspect, however, they were later released after documents surfaced claiming that Sidra Bibi had converted to Islam and had willingly married Murtaza Ali in Rahim Yar Khan district in Punjab.

## Iran propaganda push seeks to project unity despite internal divisions

DUBAI, - Iran's leaders are splashing propaganda posters across Tehran boasting of national unity and victory over a global superpower, just months after crushing protests with mass killings and as war worsens economic pain for their people. Alongside the images of Revolutionary Guardsmen and a blockaded Strait of Hormuz, authorities are staging military-themed mass weddings and public gun training sessions in mosques to vaunt a spirit of national resistance. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. Unlike the revolutionary religious messages of the past, today's propaganda emphasises nationalist themes aimed beyond a hardline support base. "The old ideology of the Islamic Republic no longer really had much traction within the society. And therefore there was a need to draw on other elements of Iranian identity that could mobilise masses," said Ali Vaez, Iran project director at the International Crisis Group. How far it may enjoy any success among a deeply disillusioned population, however, is debatable, Vaez and other analysts say.

While Iran has managed to withstand U.S. and Israeli airstrikes and brought U.S. President Donald Trump back to the negotiating table by closing the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global oil supply route, it faces a dire situation internally. The economy, already in desperate straits before the war, risks disintegration and a growing campaign of repression demonstrates the authorities' fear of renewed internal unrest. Set against that difficult backdrop, the authorities are still drawing on established Iranian propaganda motifs of national resistance and Western villainy, but downplaying some old revolutionary imagery.

Shiite Muslim iconography of martyrdom, a mainstay for decades, has partly given way to Persian national and historical symbols once disdained in the Islamic Republic as harking back to a monarchist past. Meanwhile, state television coverage of the frequent rallies staged by the authorities features interviews with women without headscarves, something long unshowable in Iranian media. "It's an attempt to show that everything is normal in Iran, we're all united and we don't butcher our own people," said Ali Ansari, professor of modern history at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. "It'll work to some extent with waverers in the middle but most Iranians don't believe it really." Iran's success in closing the Strait of Hormuz has been central to a propaganda push abroad with online memes targeting Trump, but also in Iran's internal messaging. One poster depicts Revolutionary Guardsmen holding a fishing net that has caught U.S. ships and warplanes. Another shows a cloth stapled across Trump's face in the distinctive shape of the strait. People walk past a billboard about the Strait of Hormuz, in Tehran, Iran, May 17, 2026. Majid Asgaripour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab Those images fit into a long tradition of extolling Iranian heroism and castigating the United States, including in a well-known mural showing the Statue of Liberty with a skull face. But in a break from the past, another huge poster



in Tehran shows Rais Ali Delvari, a guerrilla leader against British occupation of Iran's Gulf coast a century ago, standing alongside a Revolutionary Guards commander to block the strait with stern hands outstretched. "These banners showing national heroes are for wartime purposes. After that they will come back against us and the repression will begin," said Narges, 67, a retired government employee in Shiraz who asked not to give her family name. Power in Iran has veered sharply during the war from clerics to Revolutionary Guards commanders, Iranian political insiders have said, capping a gradual shift that had already been happening for years. "The direction of travel when it gets to the narratives that the regime is putting out there is actually indicative of the transformation that the regime is undergoing. It is moving from a theocratic system into a military one," said Vaez.

Airstrikes on infrastructure and Trump's threat of "civilisational erasure" have strengthened the efficacy of such tactics, Vaez said. "These have all helped the Iranian regime to portray this war, not as a war against the Islamic Republic, but a war against Iran as a state," he said. The authorities have staged near-nightly rallies during the war to secure the streets as a bastion of support, but backers and opponents of the system are sceptical about the results. "It's all a game, a performance meant to show the world that people are with the system. Instead of these displays they should fix the economic situation," said Arshia, 23, a recent French-language graduate from Yazd. For Mohammed, 26, a headline student in Tabriz, the patriotism was real, but he was angered by the presence of unveiled women mixing with unrelated men in the rallies. "This is not what the revolution was for," he said. A mass wedding this week involved couples being paraded in Revolutionary Guards vehicles decked out with balloons and machineguns, next to models of ballistic missiles painted an incongruous flamingo or pink. State television showed weapons training sessions in mosques, where military instructors taught men and women to strip and fire assault rifles. Such imagery may have had the double edge of reminding dissenters in Iran that the authorities can count on heavily armed support, Ansari said. "It goes to the heart of the fact that the regime is not as secure as it's pretending to be. They're presenting to their own people that this is a regime that is tough," he said.

## Yunus govt repeatedly ignored warnings on measles vaccine shortage

Dhaka: As Bangladesh grapples with an escalating measles outbreak, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) said that it had repeatedly warned the country's earlier interim government led by Muhammad Yunus — both through written communication and meetings with health ministry officials — about vaccine shortages that could trigger a major health crisis, local media reported. Addressing a press briefing in Dhaka, Rana Flowers, UNICEF representative to Bangladesh, said that the UN agency sent five to six letters to the health authorities on the issue and raised the matter in 10 meetings during the tenure of the interim government. "From 2024, we were warning the government that the shortage of vaccines could lead to an outbreak. From 2024 to 2025 into 2026, we sent letters, and we had 10 different meetings signalling this was a problem and that orders for vaccines needed to be given. They could not," Bangladesh's leading



newspaper The Daily Star quoted Flowers as saying. According to Flowers, Ted Chaiban, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, raised concerns over vaccine shortage at a meeting with the foreign ministry during his visit to Bangladesh in August last year.

## New Mexico overdose scene turns deadly, first responders exposed

GNS News Agency, May 27

Mountainair (US): Three people are dead and more than a dozen first responders had to be quarantined and assessed Wednesday for possible exposure to an unidentified substance after being called to a suspected drug overdose at a rural New Mexico home, authorities said. New Mexico State Police said three of the four people who were found unresponsive inside the home east of Albuquerque died. The fourth was being treated at a hospital in Albuquerque. During the response, authorities said, first responders were exposed to the substance and began experiencing symptoms including nausea and dizziness. Officials at University of New Mexico Hospital confirmed that 23 patients who were exposed to an unknown substance were assessed and decontaminated after being transported to the hospital. Most of those were first responders who were showing no symptoms and were later discharged. Medical teams continued to monitor three symptomatic patients Wednesday evening, according to the hospital. Two first responders were listed in serious condition, said Officer Wilson Silver with New Mexico State Police. Albuquerque Fire Rescue Hazmat teams were assisting at the scene in Mountainair, a rural community east of Albuquerque, in efforts to identify the substance involved. "At this time, investigators believe the substance may be transmitted through contact and do not believe it to be airborne," Silver said. A



# Inside the unraveling of U.S. diplomacy under Trump



for Near Eastern Affairs under President Joe Biden. "At a moment of crisis – and it's an open-ended crisis – this administration has left these missions in a parlous state." Pigott said U.S. embassies have performed well during the Iran war and are "more than appropriately staffed."

A ceremony for Iranian children killed following U.S. airstrikes reflects the human cost when conflict replaces diplomacy. Majid Asgaripour/WANA For Bridget Brink, the fracture between the Trump administration and its far-flung diplomats was potentially a matter of life and death.

Brink was the U.S. ambassador to Kyiv when Trump returned to office. In March 2025, just days after Trump's explosive encounter with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House, the U.S. cut off military aid and intelligence sharing to Ukraine. The weapons included air defense munitions that helped protect not just Ukrainians but also U.S. embassy personnel from Russian drones and missiles, Brink said. "I had 1,000 people, all civilians, on the ground," Brink said in an interview. "And we were protected by Ukrainians using U.S. and other equipment." Bridget Brink said the Trump administration's temporary halt in military aid to Ukraine while she was U.S. ambassador in Kyiv was unexplained and put Ukrainian and American lives at risk. REUTERS/Rebecca Cook

The halting of military aid came without warning, she said. "When we tried to find out why it was stopped, we got no answer." Brink reached out to the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House – "everywhere that we could, because we were very concerned about what this meant not only for Ukrainians but also for our own security." The Pentagon did not respond to a Reuters request for comment on her account. Brink said her staff worked behind the scenes to persuade the Trump administration to resume the aid, which it agreed to do on March 11. But she said she never received official confirmation of why the aid was halted in the first place.

Layoffs at the National Security Council, which traditionally coordinates foreign and defense policy at the White House, further frayed relations between the Trump administration and its embassies. In 2025, Trump slashed the NSC from hundreds of people to just a few dozen. For months, NSC staff held no regular meetings and faced a de facto ban on holding interagency meetings on national security and foreign policy, according to three current and former U.S. officials in Washington. The White House official said the NSC did not stop regular or interagency meetings but they were smaller and focused on Trump's priorities. During that period, multiple officials said, staffers received little formal guidance about major topics such as the Ukraine war or NATO's future. Instead, they scrutinized Trump's Truth Social account for policy signals. Many NSC staffers kept Trump's account open on a dedicated screen and responded quickly when he posted, the officials said.

Under Biden, Brink had regularly joined NSC meetings to develop and coordinate complex wartime policy between Washington and the Kyiv embassy. Under Trump, those meetings stopped, Brink said. She was told instead to "just call people" – an ad hoc approach she described as inefficient and unworkable in a conflict zone where Russian attacks were routine. "We're seven hours ahead and in the bunker almost every night." The final straw, she said, was Trump's policy of "appeasement" on Ukraine – seeking closer ties with President Vladimir Putin while blaming Ukraine for Russian aggression. She resigned in protest in April 2025. Two months later she announced she was running as a Democrat from Michigan for the U.S. House of Representatives. Russian drone strikes, like this one depicted in April in Ukraine's port city of Odesa, underscore the stakes of frontline diplomacy. Nina Liashonok/Her successor, Julie Davis, who served as chargé d'affaires, will also step down and retire in June, the State Department said on April 28. Department spokesperson Pigott said Davis is retiring after a "distinguished 30-year tenure" in the foreign service. Many other career diplomats have had their ambassadorships abruptly cut short. A week before Christmas, about 30 were told to vacate their posts by mid-January – a recall that came largely without warning or explanation. Some departing ambassadors privately dubbed it "the Saturday Night Massacre," a Watergate-era phrase now used to describe mass firings of officials. U.S. ambassadors fall into two categories: career diplomats and political appointees. Both are nominated by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Career diplomats traditionally pride themselves on being nonpartisan and often have decades of experience. Political appointees are usually major campaign donors, former lawmakers or close presidential allies, and may have little or no diplomatic background.

In U.S. administrations spanning nearly 50 years, career diplomats have typically made up between 57% and 74% of ambassadors, according to the American Foreign Service Association. In Trump's second term, about 9% of his ambassadorial appointees are career diplomats – a dramatic decline in the institutional expertise that has historically guided U.S. diplomacy. Most of the ambassadors recalled in December were career diplomats who were appointed to their current posts under Biden but had also served Republican administrations, including Trump's. Ukraine envoy Brink, for instance, served five presidents, Democrat and Republican, including Trump in his first term.

The State Department said the mass recall was a "standard process" and that replacements would represent Trump and "advance the America First agenda," which the White House says will "champion core American interests." More than 100 ambassadorships remain open worldwide. "We are conducting our diplomacy with one arm tied behind our back," said Brian Nichols, an ambassador for Democratic and Republican presidents from 2014 to 2021, in Peru and Zimbabwe. Against that backdrop, a new pipeline of diplomats aligned with Trump's agenda is emerging. The Ben Franklin Fellowship, founded in 2024, identifies and seeks to promote conservatives within the State Department and counters what its leaders describe as bias against them. "A lot of moderate officers come to us – men, white men – (and) they say, 'I'm totally marginalized by DEI,'" said co-founder Phillip Linderman, referring to diversity, equity and inclusion programs under previous administrations. The group now lists about 95 fellows on its website, including Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau. Another 250 members, mostly active diplomats, conceal their identities to avoid retaliation under future Democratic administrations, said Linderman, a former diplomat. Among the fellowship's largest financial backers is the Heritage Foundation, the architect of Project 2025. Last year Heritage gave the group a \$100,000 grant, effectively helping to advance one of Project 2025's main recommendations: to remake a workforce it views as hostile to conservative administrations. Heritage told Reuters it supported many U.S. organizations but exerted no "direct control" over them. The fellowship aims to help Trump avoid appointing State Department staff who could obstruct his agenda, said Linderman and Matt Boyse, another ex-diplomat, fellowship co-founder and senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank.

LONDON - When Donald Trump warned Iran on April 7 that "a whole civilization will die tonight," a European diplomat in Washington said his government wanted an urgent answer to a chilling question: Was the U.S. president contemplating the use of a nuclear weapon? Across Europe and Asia, the concern went beyond whether Trump's apocalyptic threat was real or bluster. One fear, the diplomat said, was that Russia could seize the moment to justify similar threats in Ukraine, triggering a nuclear crisis on two continents.

European governments immediately sought reassurance through a traditional channel: the U.S. State Department. But according to the diplomat, officials there gave an unsettling response: They didn't know what Trump meant or what actions his words might portend. The previously unreported episode points to a historic breakdown in American diplomacy. At a moment when a uniquely unpredictable U.S. president is rattling markets and capitals with dramatic pronouncements, governments around the world are scrambling for clarity, only to discover that their usual points of contact – at U.S. embassies or inside Washington – are missing, mute or out of the loop. At least half of America's 195 ambassadorial posts worldwide are now vacant. Margaret MacMillan, an Oxford University professor of international history, said the Trump administration is eroding America's capacity to understand the world it operates in, raising the risk of global instability. "We're not going to be able to use diplomacy as we have often done before: to build relationships, get agreements that benefit both sides, and avert and end wars."

The Trump administration rejects the notion of a breakdown, saying the changes have strengthened U.S. diplomacy and streamlined decision-making. "The President has the right to determine who represents the American people and interests around the world," said Tommy Pigott, a State Department spokesperson.

This account of America's diplomatic upheaval is based on interviews with more than 50 senior diplomats, White House officials and recently retired ambassadors, as well as dozens of foreign officials, diplomats and lawmakers across Europe and Asia. As America's career diplomats are fired or sidelined, its allies are changing how they deal with Washington. Rather than rely on embassies or formal channels, foreign governments say they are re-wiring their diplomacy around a small circle of people with direct access to the president, leaving many dependent on back channels to manage a superpower whose signals have grown erratic. Some U.S. allies now believe the most effective response to a volatile president is to treat his rhetoric as background noise.

That calculus was evident after Trump's threat to annihilate Iran stoked fears of nuclear war. In response, officials in Britain, France and Germany drafted what one European diplomat called a "harsh" joint statement later that day. But they chose not to release it, deciding Trump's language was bluster and a public rebuke could prompt him to continue the bombing. By evening, Trump had announced a two-week ceasefire with Iran.

The British, French and German foreign ministries didn't reply to requests for comment. The episode, also previously unreported, illustrates an approach many allies now follow: restraint over confrontation. But diplomats said that repeatedly discounting Trump's threats is also dangerous because it might leave them unprepared when another crisis looms. More than a year into Trump's second term, influence and information are increasingly flowing through a handful of envoys. Most prominent: Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and the president's longtime friend, real estate developer Steve Witkoff. Kushner has no formal government title and Witkoff no prior diplomatic experience. But some foreign governments now prioritize communications with them over official channels, Reuters found. Kushner and Witkoff did not respond to requests for comment.

Other countries have cultivated their own unconventional lines into the White House. South Korean officials bypassed U.S. trade negotiators to forge ties with White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles – a person they felt could explain Trump's true intentions as they fought back against his 25% tariffs. And Japan found an unlikely intermediary in SoftBank founder Masayoshi Son – one of Trump's golfing partners. The State Department was an early target in Trump's second term. In April 2025, Secretary of State Marco Rubio called it a "bloated" bureaucracy gripped by "radical political ideology" and announced a "comprehensive reorganization plan." The effort was foreshadowed in Project 2025, a policy blueprint published in 2023 by the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank in Washington, D.C. The plan called for a leaner State Department with more political appointees and the removal of career ambassadors deemed hostile to the administration. About 3,000 employees left the State Department last year, nearly half fired and the rest taking buyouts – a roughly 15% cut to its U.S.-based staff. Then, in December, Rubio ordered the unprecedented recall of about 30 ambassadors worldwide. Rubio promised last year that his overhaul would "empower the Department from the ground up, from the bureaus to the embassies." But today, 109 of the 195 U.S. ambassadorial posts worldwide are vacant, according to the American Foreign Service Association, the diplomats' union. A White House official said the changes "have made our government more efficient and less bloated and more able to effectively execute the president's foreign policy."

The new structure leaves Washington with fewer top diplomats on the ground in a major war zone. Five of the seven countries bordering Iran, and four of the six Gulf States, have no U.S. ambassador. Many U.S. embassies are now run by chargés d'affaires – diplomats who serve as acting heads – rather than Senate-confirmed ambassadors, which some countries regard as a diplomatic downgrade. Former U.S. ambassadors and State Department officials said the reduced diplomatic presence contributed to a chaotic scramble to evacuate Americans from the region when Trump started the Iran war. "Those missions should all have ambassadors when you're fighting a war," said Barbara Leaf, a retired career diplomat who served as U.S. ambassador to the United Arab Emirates under the first Trump administration and as assistant secretary of state

# Gujarat murder convict who did films with Big B, Aamir, Mohanlal arrested after 12 years on the run



On August 27, 2008, Hemant Modi, his brother Sachin, and five others were convicted of the murder of one Narendra alias Nano Yashwant Kamble. Hemant Modi's portfolio shoot, the murder convict turned filmstar's He was convicted of murder in 2008, and six years later, he jumped parole and vanished. For a decade or more, Hemant Modi hid in plain sight, seemingly not recognised by anyone – including the millions who watched him in several big-budget films, as well as plays and web series. On the big screen, Hemant Modi appeared alongside superstars Amitabh Bachchan and Mohanlal – and also Aamir Khan, Ranveer Singh, Aditya Roy Kapur, and Sara Ali Khan. And then, his luck ran out. Real-life caught up, cutting short his dream reel life. On Thursday, the Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) of Ahmedabad City Police swooped on premises near the city's Gheekanta Metro Station. There, they found Hemant Modi, fugitive from justice since 2014 – known in his current world as Spandan Modi, 54-year-old actor. This is his story, according to police. During the time that Hemant Nagindas Purshottamas Modi ran from the law, he was pursuing an acting career, starring alongside Amitabh Bachchan, Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh, among others.

On August 27, 2008, Hemant Modi, his brother Sachin, and five others were convicted of the murder of one Narendra alias Nano Yashwant Kamble. The murder took place on June 15, 2005. The trial court sentenced all accused to life imprisonment. Hemant Modi was first incarcerated in Sabarmati Central Jail and then transferred to Mehsana Jail. There, he became Prisoner Number 31146. Six years into his sentence, on July 25, 2014, Gujarat High Court gave Hemant Modi 30 days' parole. Prisoner

Number 31146 walked out of jail – never to return. The other six individuals who were convicted with him completed their sentences, and have since been rehabilitated in society, Police Inspector P M Dhakhada, Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, said. After jumping parole, Hemant Modi lived in Patan district for a year, until 2015. He then changed his name to Twinkle Mukund Dave, and moved to Ahmedabad. He took up a job in a private company, and accommodation as a paying guest. And then, he decided that his life needed some drama. He began with the stage, making his way into the theatre scene. He seems to have made fairly rapid progress – by 2017, he had landed up in Mumbai, and had started to land himself small roles as a supporting actor in Bollywood. 'Spandan Modi' had arrived.

According to police, Hemant Modi alias Spandan acted alongside Amitabh Bachchan and Aamir Khan in Yash Raj Films' 'Thugs of Hindostan' (2018), alongside Ranveer Singh and Boman Irani in Divyang Thakkar's 'Jayeshbhai Jordaar' (2022), and alongside Aditya Roy Kapur and Sara Ali Khan in Anurag Basu's 'Metro...in dino' in 2025. He also worked in the Mohanlal starrer 'L2: Empuraan' (2025), and in the upcoming films 'Lahore 1947' starring Sunny Deol, and 'Tu Hai Meri Kiran' starring Sonakshi Sinha. Police said Hemant Modi also acted in about 20 Gujarati films, the web series 'Taskari' starring Emraan Hashmi, two Hindi and four Gujarati serials, and 17 Gujarati plays including 'Yugpurush' and 'Gandhi Viruddh Godse'.

In 2025, however, Hemant Modi returned to live in Ahmedabad, where he was nabbed after someone finally recognised him. "Hemant Modi had developed an interest in acting while in college. We have learnt that he may have studied journalism as well. However, he was practising as a junior lawyer and, according to his brother Sachin, had also passed a government exam when the murder took place." Inspector Dhakhada said. Police zeroed in on the fugitive after getting some "confidential information", Dhakhada said. "Hemant Modi had cut ties with his family, divorced his wife, and left his friends. He had near zero digital presence, and he was not on social media," he said. "However, it appears that after he came back to Ahmedabad, someone recognised him, leading to the tip to the police. We detained him and compared his characteristics and features to descriptions from the prison, which matched exactly. He ultimately confessed to his actual identity," Dhakhada said.

# What Russia's growing dependence on China means for India's security

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday less than a week after US President Donald Trump concluded his three-day visit. Such high-level engagements in quick succession are extremely rare. Nonetheless, these visits underline China's emergence as a central hub of global diplomacy. Washington seeks to alleviate its strained ties, while Moscow aims to secure Beijing's sustained economic support and preserve its strategic relevance in global geopolitics. The US, China and Russia are systemic players and the nature of their interactions is central to the stability and future direction of the global order. Therefore, Putin's visit to Beijing is significant, not merely for bilateral reasons but also for regional and global stability. The crucial question is: can the deep partnership between Russia and China pave the way for a military alliance? History of Russia-China relations

Historically, Russia-China relations can be understood in three phases: the imperial period, the Soviet period and the post-Soviet period. Russia and China have interacted as civilisational states for centuries. They share a long border of roughly 4,300 km, and their relationship has largely been tranquil. However, there were periods of episodic conflicts and hostility. For instance, Chinese literature often refers to the 19th century as a "period of humiliation" in which European powers, including Russia, forced China to sign unfair treaties. China had ceded some territories to Russia following the treaties of Aigun (1858), Peking (1860), and Tarbagatai (1864), which China now claims was done under duress.

The establishment of the Communist regime in China in 1949 enabled strong cooperation with the Soviet Union, and the two countries signed the famous Treaty of Friendship in 1950. However, the ideological affinity was short-lived, and soon the differences emerged over the correct interpretation of socialist ideology, regional geopolitics and global influence. Then Chinese President Mao Zedong resented Russian leader Joseph Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country" (which proposed that the Soviet Union could achieve socialism by itself if allowed to exist in peace by hostile countries) and Soviet support for the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), a rival of the Mao-led Communist Party of China. Further, Beijing viewed Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation programme as a betrayal of the socialist movement. China also expected the Soviet Union to provide nuclear technology, which the latter refused. These developments led to the famous Sino-Soviet schism of the 1960s, culminating in armed clashes in 1969.

The Sino-Soviet schism provided the US with an opportunity to realign its policy toward China. Then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's famous "ping-pong diplomacy" (referring to a series of friendly table tennis matches between Chinese and American players in 1971, seen as a symbolic gesture of goodwill between the two countries) thawed Cold War ties and paved the way for US President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing. Washington-Beijing-Islamabad forged close ties during this period, jeopardising India's continental security and destabilising regional geopolitics. Now, President Trump seems to be pursuing a similar policy of establishing close ties with Pakistan and China.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China's Jiang Zemin and Russia's Boris Yeltsin signed the Strategic Partnership Treaty in 1992. However, the credit goes to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping who added new dynamism to Russia-China relations. They declared a "no-limits" partnership in 2022, just before the onset of Russia's war with Ukraine. Russia and China have deep economic and political ties and complement each other in several respects. President Putin and Xi Jinping have met more than 40 times. In fact, Putin has visited China more than 20 times, while Xi has visited Russia 11 times. China is the leading player in commerce, technology and finance, while Russia thrives on its energy and defence exports. Russia needs market, technology and capital, while China needs energy and defence products. Following Western sanctions, Russia has become heavily dependent on China. The Russian economy would have collapsed without China's support from 2022. Russia's total trade value was about \$700 billion in 2025, of which about \$228 billion (or 32 per cent) was only with China. Russia's main exports are crude oil, coal, natural gas, copper, tim-



ber, and agricultural products, and its imports are cars, computers, tractors, phones, machinery, electronics, and vehicles. For key technologies, Russia now depends heavily on China. Chinese automobile, telecom and electronic companies have captured a high share of the Russian market following the withdrawal of Western companies. Russian technology firms rely heavily on semiconductor and industrial electronics from China. They are also collaborating in aerospace, satellite navigation, advanced materials and industrial artificial intelligence.

The Power of Siberia 1 gas pipeline (a 3,000-kilometre cross-border pipeline that transports natural gas from Eastern Siberia directly to Heilongjiang province in northeastern China) reached full operational capacity in 2025, and they are working on the 2,600-km Power of Siberia 2 pipeline from the Arctic gas fields of Yamal to China through Mongolia. Before the Ukraine war, Russia's gas supply was mainly to European states, but after the sanctions, it has gone mainly to China. An interesting aspect of cooperation is that the trade between the two countries takes place in local currencies of yuan and ruble. Thus, reflecting the accelerating de-dollarisation of bilateral trade. Outcomes of Putin-Xi summit The Putin-Xi Summit on Wednesday is considered more productive than the Trump-Xi meeting a week ago because it issued a joint statement and signed more than 40 agreements encompassing energy, technology, investment, transport, space, digital and cultural cooperation. There was no concrete agreement on the Siberia-2 gas pipeline. Essentially, they seek to develop robust bilateral ties immune from global volatility and Western pressure. Without naming the US, they criticised its unilateral and hegemonic policies, and pledged to work for a "multipolar" world order and democratisation of global institutions. In short, the summit reinforced their determination to deepen strategic cooperation to preserve their interests and counterbalance the Western hegemony. Russia and China are not natural allies in terms of common culture, ideology, political regime or racial affinity. However, the emerging geopolitics, in which both Russia and China view Washington as a structural rival, has brought them closer. In the lexicon of international politics, an alliance is a formal agreement in which two states commit to supporting each other against external aggression.

There is a growing concern that Beijing and Moscow are headed towards a military alliance. However, in the shifting sands of global geopolitics, military alliances can be a liability and come with twin fears of "entrapment" and "abandonment". A state fears being dragged into unwanted conflict and abandoned during a crisis. China does not want to get entangled in Russia's conflict with the West. Similarly, Russia does not want to get embroiled in China's conflict with the US over Taiwan. Therefore, while their cooperation would intensify, they are unlikely to forge a formal military alliance in the near future. In fact, Trump's visit to Beijing has precluded such a possibility in the short term, if it existed at all. Russia's growing cooperation and dependence on China has serious ramifications for India's security. For the last two decades, New Delhi has pursued a twin strategy to maintain balance: cultivating a security partnership with the US and by maintaining strong ties with Russia. These diplomatic options, however, are dwindling as both Trump and Putin are trying to woo Xi Jinping. New Delhi will have to work on alternative strategies as it can no longer rely on the US for its continental security and balance. At least, not while Trump is in office.

## To defend, or not to defend (the rupee), that is the question



Indians can continue importing whatever goods it imports for a period of at least 10 months. This includes people wanting dollars to buy machines, crude oil etc. In other words, the RBI's defence of the rupee is not just about the RBI's willingness to defend but also its ability to defend. After RBI hits a certain level of forex reserve — say like going below 10 months of import cover — it has to take a pause and reconsider.

Secondly, and this is a less appreciated aspect and perhaps the biggest constraint that India and RBI face when it comes to defending the rupee: The quality of India's forex. Most of the forex with RBI comes to India in the form of investments into the Indian economy, and not as money earned by selling more goods to the rest of the world. As we have seen in the past couple of years, such money can be pulled out of India if investors take a dim view of India's growth prospects and/or if they like the prospects of some other country better. Another way to look at this situation is that the forex that RBI holds is more a liability than an asset. For instance, China earns its forex by selling more goods to the rest of the world; this is called having a trade surplus. The dollars it gets in return are an asset and cannot be pulled out by any investor. But in India, thanks to our continuing weakness in trade, India spends more dollars buying imports than it earns selling its exports.

Why not let the rupee fall and find its level?

Mainstream economists regularly advocate this remedy instead of the RBI going overboard defending the rupee. They argue that a weaker rupee will help India's exporters, thus boosting exports. Similarly, as the rupee's exchange rate falls, all imports will become costlier and, as a result, their demand will also fall. The net result will be an elimination of the trade deficit (the gap between exports and imports). Moreover, if the RBI allows the rupee's exchange rate to fall then neither RBI would have to draw down India's forex reserves nor would the prime minister be forced to ask Indians to undertake austerity measures such as voluntarily cutting back on imports of gold, crude and edible oils, etc. However, while this recommendation (of letting rupee exchange rate fall) makes sense on paper, in India's case there are many anomalies that suggest that letting the rupee find its own level could end up either not having any impact or, in the worst case scenario, exacerbate the slide in rupee's exchange rate. Here are some reasons why letting the rupee slide argument may not actually work. 1> A large part of India's exports — some analysts peg it as high as 40% of the total — are "re-exports". In other words, these exports are essentially based on imported goods. As such, a fall in the rupee's exchange rate makes the imports costlier for Indians just as they make the exports cheaper for the foreigners. In other words, the effect cancels out.

There is another reason why a weaker rupee may not change India's trade balance (record of exports and imports): In many export goods, India is a price-taker and not a price setter. Take, for example, most textile goods. India competes fiercely with other countries such as Bangladesh. India cannot set the price of their goods lest they be undercut by their Bangladeshi counterparts. In such a scenario the foreign firms buying goods from India can point to the fact that the Indian exporter is anyway benefiting from rupee depreciation, and as such the Indian exporter should lower the product's price in dollar terms. Imagine an Indian exporter selling a t-shirt for \$1 when one dollar was worth Rs 50. Next season the exchange rate falls and becomes Rs 100 to a dollar. In such a case the foreign buyer will likely force the Indian exporter to reduce the price to say \$0.6 for a t-shirt, since this way the Indian exporter would still earn Rs 10 more than what he was earning before the exchange rate fell. The end result is that a falling rupee may not have boosted exports and export-earnings for Indians, as the argument goes in economic textbooks.

3> There is a good chance that letting the rupee find its level, especially when it has just lost a lot of value, could actually further push down the rupee's exchange rate. In other words, depreciation can beget depreciation.

If an Indian importer looks at the rupee fast losing its exchange rate, they are likely to buy more and more dollars from the forex market because they expect the rupee to weaken in the coming weeks and months. But the more they buy dollars the more the rupee weakens further. An exactly different thing happens to Indian exporters albeit with the same result of exacerbating the rupee's fall. If the rupee has been falling, an exporter may defer accepting that payment because \$100 a couple of months down the line will fetch more rupees. This dries up the supply of dollars that were otherwise scheduled to come into the market, thus further stoking the price of dollars. 4> Something similar happens on the capital account side — that is, with reference to the movement of money for investment purposes, letting the rupee fall may disincentivise investments. Suppose, the Indian stock markets give 10% returns in a particular year but during the year the rupee loses 5% of its exchange rate. This means an American investing in India would get only about 5% return in dollar terms. This would disincentivise future investments, especially if the foreign investors expect the rupee to slide further; in such a case they may hold back fresh investments. But this, in turn, will further show up as a deficit in India's overall Balance of Payment and will further push down rupee's exchange rate. Thus the vicious cycle becomes deeply embedded. As can be understood from these arguments, the strategy to let the rupee find its level could end up worsening the situation instead of stabilising it. As explained, both the strategies — defending the rupee versus letting it find its level — can work or fail depending on the circumstances.

as, "A date to remember." In the picture, Vivek was seen holding Divyanka close to him as the actress smiled for the camera. For the uninitiated, Divyanka Tripathi and Vivek Dahiya announced their pregnancy on the 19th of March on the auspicious occasion of Gudi Padma. Earlier, Vivek had shared that he felt extremely nervous after receiving the news, as he realized that having a kid is a huge responsibility. The 'Yeh Hain Mohabbatein' actor was asked, "You are entering one of the most beautiful phases of life as soon-to-be parents. What was your emotional reaction when you first received the good news?" Sharing his initial reaction, Vivek said, "Honestly, my first reaction was not overwhelming excitement. I actually felt nervous and a little stressed. When Divyanka Tripathi first told me the news, I suddenly realized that a huge responsibility was about to begin." "That feeling slowly started sinking in over the next few days. Then I understood that this is a process, and every person reacts differently. It did not mean I was not happy because, deep down, this is something both Divyanka and I always wanted. It is a beautiful phase, but I will always remember that my first reaction was nervousness", he went on to add.

## India faces a 1991 moment: It needs to reform, relook at subsidies



The Indian rupee continues to weaken against the US dollar. If the RBI does not intervene decisively, the exchange rate could well slide to Rs 100 per US dollar. To stabilise the rupee, the RBI may need a war chest of at least \$50-60 billion, and even that would provide only temporary relief. The underlying causes of the crisis lie largely beyond the RBI's control. The crisis in the Middle East is finally hitting India pretty hard. Energy and fertiliser costs have almost doubled. The recent increase in petrol prices by around Rs 3-4 per litre is only a partial pass-through of global prices. Similar underpricing exists in LPG, LNG, and fertilisers, especially urea. These pressures are likely to widen the fiscal deficit beyond 5 per cent of GDP.

Foreign portfolio investors are losing interest in India and withdrawing their investments. Domestic investors are equally worried and are not coming forward to invest big. The IMD has forecast a strong El Niño. As a result, the Indian economy is losing momentum. Our calculation, based on today's conditions, is that in the current financial year (FY27), India will be lucky to clock 6 per cent GDP growth and contain Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation below 6 per cent. If the Strait of Hormuz remains closed for another three months, GDP growth will fall below 6 per cent, and CPI inflation will shoot above 6 per cent — the upper band of the RBI for inflation control. The RBI will not have much choice but to raise the repo rates soon, triggering the northward movement of all interest rates. The economy seems to be on the brink of a major crisis. The only rational way to avoid this is to carry out major reforms, similar to those in 1991. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for austerity measures, and some chief ministers have reportedly travelled on motorcycles, metros and electric cars. Such tokenism does not last long. After returning from his five-country visit, Modi held a meeting with his cabinet colleagues and asked them to carry out reforms that can save resources, especially energy, narrow down the twin deficits of trade and current account, and restore confidence in India's growth story. The technical blueprint of economic reforms is not difficult to prepare, but what is required is the political will to undertake such reforms. The culture of distributing freebies, at the central as well as the state level, is now deeply entrenched. That's the biggest hurdle in carrying out structural reforms. Let us demonstrate with the ex-

amples of fertiliser and food subsidies. Take the case of fertilisers first. India imports anywhere from 20 to 25 per cent of its urea requirements. The last import tender showed that the minimum price of urea's landed cost on the west coast would be \$935/tonne. But it is being sold at less than \$70/tonne to farmers. How prudent is this? Let the readers judge. But what we know is that such pricing creates a large arbitrage — a large amount that is being diverted away from agriculture to other industrial uses in India and also smuggled out to neighbouring countries. Bihar is an interesting example. Government data on fertiliser supply and usage reveal a mismatch. While official figures show large quantities of urea, DAP, and MOP being supplied, another set of government data — the Cost of Cultivation surveys used to determine the minimum support prices for major crops — suggests that actual on-farm usage is more than 50 per cent lower than the quantity supplied. The obvious question is: Where does the rest go?

Anyone familiar with Bihar's ground realities knows that the state has long been an easy route for fertiliser diversion into Nepal. Reports from border districts also indicate that subsidised fertilisers are routinely smuggled into Bangladesh. The root cause is the enormous subsidy on urea, which today covers nearly 90 per cent of its cost.

The fertiliser subsidy bill, budgeted at Rs 1.71 lakh crore for FY27, is almost certain to exceed Rs 2.25 lakh crore and could even touch Rs 2.50 lakh crore. The ultimate solution — the real brahmastra — lies in reforming the entire chemical fertiliser subsidy regime by moving towards a direct benefit transfer system on a per-acre basis, integrated with the PM-Kisan scheme. Concerns relating to tenant farmers can be addressed by triangulating different data sets, provided the government gives this reform the same priority it once accorded the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-mobile linkage initiative. Once this transition is made, fertiliser prices should be left to market forces. That would curb leakages and the smuggling of urea, correct the imbalance in the use of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, and improve nutrient use efficiency. Such reforms could save the government at least Rs 40,000-50,000 crore annually. If comprehensive reform is politically difficult, the second-best option would be to impose quantitative restrictions on fertiliser sales based on landholding size and the crops being cultivated. If even that proves unfeasible, a third alternative would be to bring urea under the nutrient-based subsidy scheme, raise urea prices gradually, and potentially reduce the prices of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, while keeping the overall subsidy bill around Rs 2 lakh crore. A similar issue arises with food subsidies. The food subsidy bill for FY27 is budgeted at Rs 2.28 lakh crore. Yet, if the government claims that extreme poverty has fallen to 5.3 per cent, according to World Bank standards, or around 11 per cent according to NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index, why should free foodgrain continue to be distributed to more than 800 million people? Rationalising the coverage under the scheme or increasing issue prices for those above the poverty line could potentially save another Rs 50,000 crore an-

## Why Kerala has announced a new department for welfare of senior citizens



The newly elected Congress government in Kerala has announced the formation of a department for the elderly people, the first such initiative in India. At present, the welfare of the aged comes under the state's Social Welfare department. Here's what to know about the initiative and how Kerala's changing demographic profile prompted the move.

Kerala is going through a critical phase of demographic transition. With its demographic profile similar to East Asian and European countries, Kerala is India's most rapidly ageing state. As per the Elderly in India Report of 2021, around 16.5% of the state's population is aged above 60 and is expected to touch 20.9% of the total population by 2031 compared with the all-India figure of 13.1%. The old age dependency ratio — the number of the aged per 100 persons of working age group — has risen from 19.6% in 2011 to 26.1% in 2021. This figure is expected to go up to 34.3% by 2031. According to state government data, the number of residents in old age homes in Kerala has increased from 19,149 in 2016-17 to 37,895 in 2024-25. Why Kerala is ageing fast? Three reasons are contributing to Kerala's rapid ageing. Over the years, Kerala's total fertility rate (TFR) — the average number of children that are born to a woman over her lifetime — has declined and is now 1.35 children per woman in 2023 as per the state's Vital Statistics data. This is below the national replacement level of 2.1, which indicates the rate required for a population to replace itself across generations. The life expectancy has increased in Kerala owing to better healthcare facilities. Besides, many in the working age population migrating abroad en masse has turned Kerala into a land of the grey. A major chunk of those who migrate to non-West Asian countries settle there, leaving their aged parents back home. So, there is a large proportion of senior citizens in Kerala, with many households having only aged parents. At the same time, a large-scale return of migrants from West Asia after they no longer are of working age adds to the state's elderly.

The India Ageing Report of 2023 said that around 17.5% of Kerala's rural population comprised individuals aged 60 and above, compared with 15.4% in urban areas. The density of aged people in rural areas is mainly attributed to outmigration of the working age population in search of employment. There are more elderly women than men, especially in advanced ages: sex ratio among those 80-plus is 1651 women per 1000 men. The difference in life span is another factor, with female life expectancy is estimated at around 78.4 years, while that of men is 71.9 years. This has created a large number of women — many of them widows — who live alone without much social and financial support. The data on MGNREGS shows that 88-90% of Kerala's workforce are women, while the corresponding national average is around 55-59%. Among MGNREGS workers in Kerala, around 38% are aged between 61 and 80 and there is another 1% above 81, which indicates the financial distress of the state's aged. As per the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India Wave 1 (2017-18), over 70% of Kerala's elderly suffer from at least one chronic ailment, with hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, and cardiovascular diseases most prevalent. The India Ageing Report 2023 said that nearly 1 in 4 older adults in Kerala exhibit symptoms of

psychological distress. The Kerala State Initiative on Dementia (Smruthipadham) estimates that approximately 4.86% of persons aged 65 and above are affected. This calls for expansion of dementia care services, caregiver training, and public awareness to counter stigma and ensure early diagnosis. In 2025, Kerala formed a first-of-its-kind State Elderly Commission, a quasi-judicial forum for protecting the rights and welfare of senior citizens. Around 75% of the aged population is covered under welfare pension schemes. Kerala has already launched certain community initiatives such as Vayomithram (mobile medical care) and Samayaprabha (daycare). The Kerala Care Palliative Grid has been formed in collaboration with the Digital University Kerala to coordinate palliative care. All voluntary organisations and associations in the field of palliative care are part of the grid. Around 1.5 lakh bedridden people and another ailing 4 lakh are getting care from a palliative care grid, which includes 1,387 government institutions and 1,227 NGOs. The growing graph of senior citizens has thrown up challenges for Kerala in the health and service sectors, mainly on shifting its focus to geriatric care. This requires nurturing a care economy in the state. In 2023, the Directorate of Health Services had found that the state has around 120 geriatricians, 600 nurses trained in elderly care, 400 physiotherapists, and 50 occupational therapists. To meet projected service needs and align with the World Health Organization's recommended multidisciplinary care model, Kerala should have a workforce of nearly 300 geriatricians, 1,500 nurses, 900 physiotherapists, and 250 occupational therapists by 2030.

## 'Maa Inti Bangaram' trailer: Samantha plays a gun-wielding daughter-in-law

Hyderabad: The makers of director Nandini Reddy's upcoming action drama, 'Maa Inti Bangaram', featuring actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu in the lead, have now released a trailer of the film, much to the delight of fans and film buffs. Taking to her social media timelines, Samantha shared the link to the trailer and wrote, "Even if my life is at stake... I will ensure nothing happens to my family #MIBTrailer out now! MASS FAMILY ENTERTAINER WITH A FRESH TWIST. #MaaIntiBangaram in cinemas worldwide June 19th, 2026." The trailer released shows Samantha arriving at her boyfriend's place. She is met with a lot of questions that include, "I think I've seen you before." "What is your name?" and "where are you from?" However, she asks a loaded question in reply. "Do you know who I really am?" The trailer gives the impression that her partner, who fell in love with her, waited for her for two years and that she has now joined him at his place. His family members ask her about what her caste is, whether she knows to cook and has how many siblings. However, these questions make her feel like she is being grilled like a criminal. She is then introduced to Anusuya, the younger daughter-in-law of the house. Anusuya is referred to as "maa inti Bangaram" (the gold of our house) by the other members of the household. "A daughter-in-law is expected to have many qualities to be seen as the ideal woman. She should be beautiful, lean, well behaved, should cook and sing," she laments and then declares, "I have none of those qualities. But I have one quality. I can risk everything to keep my family safe." We then see Samantha bashing up baddies, left, right and centre.

## Divyanka Tripathi, Vivek Dahiya welcome twin baby boys

Mumbai: Television's beloved couple, Divyanka Tripathi Dahiya and Vivek Dahiya, are on cloud nine as they welcome their twin baby boys. The couple who embraced parenthood for the first time in the last 10 years of their marital bliss, took to social media to announce the good news. Sharing an animated picture announcement, Vivek wrote, "The wait is finally over... 'The Boys' are here and life already feels more beautiful than we ever imagined. Mere Karan Arjun aa gaye! Need all your love and blessings as Div and I begin this incredible new chapter of parenthood. #Divek #babyboys #DivekBabies #twins #newparents" The announcement post read, "We asked for happiness... God said, 'Take double.' Blessed with twin baby boys." The dreamy announcement graphic featured two baby boys dressed in matching blue knitted outfits, sitting amidst clouds and stars, perfectly capturing the joy and warmth of the special moment.

Just a night before, Vivek Dahiya and Divyanka Tripathi were seen having a gala time at their sweet date night. Vivek had taken to his social media account to share a beautiful picture with his pregnant wife and captioned it

## Supply chains hit, Government asks industry if local production of 200 petro items possible



gests that India's import substitution strategy cannot rely on a single policy instrument, such as tariffs or PLI schemes. Different categories require very different policy responses depending on the level of existing domestic capability, scale gaps, technology intensity and supply-chain dependence, Srivastava said.

The GTRI's analysis of the data showed that imported items of value over \$500 million, such as phosphoric acid, polypropylene, gold compounds, polycarbonates, suspension grade PVC, resin, India's most strategically vulnerable product categories, are extremely high imports with almost no domestic capability. Such dependence may expose India to external supply-chain shocks, geopolitical risks and long-term trade imbalances, he said. Items such as PVC pipes, polycarbonates (roofing sheets), epoxy resins (coatings, adhesives), and MDI/polyurethanes (insulation foam) are primarily used in housing, commercial real estate, and government infrastructure projects. Similarly, MDI, polyurethanes, carbon blacks (tyre filler), engineering plastics (polyamide/nylon), and isocyanates go into vehicle interiors, tyres, bumpers, and industrial coatings. Some of these items are also key raw materials for fertiliser and urea production. These included phosphoric acid, used in fertiliser production and anhydrous ammonia, a feedstock for urea. Items like PET (terephthalic acid), acrylic fibres (acrylonitrile), nylon-6/6,6 (polyamide), and vinyl acetate are used in the garment and technical textiles industry. Similarly, Butyl acrylate, methyl methacrylate, epoxy resins, toluene, xylene, and ethylene glycol feed the decorative and industrial coatings value chain. Ajay Joshi, a chemical sector expert, said most of these items are crude oil and natural gas derivatives and faced supply chain disruption due to the West Asia crisis. While the drive to indigenise chemical production is the right ambition, it faces a structural gap, Joshi told.

"You can't localise manufacturing when the feedstock itself is imported. Over 85% of our crude oil is shipped in, and most chemicals we aim to produce domestically are ultimately petroleum derivatives. The intent is strong, but the foundation remains borrowed," he said. According to Joshi, linking India's latest push for coal gasification to the chemical value chain could be the right policy direction given the country's huge coal reserves. "What we need now is a feedstock-first industrial policy that connects our coal reserves to our chemical ambitions," he said.

These items cumulatively account for annual imports worth over \$50 billion and the missive from the DPIIT, issued Wednesday, comes amid the West Asia crisis that has caused price and supply related challenges for the industry. Most petrochemicals listed by the DPIIT are intermediate products that are used in packaging, construction, automotive, agricultural, textile and paints. Items like PVC, polyethylene (LDPE, LLDPE), polypropylene, polystyrene, ABS are the backbone of packaging films, pipes, containers and consumer goods. Any supply disruption of these items directly hits FMCG, construction and e-commerce packaging.

The list of items also includes high-value imports ranging from phosphoric acid, ammonia, acetic acid, toluene used in agriculture, food production, and industrial manufacturing, plastics and resins such as polypropylene, polycarbonates and propylene copolymers that go into the production of automotive components, packaging materials, and medical devices. While the Indian industry and consumers have been relatively shielded by the impact of the West Asia crisis due to the low-cost inventory, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is depleting the inventory and a more pronounced impact across the industry may be felt if the crisis continues.

Ajay Srivastava, former trade officer and founder of think tank GTRI, said that out of the total imports in the petrochemical industry that is worth \$56 billion, only a limited set of sectors show meaningful domestic export capability, while a large number of product lines remain heavily import-dependent with negligible exports. The list of items sug-

## Shift by bulk fuel buyers to OMCs' retail pumps behind demand surge, supply issues in some pockets

Fuel demand, particularly of diesel, is seeing a surge in certain pockets as a large number of bulk fuel consumers have shifted to public sector oil marketing companies' (OMCs) retail outlets due to a wide price gap between retail prices—which are still below market rates—and the market-linked bulk prices, according to the government. On top of that, certain private sector fuel retailers are retailing the fuels at higher prices than the OMCs, leading to additional pressure on the latter's retail network as consumers are preferring to buy from them. These shifts are a major reason why the OMCs' retail outlets in some areas are running out of fuel stocks faster than usual, leading to dry-out-like situations, according to industry sources. There have been reports from various parts of the country of some retail fuel bunks running out of stocks. Industry sources said that the problem gets amplified when a supply constraint at one retail outlet leads to rumours of shortage in the area, and consumers start panic-buying from other outlets as well.

The visible migration of a large number of bulk consumers to OMCs' retail stations, combined with higher agricultural season fuel demand, has led to a demand growth of 20% to 30% in some localised areas, according to Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma. "The price difference between diesel for bulk sales and that available at petrol pumps is Rs 40-42 per litre," she said.

Amid the global oil and fuel price surge due to the West Asia crisis, only a fraction of the price hike has been passed on for the retail petrol and diesel sales in India by the OMCs; the price hikes have been much higher in the bulk and industrial segments. While the OMCs, being government-owned, have kept prices artificially lower, some private sector fuel retailers have hiked retail fuel prices. The three OMCs—Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, Hindustan Petroleum—together have a share of 90% in the fuel retail market. While fuel production and supply at the national level remains stable and adequate, these factors are leading to regional imbalances and last-mile logistical challenges for the OMCs to maintain 24x7 supplies, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and rural and remote areas. While retail fuel pumps usually sell fuel to two-wheelers and cars, bulk and commercial buyers like state road transport corporation buses, trucks, and diesel-powered telecom towers are supposed to get their supplies from designated points. "Petrol pumps generally have stocks of two to three days, and if they see 20-30% growth in demand, they may temporarily face some issues... after all, there are last-mile logistics issues (as well)," Sharma said, adding that the OMCs are closely monitoring the situation on a real-time basis and taking the necessary action. Some state and district administrations have also issued formal requests or directives for bulk consumers to use designated bulk supply points rather than retail petrol pumps.

The country's second-largest fuel retailer Bharat Pe-



roleum said that while metropolitan centres continue to remain adequately supplied, special operational focus has been placed on "maintaining seamless supplies across tier-2, tier-3 and remote markets, where localised demand spikes and precautionary buying tendencies have been observed in recent days". According to Bharat Petroleum, between May 1 and May 20, its petrol sales volumes jumped 16.4% year-on-year, while diesel sales surged 16.7%, reflecting super-normal growth. According to provisional data from the Petroleum Ministry, nationwide petrol consumption in April was higher by 6.4% on a year-on-year basis, while diesel consumption was 0.3% higher. "BPCL's (Bharat Petroleum's) integrated supply chain network — comprising refineries, terminals, depots, transport logistics and retail outlets — continues to operate efficiently, supported by round-the-clock monitoring and enhanced coordination between regional teams and field operations," Bharat Petroleum said, adding that additional measures have been initiated to augment supplies in high-demand regions.

These measures include enhanced tanker movement planning, depot-level inventory optimisation, and continuous monitoring of retail outlet replenishment cycles. The other two OMCs have also implemented similar measures, it is learnt. The government and the OMCs reiterated that India has more than required production of petrol and diesel, and appealed to consumers to not indulge in panic buying. "There is no issue in product supply," Sharma said. "I would again appeal that citizens should not resort to panic buying and should not believe rumours. They should purchase as per the need," Sharma said, adding that India produces about 10 million tonnes a month, but consumes about 8.5 million tonnes. "We have sufficient supplies of crude oil, natural gas, petrol and diesel... Our refineries are operating at optimum capacity (105% in the last year) to meet the demand of the country," Sharma said. India is the world's fourth-largest refiner, and while it majorly depends on imported crude, it is a net exporter of refiner fuels as the refining capacity exceeds domestic consumption. "To say that there is a shortfall of petrol and diesel at any place is incorrect," Sharma said.

## Illicit trade, deep discounting hurting small traders, say FRAI members

Hyderabad: Retailers expressed serious concern over the growing circulation of counterfeit products, illegal distribution channels and non-compliant goods across markets. During a seminar on "Confronting Illicit Trade in Modern Markets" organised by the Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRAI) Telangana State Chapter here on Thursday, retailers highlighted how predatory pricing, deep discounting and unchecked expansion of certain quick commerce and e-commerce models were creating severe imbalances for small retailers and traditional businesses. The seminar also highlighted that both illicit trade and unfair market practices are adversely affecting genuine businesses, government revenues, consumer trust as well as the livelihoods of lakhs of small traders across the State.

Participants said flash sales, unrealistic discounting, aggressive pricing strategies along with the constant push for ultra-fast delivery have created an environment where consumers are often unable to differentiate between genuine and counterfeit products. Central zone ACP R Sanjay Kumar said illicit trade and the unchecked circulation of counterfeit products have become a serious concern not



only for businesses and consumers, but also from the perspective of law enforcement and public safety. "Today, digital platforms and rapid-delivery ecosystems are expanding at an unprecedented pace, but in many cases there is insufficient awareness regarding product authenticity, cyber risks and illegal supply chains. Consumers are often attracted by heavy discounts and instant availability without fully understanding the risks associated with fake, adulterated or non-compliant products," he said.

## Jhaal muri, papdi chaat, and phuchka: The coolest Indian snacks to beat the summer heat



Every summer in India, it feels like we have been plunged into the concentric circles of flames from Dante's Inferno. As I write this, the temperature is expected to soar to 44°C! While I don't recommend stuffing onions into your pockets as our erstwhile Maharajahs recommend, I do suggest beating the heat with onions dipped in chickpea flour, crisply fried, ready to be dunked into a spicy coriander-mint chutney. Summer is when India's innovativeness and love for light, fast food can best be appreciated. Here's my list of Indian solutions to eating light in the summer heat.

First off the bat is Bengal's favourite—jhaal muri. The charm of Indian street food is that it is ready instantly: made fresh before your eyes, easy to carry and eat, and doesn't require you to sit down to enjoy a meal to fill your stomach. Jhaal muri ticks all these boxes. Puffed rice—not chiwda—is mixed with finely diced cucumber, tomatoes, chillies, onions, coriander leaves, sometimes roasted peanuts or chickpeas, chana chur or hot gram, a secret spice mix usually known only to the vendor, a generous squeeze of lime, and a glug of mustard oil finish. Traditionally served in containers made from yesterday's newspapers—or as Calcutta lore has it, from the exam paper you wrote last week, which found its way to the newspaper collector. The best part about jhaal muri is that you can tweak it to your taste and choose the spice level and the vegetables that go in. It's filling, delicious, and light on the pocket.

If jhaal muri is not your thing, you could always try Bombay's answer—bhel puri. Also made with puffed rice, but with the addition of bhujia and diced onions, bhel puri is a little heartier and definitely less healthy with a generous dose of a sweet tamarind chutney. I personally love a good bhel puri, but it's best eaten as soon as it's made because the chutney makes everything soggy.

Another favourite is papdi chaat, also called sev puri. Even Planet India in Brighton has mastered it. A layer of crisply fried puris, devoid of oil, is topped with chopped potatoes, onions, and chillies and then drizzled with a sweet-and-sour tamarind chutney, cold yoghurt whipped till it's

runny, and a spicy coriander-mint chutney. A sprinkle of black salt, chaat masala, and red chilli powder completes the dish. A bit messier than jhaal muri or bhel puri, you use the fried papdis to pick up the topping, with each papdi a mouthful. Bombay's other favourite is the vada pav, which I personally felt was an abomination. But it is a hearty way to fill your stomach in a jiffy, and it does have its own fan club. Street vendors will be sitting with piles of big alu bondas—balls of spiced mashed potato—which are deep-fried. They will slice open a bun or pao, keeping one side attached so your bonda and its filling don't fall out. The bun is then slathered with a red chilli paste and some green chutney, the bonda is stuffed in it and smashed down slightly, and topped with a fried chilli. India's answer to a burger. But we've kept it vegetarian.

Another great little snack on the road that helps beat the heat is kakkdi (long melon or Armenian cucumber) and kancha aam (raw mango). It's impossible to travel through North India without noticing men pushing carts piled with kakkdi. If you ask for some, they will either sell it to you whole or offer to cut it up into chunks, with a sprinkle of a salty spice powder. Raw mango is sold across Bengal in little thongas (containers made from newspapers), where the mango is sliced and sprinkled with some salt and red chilli powder. If you're making it at home, I'd recommend you add a little turmeric powder to the mix and then place the marinated mango in the sun for a few days. The slightly sun-dried spiced mangoes are heavenly.

How can I forget my favourite summer and winter snack, which you should only eat from a street vendor? The phuchka! This is paradise in a mouthful. Watch the phuchka-wallah mash potatoes with spices and chopped chillis, sometimes adding some boiled chickpeas, and a dash of tamarind water ladled from a big, steel urn. Then see him crack a hole in the fried atta or suji phuchka, fill it with the potato mix, dip it into the steel urn—it usually has big chunks of Gondhoraj lebu floating in it—fill it with the cool, spicy water, and hand it to you. Pop it into your mouth, crush it, and savour the explosion of flavours. Another big favourite I miss in Delhi—you don't get it anywhere outside the Bengali markets here—is the alur chop, peyaji, and other bhaajas. This is far from healthy eating, but it's quick, tasty and filling. Mashed spiced potato is made into a flat patty/chop, dipped in chickpea flour batter, and deep-fried. So too are rounds of onions, sliced onions mixed with spices and chillies and dipped in runny chickpea batter, whole chillies, and even sliced brinjals. In Bengal, and in Bengali markets outside, these "chops" are usually prepped in advance and fried once. When you ask for your mix, they are dunked into hot oil again and served straight from the frying pan, often with a sprinkling of rock salt. Then they are packed into a thonga and handed to you so you can relish the delicacies on the go, and kickstart your calorie count. So if you're trying to beat the heat, stay away from the rice and heavy meals. Just trot over to a local street-food vendor and take your pick. Apart from fried potatoes—including purely for taste and ease—this is the best option for freshly made, light food in the summer of 2026.

## Why Indian jewellers wrap gold in pink paper

If you have ever purchased gold jewellery in India, chances are the ornament was carefully folded into a sheet of bright pink paper before being placed inside a box. While many assume it is merely a traditional aesthetic choice, experts say the decades-old practice has practical, psychological, and cultural significance. According to Krishan Kumar Dal, Department Lead – Jewellery Design, Pearl Academy, Jaipur, the iconic pink paper has survived generations because it does much more than simply package jewellery attractively.

Does pink paper actually protect jewellery?

"For practical reasons, pink paper frequently contains a mild anti-tarnish coating that minimises exposure to air and moisture, which are the primary causes of dullness, particularly for silver or gold alloys combined with copper," explained Dal. He added that the paper also acts as a protective barrier during storage and handling. "During storage, it serves as a rudimentary defence against dust, moisture and small scratches," he said. Before modern luxury packaging became common, jewellers relied on simple yet functional wrapping materials to ensure ornaments remained protected during transport or storage. Soft paper prevented friction between jewellery pieces and reduced the chances of minor surface damage. Aditi Daga, co-founder of Angara, echoed this sentiment, saying the choice of pink paper was never random. "The pink paper you often see with gold jewellery isn't random. It's been used for decades because it's simple, soft enough to prevent minor scratches, and the colour enhances the warmth and richness of gold at first glance," Daga said. "It also serves as a light barrier against moisture, which made it a practical choice for traditional retail," she added.

Why does gold look richer against pink paper?

"For aesthetic reasons, gold's yellow tone appears richer and more vivid due to the attractive contrast created by pink," Dal explained. "This minor optical trick increases the jewellery's appeal at the time of purchase." "Gold appears brighter, more glossy, and aesthetically pleasing due to the warmer contrast created by the gentle pink tone," Dal added. "The gold appears richer and more sophisticated rather than harsh or overly reflective since both hues are within a warm palette." According to him, this subtle visual



enhancement can psychologically influence buyers and increase the perceived value of the jewellery.

Why has the tradition survived despite luxury packaging trends?

Dal believes this endurance is deeply cultural. "Pink wrapping paper blends cultural significance, emotional familiarity and usefulness," he said. "In many Indian contexts, pink and related colours like red are linked to prosperity, celebration and auspiciousness, particularly when it comes to gifts and weddings." Over time, the paper itself became associated with trust and authenticity in jewellery shopping. "This straightforward packaging has developed into a reliable visual indicator of history and authenticity throughout time," Dal added. Daga, on the other hand, believes the tradition is now evolving rather than disappearing. "What's interesting today is how that legacy is evolving. While the essence of care and presentation remains, there's a clear shift towards more thoughtful, design-led packaging that feels like an extension of the jewellery itself," she said. According to Daga, packaging today is not merely functional, it is an integral part of the luxury experience. "Packaging is no longer just protective; it's part of the experience. From the moment a piece is received, it should feel personal, considered and memorable," she explained. "At its core, the intent hasn't changed, it's still about making the moment special. But the way we express that is becoming more refined and aligned with how modern consumers engage with luxury," Daga underlined.

## R Madhavan on parenting lesson that shaped son Vedaant; expert weighs in

Actor R Madhavan has often spoken about raising his son, freestyle swimmer Vedaant Madhavan, with discipline, gratitude, and humility despite growing up in a financially privileged environment. In a recent conversation on the 100 Year Life Project by ACKO with Radhika Gupta, Madhavan reflected on the parenting choices that shaped his son's upbringing. Speaking about teaching respect and awareness of privilege, Madhavan said, "The thing I made sure that Vedaant did was to acknowledge, maybe not as much as my friends, but most certainly acknowledge the lifterman, the guard, the drivers, you know, and not call them aayas and stuff like that. Call them didis instead. And I made sure that if the watchman came and said, 'You are a very polite child, he always says namaste to me,' I thought my job was well done." His comments highlight how many parents today are trying to ensure children grow up with empathy, social awareness, and respect for people across all professions, especially in homes where domestic help and support staff

are a part of everyday life. Madhavan also opened up about a parenting lesson he learned while living in Canada years ago. He recalled staying in a town where issues like teenage pregnancy, drugs, and alcohol were common among young people. However, one particular family stood out to him because their children remained disciplined and grounded despite the surrounding environment. Curious about how they managed it, Madhavan said he later asked the mother for advice, and her response stayed with him for years. Recalling the conversation, he said, "I happened to ask the lady of the household many years later, I said, 'How did you manage to do this?' And she gave me an advice which I followed to the heart, and it really worked for my son. And she said, 'Don't give your child free time. She said, 'You know, indulge him or her in whatever they want to do, as long as they're doing it with passion. The interests will change, the level of commitment will change

## Ashwin reacts to Chennai's IPL 2026 exit: 'This is not Dhoni's CSK'

GNS News Agency, May 27

Former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin believes Chennai Super Kings need a major rethink in both approach and squad-building after their IPL 2026 campaign ended with a crushing 89-run defeat to Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on Thursday. Reflecting on CSK's struggles this season, the 39-year-old said the franchise could no longer depend on the formula that brought them sustained success during the MS Dhoni era, adding that the side now needed greater quality, experience and balance across departments. "Honestly, I will say this openly, CSK has to invest in quality. They have to invest in quality cricketers," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel 'Ash ki Baat'. "I mean, make a quality team. With experience. Bowling experience. Variety in fast bowlers. Variety in spinners. A team has to be formed in a good way." Ashwin acknowledged the excitement around young players but stressed that experience remained irreplaceable in a tournament as demanding as the IPL. "Young talent, exuberance of youth, as Ravi (Shastri) bhai says, it excites. But along with that, if there is experience in your team, that is a lethal combination." The veteran off-spinner also urged fans to temper expectations around an immediate turnaround. "This is not Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings. Not at all. That time has changed. And you have to keep in mind that success will come. But it will come slowly." Ashwin also questioned whether CSK's current squad composition truly suited conditions at Chepauk, a venue where the franchise built much of its success over the years.

"Actually, honestly speaking, Shivam Dube's batting was very positive for Chennai," Ashwin said. "But I have an



observation. I think the squad that is picked to play in their home game, in Chepauk, I think it is not suiting them." Ashwin felt that batting successfully in Chennai required patience and adaptability rather than just power-hitting. "Whenever I think of Badrinath, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu, Shane Watson, Michael Hussey — players like them — I feel that to bat in Chepauk's conditions, you have to do a little attritional batting. You don't have a wicket to hit through the line like this." He also praised youngster Kartik Sharma for showing traits that could suit Chennai's traditional style of cricket. "Kartik Sharma has that ability. He plays the spinner a little late, he plays inside-out shots, he uses his feet in front. Today's batters, if you count them on one hand, how many have the ability to use their feet while batting?" CSK's defeat to GT also marked the third straight season in which the five-time champions failed to qualify for the IPL play-offs, underlining the scale of the transition facing one of IPL's most successful franchises.

## Rashid Khan on Gill-Sudharsan success: 'They don't change their game'

GNS News Agency, May 27

Rashid Khan believes the understanding between Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan has been one of the biggest reasons behind Gujarat Titans' batting success in IPL 2026.

The latest example came against CSK, where Gill and Sudharsan stitched together a 125-run opening stand that set up GT's massive total of 229. Over the last few seasons, the pair have become the backbone of GT's batting, combining consistency with a calm understanding of tempo and match situations. "Shubman, I think he is getting better and better each and every day," Rashid said after GT's 89-run win over Chennai Super Kings in Ahmedabad on Thursday. "He is adjusting himself with the condition and the grounds very quickly, and he reads the game very quickly, and I feel like that's the reason behind him and Sai Sudharsan." "They take a little bit of time, and they know their game very well," he said. "I think they don't change much of their game. Either they're chasing 200, or they're chasing 150." According to Rashid, that clarity separates Gill from many T20 batters who constantly alter their approach depending on the situation. "So I think what is great with Shubman is he knows his game," Rashid said. "He knows his innings, how to start, how to accelerate and how to finish it. So I think that's something which has been great so far and we look forward to see some great innings." Rashid also said GT's consistency as a side has come from not obsessing over weaknesses, even as questions around the middle order continued throughout the season. "For us, you can't be a complete 100% perfect team," Rashid said. "Doesn't matter how good a player you will have. You will have some areas where it's weak, but you can't take that area and keep that in the mind a lot. Throughout the tourna-



ment, lots of discussion about our middle order and things like that, but I feel everyone is stepping up." "Everyone is taking the responsibility, and I feel like that's so important. If you keep thinking about those 10% or 15%, I feel it's going to affect the rest of 70-75% or 80%." GT finished the league phase with nine wins in 14 matches, and Rashid felt the team's simple approach had played a major role in that consistency.

So you can't really say we are a very perfect team or we are 100% perfect and we will win each and every game," he said. "I think for us, the thing is that we just keep things simple. Whoever the opposition is, how are we going to be more impactful whenever someone gets the opportunity in the middle." "Either you bat, bowl or field. Don't think too much about where we are weak or where we are strong. Think about what is in front of you and how you can do better for the team. Winning nine games out of 14 is a great feeling for any team." "I think not only this year, but from the last five years, GT have played some amazing cricket and amazing group games."

## Cristiano Ronaldo in tears after winning first Saudi PL title with brace



GNS News Agency, May 27

Cristiano Ronaldo broke a six-year deadlock for a premier club-level title on Thursday night as he powered Al Nassr to the Saudi Pro League championship with a brace in a 4-1 win against Damac FC on the final day of the season. The victory marked Al Nassr's first SPL title since 2019, while Ronaldo ended his wait for a major club title since winning the Serie A with Juventus in 2020. The win meant Al Nassr finished on 86 points, two clear of rivals Al Hilal, who beat Al Fayha 1-0 but were left to settle for second place. Al Nassr broke the deadlock in the 34th minute

when Mane rose to meet a Joao Felix corner, powering a header past the goalkeeper. They extended their lead in the 52nd minute when Coman waved past the defence before unleashing a fierce left-footed strike from outside the area into the bottom corner. Damac were handed a lifeline when Morlaye Sylla converted a penalty in the 58th minute, but any hopes of a comeback were quickly extinguished. Ronaldo restored the two-goal cushion five minutes later, curling a sublime free kick into the net to make it 3-1. The Portuguese great put the result beyond doubt in the 81st minute. He pounced on a loose ball after the Damac defence failed to clear a cross, smashing a powerful shot into the top corner. Teary-eyed, Ronaldo received an overwhelming ovation before he was subdued off towards the end of the match. The 41-year-old Portuguese superstar finished the season with 28 goals in 30 appearances. After the trophy presentations, Ronaldo posted a social media video of himself and the team with the notation: "It means so much to us." It also included the words "Yalla Nassr," which when translated from Arabic means "Come on, Al Nassr!" and is a popular cheer used by the team's fans. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner raised his world record goal tally to 973 goals and will next be seen in World Cup action next month after being named in Portugal's 27-man squad for a record sixth time.

## Praggnanandhaa suffers first defeat at Romania; Sindarov wins first time

GNS News Agency, May 27

India's R Praggnanandhaa slumped to his first defeat of the Super Chess Classic Romania tournament at Bucharest on Thursday, losing to Fabiano Caruana in 33 moves with white pieces in a round 7 encounter. Coincidentally, while Pragg suffered his first loss of the tournament, his contemporary from Uzbekistan Javokhir Sindarov experienced his first victory, defeating tournament leader Vincent Keymer. In a game that began with a Queen's Gambit Declined on the board, Praggnanandhaa was in trouble from as early as the 25th move against Caruana after a shuffle of the queen from c2 to e2 saw the evaluation bar drop and indicate a hefty advantage to the American grandmaster. Another move of his rook on the back rank from e1 to c1 on move 28 left Pragg in an un-winnable situation, even though he had an additional pawn by this stage. By the end, when Pragg decided to throw in the towel, even the single pawn advantage of the Indian prodigy had disappeared.

After the seventh round, Pragg finds himself in tied fourth place with three others (including Sindarov) on 3.5 points. Caruana rose to joint lead, only one point ahead of

Pragg, which means there is still hope the Indian prodigy could make a run at the title in the final two rounds. Pragg will take on Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in the next round before facing Dutch GM Anish Giri in the final round. His only victory of the tournament so far has come over Sindarov, who has struggled so far before he finally managed to pull off a victory on Thursday. Both Sindarov and Praggnanandhaa will consider themselves unlucky to have been held to draws by French-Iranian grandmaster Alireza Firouzja earlier in the tournament. Alireza withdrew from the tournament mid way due to an ankle injury, after playing two games from a hotel room bed with his leg propped up on multiple pillows. Alireza's pull out would mean that besides the three games he lost to Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Anish Giri and Fabiano Caruana, he would end up gifting a point to the other four players in the field as forfeit. The only players who lost points to him were Pragg and Sindarov.

"If I was in his situation I would do the same thing. Four hours or five hours lying in bed and playing chess is crazy," Sindarov said. "Now I just want to finish my tournament well. I'm not thinking about other things."

## 'Sometimes your emotions do come out': Shubman Gill on his 'shush' celebration

Gujarat Titans captain Shubman Gill was overwhelmed with emotions after taking a catch of Shivam Dube during the match against the Chennai Super Kings at Ahmedabad on Thursday. After grabbing on to the catch, Gill celebrated with a shushing gesture which looked like it was directed at the CSK supporters in the Narendra Modi Stadium stands. "No, nothing. When you're playing such a high-emotion game, sometimes your emotions do come out. So, it was one of those moments for me," Gill downplayed the situation when asked after the match in the presentation ceremony.

Gill also talked about the Gujarat bowlers as well as his batting where he scored 64 runs. "Our bowlers hit lengths consistently. Yes, the odd ball will go over the rope but it's about backing your lengths. I am happy with my batting, every time you are out, you think you could have done better." On the day, CSK officially bowed out of the tournament with their eighth loss — 89 run defeat against Gujarat Titans. "When you are chasing 230, it's not easy against that (GT) bowling attack. The wicket was spongy to start, they started well. Our bowling wasn't good in the powerplay. It was hard to stop their openers. We had our chances to restrict them under 200, failed to do it," CSK captain Ruturaj Gaikwad didn't beat around the bush.

Gaikwad believes that it was a catch up game for them once they had lost three successive games in a row. "Tough



season, after a hat-trick of losses. We found momentum, we found the right spots but were hit by injuries. Ramakrishna Ghosh and Jamie Overton going out unsettled us, we were always a batter or bowler short in the last three games." Gaikwad also explained that this season was a perfect case of transition happening in the CSK ranks. "More than 8 players have played less than 20 games, we have found out what areas we're lacking. We still got six away wins, proud of the unit." We have moved on from Ajinkya Rahane, Ambati Rayudu, the experience we had. Karthik Sharma, Urvil Patel and Dewald Brevis are there. Karthik has potential, he has areas to improve. Urvil's playing a full season for the first time, that comes with expectations," Gaikwad reasoned.

## Gaikwad on MS Dhoni playing IPL 2027: 'You and I will know next year'

The future of MS Dhoni at Chennai Super Kings remains uncertain, with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad admitting that even the dressing room does not yet know whether the veteran will return for IPL 2027. "You and I'll get to know it next year," Gaikwad said after CSK's crushing 89-run defeat to Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on Thursday. "It's a hard miss for us. He can come in those late overs and change the game just by staying in the crease. Never know about next season, but really happy with the guys we have."

Dhoni did not play a single game in IPL 2026. The 44-year-old was initially expected to miss only the opening two weeks of the season while recovering from a calf injury. However, the former India captain never returned to action as the tournament progressed. Things worsened when Dhoni suffered a thumb injury ahead of CSK's clash against Lucknow Super Giants in Lucknow, further complicating any hopes of a comeback during the second half of the campaign. Without Dhoni — both as a finisher and a calming presence — CSK endured one of their most disappointing IPL seasons. Thursday's heavy defeat against Gujarat officially ended their playoff hopes and underlined the transition phase the five-time champions currently find them-



selves in. For years, Dhoni's presence at the back end of innings has masked several flaws within the CSK batting order. Even in his advancing years, his ability to finish games and control tense moments remained invaluable. Gaikwad acknowledged that void while describing Dhoni as someone capable of "changing the game just by staying in the crease." Whether the former captain returns for one final season or quietly steps away, the end of IPL 2026 has once again left Indian cricket waiting for answers only MS Dhoni can provide.

## Why Federation Cup has added importance this year



In the golden hour under the stadium lights, decathlon national record holder Tejaswin Shankar is warming up. On Friday, he would compete in his first set of events at the Federation Cup Athletics in Birsamunda Stadium, Ranchi, aiming to qualify for the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in July. But the 27-year-old from Delhi will have to better his season's best to meet the qualification standard set by the Athletics Federation of India. His only decathlon event this season was at David Nobles Combined Events in USA, where he scored 7947 points. The AFI-set mark is 7787. He knows its relevance. "It is a crucial tournament for me as the CWG qualification is on the line. I came to India ten days back and landed here three days back to acclimatise with the weather," Tejaswin said during the press conference. Tejaswin, who is also national record holder in high jump, has a chance to qualify for both events. "I will prioritise Decathlon for CWG as I get to do ten events together," said Tejaswin.

Federation Cup, one of the main fixtures in the Indian athletics calendar, will be a qualifying event for CWG and Asian U23 Athletics Championships. However, only 32 athletes including 16 men and 16 women will be allowed to participate in CWG. "If there are more than 32 athletes, the selection committee will have to pick and choose as organisers have made it clear that every Athletics squad will have only 32 athletes," Lait Bhanot, Chairman of AFI planning commission said. Commonwealth Games have a competitive field in athletics with the presence of Caribbean and African athletes in most of the events. Qualifying standards for events like 100m (10.16s), 400m (44.96s) would need athletes to break the national record and for events like javelin throw (82.61m) it is world class. Hurl fest

Post Neeraj Chopra's gold medal in Tokyo, javelin throw has become a blue riband event in India's athletics

## Aida clinches treble at IGU Maharashtra Ladies and Junior Girls Golf Championship

Hyderabad: On a day of fluctuating fortunes, Karnataka's talented Aida Thimmaiah capitalized on Yogya Bhalla's lapse to secure a fine treble (overall, Category 'A' & 'B') in the IGU Maharashtra Ladies & Junior Girls Golf Championship at the Willingdon Club in Mumbai on Thursday. Aida shot a three-over 68 on the final day for a two-shot victory over Yogya Bhalla (69), who looked in control until her collapse on the 17th hole. The 12-year-old from Coorg finished with a three-day total of three-over 198 to claim her maiden overall title, becoming one of the youngest to achieve the feat.

Starting the day with a one-stroke cushion, Aida doubled the lead with a birdie on the fifth. A three-putt double bogey on the seventh allowed Yogya, who played solidly for most of the round, to draw level for the first time. From then on, Aida was forced to play catch-up, dropping shots

each time she tried to recover. Yogya went ahead by a stroke after Aida's bogey on the 14th and extended her lead with a birdie on the 16th to go two shots clear. Two up with two holes to play, Yogya only needed to stay conservative. But the 16-year-old from Delhi, who was in the middle of the fairway with a powerful drive, went for broke and paid the price. She went out of bounds twice, walked away with a quadruple bogey, and faced a two-stroke deficit heading into the final hole.

The dramatic four-shot swing on the penultimate hole handed Aida a two-shot victory. "It feels nice to win my first overall title," said Aida. "It was a tough battle right till the end." In Category 'C' (11-12 years), Haryana's Nandini Rathee (70) clinched the title with a three-shot victory over Gairat Kaur Kahlon (72), finishing on 25-over 220.

## System movie review: Sonakshi Sinha-Jyotika drama starts with promise, ends with an eye-roll



**System movie review:** System is a legal drama bookended by two women, separated by class, but united in their zeal for justice. Neha Rajvansh (Sonakshi Sinha) may be a struggling public prosecutor (sarkara vakil) but she comes from privilege. Her wealthy father (Ashutosh Gowariker) is a top defence lawyer, and her brother (Adinath Kothare) is following in his footsteps. Dad wants his rebellious beti back where she belongs, but she has to prove her mettle. If she wins ten cases in a row, he declares, she will get entry into his hallowed chambers.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the much-lower-on-pecking-order Sarika Rawat (Jyotika), a court reporter who has learnt enough law to be able to give tips to Neha, especially when she sees the latter fumble. Sarika has a husband who is a wheel-chair user, and a school-going daughter, and she could do with a bit extra on the side, and so the women come to an understanding. It's pragmatic: Neha needs the help, and Sarika needs the money, so why should anyone have any objections? The fact that it's not exactly kosher is brushed under the carpet.

The strength of Iyer's film is just this, showing the two women bent upon earning their living their way, and making

their choices, right or wrong. The fact that they are sexually independent is also a plus: when Neha tells her lover that he makes her very happy, you are startled, because this is not a statement one comes across in too many mainstream Hindi films. That Sarika has her own little physical fiddle on the side is also a surprise, especially because she handles the trusts in the most matter-of-fact of manner. But the good things don't last. Confusion arises soon enough when Neha, who seems perfectly happy trying her hand at defending people who do need help, as opposed to the wealthy who hide under the convenient loophole — it's not just enough to be guilty, but proven to be guilty beyond reasonable doubt — suddenly seems to want to be part of daddy's camp. Whatever happened to the vaunted independence?

The cases also seem to be summarily fought and disposed off, from a fire in a restaurant which claims an innocent life, to the murder of a famous influencer: it's almost as if Neha is ticking off the numbers of cases just to be able to cross over to the other side, with a sidekick (Aatam Prakash Mishra, who had a lot to do in 'Criminal Justice' series) and is here reduced to delivering pointedly funny lines which call attention to themselves. And then, of course, when daddy's rich builder pal (Vijayant Kohli) is in the dock, Neha goes off sleuthing — why do feisty female lawyers in Hindi movies wade into unknown territory without batting an eyelid? Not only do they jump into these spaces, they also come up triumphantly with answers. Old Delhi seems to be the only address for those who are struggling financially, in Bollywood's imagination; rickshaws miraculously appear late in the night; and my pet peeve, homes invariably look like decorated sets. The contrivances do not end here: the climactic confrontation, in which the killer is revealed, is nothing but an eye roll. System movie cast: Sonakshi Sinha, Jyotika, Ashutosh Gowariker, Adinath Kothare, Vijayant Kohli, Aatam Prakash Mishra. System movie director: Ashwini Iyer. System movie rating: 2.5 stars

## 'I was 8 when mom died': Sanjay Dutt's daughter Trishala on dark reality of 'silver spoon' childhood

There is a general notion that the kids of Bollywood stars live a life of comfort and luxury and never face any real struggle in life. However, everyone's definition of struggle is different, and in a recent interview, Sanjay Dutt's daughter Trishala Dutt opened up about the kind of bullying and racism she went through growing up in New York. Trishala is the daughter of Sanjay and his first wife Richa Sharma, who passed away in 1996. Trishala grew up in New York with her maternal grandparents and Sanjay, who had an active film career in India, would visit her often.

Trishala Dutt faced bullying, racism as a child in a chat with the YouTube channel Inside Thoughts Out Loud, Trishala opened up about the bullying she faced at a young age and shared that the bullying first started when she was just 5-6 years old, and it was primarily because she was Indian. "I faced a lot of hardship and a lot of taunting from children around me because I was a child at the time, and I did not have a safe space," she said. Trishala added that the bullying continued when she went to middle school as she "had gained a lot of weight during the time." And finally, when she went to high school, things "blew up" as people started finding out who she was, and the family she came from. Looking back at that era in her life, Trishala said that she had "no one to lean on" and hoped that she had "someone to talk to when I was younger." Trishala opened up about her mother Richa, who passed away in 1996, when Trishala was just 8 years old. Sanjay, who had substance abuse problems through the 1970s and 1980s, went to a rehabilitation center in the mid-1980s and cleaned up his life. It was then that he met Richa, who was also an actor. They got married in 1987 in New York and welcomed Trishala into their lives the next year. However, soon after, Richa was diagnosed with brain cancer.

"My mother passed away in 1996 when I was 8 years old, and she passed away from a brain tumour. She was diagnosed in 1989. When they found out, it was already grade 4. That type of brain cancer is one of the deadliest and most aggressive human cancers," she recalled and shared that her father was splitting time between India and US at the time. Trishala was a baby when her mother's health problems started. When Richa passed away, Trishala lost a major support system, and even her father couldn't be fully present in her life. In 1993, Sanjay was accused of aiding underworld criminals during the bomb blasts in Mumbai. The case dragged on for years, and Sanjay spent a lot of time behind bars.

Sanjay Dutt couldn't be present for Richa's treatment. "Dad was splitting his time between India and the US. He was back and forth because he was working, and it was hard to stay here for her entire treatment while also being an actor back home," she said. Richa received her treatment from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, where Sanjay's mother Nargis Dutt was also treated for her cancer. She recovered in New York but fell ill as she returned to Mumbai. Nargis died days before the premiere of Sanjay's first film in 1981. "I didn't look the part of Sanjay Dutt's daughter"



While the world around her was falling apart, Trishala found some comfort in food but that led to a "weight problem". She shared, "When I was younger and my mother was going through cancer, I developed a weight problem because I turned to food for comfort." Her weight became a subject for naysayers as she did not fit their ideal picture of who Sanjay Dutt's daughter would be. "People think that if you are a celebrity's daughter, you have to look a certain way and I just didn't look the part of Sanjay Dutt's daughter," she said.

Trishala said that when she would visit India in her younger years, it would "make her curl up in a shell" as the paparazzi would photograph her relentlessly, and it would inadvertently lead to mean comments. "When I was a child, so many things were written about me, people would leave mean comments," she said and added, "Nobody has thicker skin than me because I have seen it all at a very tender age."

Why Trishala became a therapist In the same chat, when Trishala was asked about the "biggest misconception" that people have about her, she shared that people think she was born with a silver spoon, and while she acknowledges it, she added that she was also surrounded by a lot of "dark clouds." "I have been through many storms, a lot of dark clouds. Was I born with a silver spoon in my mouth? Yes and no. I didn't have everything handed to me as everybody thinks. I had to work a lot to get to where I am today. I have internal struggles just like everybody else. I am not perfect and I became a therapist to let people know that it's okay to struggle. You don't always have to have it together and you are not alone in this journey," she said. Trishala now works as a mental health professional in New York. Disclaimer: If you or someone you know is going through a difficult phase, experiencing emotional distress, or having thoughts of self-harm, please know that help is available and you do not have to go through this alone. Reach out to a professional or contact one of the compassionate support networks listed below for free, confidential, and 24/7 assistance.

## Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade-starrer 'The India Story' set for July 24 global release

Chennai: Director Chettan DK's eagerly awaited socio-national drama 'The India Story: Slow Poison in Progress', featuring actors Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade in the lead, will hit screens worldwide on July 24 this year, its makers announced on Friday. Taking to its social media timelines to make the announcement, MIG Productions and Studios, one of the production houses producing the film, said, "The field that feeds you. The field that buries you. #TheIndiaStory, Slow Poison In Progress, In Cinemas 24th July 2026. Releasing in 3 languages #Hindi #Tamil #Telugu #IndiasMostShockingTruth."

After unveiling an intense and thought-provoking poster, the makers of 'The India Story' have announced that the teaser of the film will be out soon. Starring Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade in the lead roles, the socio-national drama has already started creating buzz for its gripping theme and striking visuals. The film is being presented by Zee Studios in association with MIG Production & Studios. Directed by Chettan DK and writ-

ten and produced by Sagar B Shinde, The India Story: Slow Poison in Progress explores the alarming consequences of chemical misuse, particularly in pesticide farming and its impact on public health. The recently released poster offers a glimpse into the disturbing yet important subject that the film aims to address. Moving beyond the story of an individual or a family, the narrative reflects a much larger crisis affecting countless lives across the country. The film intends to highlight the hidden dangers of industrial negligence and the urgent need for awareness and accountability.

The makers have hinted that the teaser will offer audiences a deeper look into the hard-hitting world of The India Story, building anticipation around the film's socially relevant premise. Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade, coming together on screen for the first time, are expected to bring emotional depth and intensity to the narrative with their impactful performances.

## Chand Mera Dil movie review: Ananya Panday-Lakshya film tries to do a lot, all of it badly



**Chand Mera Dil movie review:** Chand Mera Dil movie review: If Chand Mera Dil had stuck to one thing, it could still have made something of it, given at least the rarity of the story in Bollywood. Romance, they say, dies in the first chapter of marriage. In what passes for an "adult romance" in Chand Mera Dil, marriage dies in the first chapter of marriage.

Or, does it?

You can't be sure. Never mind their previous productions, director/co-writer Vivek Soni (Meenakshi Sundareshwar) and writers Tushar Paranjape (Killa), Akshat Ghildial (Badhaai Do) don't seem to know where or whether they are coming or going in this one. Their lead pair, untested in the adulting department, just don't have it in them to steer through this mess. Aarav (Lakshya) and Chandni (Ananya Panday) meet at an aesthete engineering college in Hyderabad. To attract her, he "twins", that is, wears the same colours as her, every single day. When he doesn't go further than that, she takes the initiative, and soon enough they are a couple. Chandni, in this film's mixed-message imagination, can dance the classics, top her classes, seem engrossed in experiments in a lab coat, and be bold enough to take the lead in love and sex, and in deciding she wants to keep their baby, despite everyone's objections. The boring, pastel churidar suits and Kolhapuris she wears at all times may be incongruous but, as you go on to realise, there is more where that comes from.

For example, take Aarav. He takes his shirt off to flex his six-pack with almost as much regularity as he takes out a pack to smoke, with cigarettes getting this much love (and for no particular reason) after a long time on screen. Aarav is, of course, a "topper" too, not just here in Hyderabad's 'Hy-Tech University' but also at a college in Michigan, US, which is where the film starts, by way of telling us that his love story with Chandni has ended. If Chand Mera Dil had stuck to one thing, it could still have made something of it, given at least the rarity of the story in Bollywood. Like being reluctantly thrust into fatherhood. Like pressures of parenthood, and making ends meet. Like discord over child care. Like the fear of being left behind, in this case faced by the father, as his college mates bag lucrative placements. Like the intervention of parents when things go quickly south, only making things worse. Like the baggage Chandni carries from the failed marriage of her own parents. Like sharing custody.

However, the Dharma Production is too squeamish about getting the hands of its lead pair dirty — from diapers to dishes to that big 'd' word, divorce. So just when they are hovering on the brink, Chand Mera Dil pulls back to bung in a soulful song that is as soulless as that next Insta picture — of which there are several — or takes another of its quicksilver diversions. Trains and SRK's arms-wide-open, Dharma's other fallbacks, are also invoked. So promising in his previous outings (Kill, Ba'ds of Bollywood), Lakshya sheds a copious amount of tears and screams his heart out here, but never really connects as either hopelessly in love or in despair, not the least because of an unclear dialogue delivery and the lacklustre chemistry between him and Panday. She fares better, but only slightly, with the film putting the bigger weight of its contradictions on her frail frame. Panday also looks surprisingly wan, with lines under her eyes, and it's not just on account of the baby. Coming to that, rarely have two parents been so uncomfortable around their newborn. There appears to be little love lost there, and every time Lakshya is carrying their daughter, on trains, terraces or autos, you fear all the ways that things could go wrong. Hyderabad, that city which rarely makes it to mainstream Bollywood, fares the best, with its wide streets, lavish greens and shiny complexes. Plus, it comes with frequent mentions of biryani, and at least one person speaking the distinctive Dakhani.

## Shahid, Kareena want to show Jab We Met to their kids, says Imtiaz: 'But Mira Rajput likes Tamasha'

Nearly two decades after its release, Jab We Met is being watched by a new generation: the children of the two actors who starred in it. Director Imtiaz Ali has reacted with quiet delight, and let slip a detail that changes the story slightly: Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira is not a Jab We Met fan but prefers Ranbir Kapoor's Tamasha or Rockstar from the director's filmography. In a conversation with Pinkvilla, Imtiaz Ali recounted, "It makes me feel nice that Shahid's kids and Kareena's kids are watching their film Jab We Met. It's the only movie I remember after the screening. I went in after the censor screening and asked what certificate they were giving it. They said clean, no arguments or anything."

Shahid Kapoor, in one of his old interviews, revealed that the first film he showed his kids was Jab We Met. Around the same time, Kareena Kapoor said it is the first film she would show her children too. Two lead actors from the same 2007 film, now with families of their own, independently pointing their kids towards it. Imtiaz Ali, the man who made it, heard all of this and felt, understandably, rather good. He added: "I'm really glad that Kareena and Shahid are showing it to their kids." The more revealing part of Imtiaz's comments was his observation about the viewing preferences inside the Kapoor home. "I think Mira likes Rockstar way more than Jab We Met. She's a fan of Rockstar and Tamasha, I think Mira in particular also sang a song for me when I went to his house one day. And that wasn't Shahid's song."

Rockstar, released in 2011, stars Ranbir Kapoor and Nargis Fakhri with music by AR Rahman, and remains one of Imtiaz's most emotionally intense films. Tamasha, from 2015, stars Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone and took years to find its audience before earning cult status. Jab We



Met came out in October 2007 and found its audience the old-fashioned way, nobody went to see it on opening weekend, and then everyone did. For Shahid, it was Aditya Kashyap, a heartbroken, hollowed-out man who says almost nothing for the first half of the film while Geet fills every silence. It remains the role people most associate with him from that period of his career, the one he still gets asked about, the one he calls Imtiaz's best work. For Kareena, it was Geet Dhillon, loud, certain, a little all over the place, and completely at home in herself. Shahid and Kareena were in a relationship for a few years but ended around the film's shoot ended. They are on cordial terms now. While Kareena is married to Saif Ali Khan and have two sons — Taimur and Jeh; Shahid and Mira have two kids too — daughter Misha and son Zain.

## 'What is undekha?': Dhurandhar 'Raw and Undekha' drops on OTT with same runtime, more abuses

When Netflix and JioHotstar announced 'Raw & Undekha' versions of Dhurandhar, fans expected something substantially different from the theatrical and existing OTT cuts, perhaps deleted scenes, extended action blocks or a grittier uncensored edit. Instead, viewers who streamed the film say the version offers almost nothing new apart from unmuted abuses. After watching the film, many viewers were left underwhelmed. Fans online claim the so-called 'Raw & Undekha' version is identical to the existing OTT cut, with the only noticeable difference being that the abuses are now unmuted. The runtime on both platforms remains exactly the same as the original streaming version, 3 hours and 25 minutes, leading many to ask: what exactly is 'undekha' here? Netizens react to Dhurandhar Raw and Undekha

Several users on social media expressed disappointment after watching the film. One user wrote, "#Dhurandhar Part 1 — RAW & UNCENSORED is now streaming on Netflix India — 205 minutes runtime. no extra scenes but dialogues are unmuted now."

Another user posted, "#Dhurandhar Part 1 #RawAndUndekha is just abuses being Uncensored. Not that anyone was expecting, but no new Extra scenes are added. Thanks to Vasan for the info." Another user wrote, "Netflix and JioHotstar promised a 'Raw & Undekha' Dhurandhar. Same runtime. No deleted scenes. Just unmuted abuses. So what exactly is 'Undekha' here? ?? #Dhurandhar #RawAndUndekha #Netflix #JioHotstar #RanveerSingh" Apart from the content itself, many viewers also complained about their streaming experience on JioHotstar. One user wrote, "These many ads on OTT?? @JioHotstar sharm kar lo isse achha to TV experience hai. Aur upar se ghatiya user interface hai. #Dhurandhar" Another user compared the viewing experience on both platforms and wrote: "You have two choices on how to experience #Dhurandhar Choice 1: Crap user-interface, ads after every few minutes (unless you are on a premium plan), ads are longer than usual, and as many as 19 ads in a single movie. At some point, you'd forget you are watching a movie

or ads. Choice 2: Play a movie, no matter if your plan is 720p, 1080p or 4K plan, uninterrupted, ad-free experience. Just you and your pristine movie experience. The second choice is, of course, Netflix. There is one more choice which is not recommended, but it will give you the highest bitrate, best 4K, Atmos and no need for a good internet speed. Sail the high seas."

While Netflix had acquired the OTT rights for the first film, the massive success of the franchise reportedly triggered an aggressive bidding war for Dhurandhar: The Revenge, which released in theatres on March 19, 2026. JioHotstar eventually secured the India streaming rights for the sequel, while Netflix acquired the international digital rights. As part of that arrangement, Netflix began streaming Dhurandhar: The Revenge — Raw and Uncut overseas from May 14, 2026. JioHotstar, meanwhile, has announced that the Ranveer Singh-starrer will premiere in India on June 5, with a special digital premiere event planned for June 4 at 7 PM. There are also reports suggesting that the film may arrive on Netflix India after a two-week window, although there has been no official confirmation yet. According to reports, JioHotstar acquired the digital rights for Dhurandhar: The Revenge for Rs 150 crore, while the first film's OTT rights were reportedly sold for Rs 85 crore. Unlike the first film's 'Raw & Undekha' release, the extended OTT cut of Dhurandhar: The Revenge includes scenes that had been shortened or toned down in theatres. The 'Raw and Uncut' version has a runtime of 3 hours and 52 minutes, nearly three minutes longer than the theatrical cut, which was 3 hours, 49 minutes and 6 seconds long. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the franchise stars Ranveer Singh, Akshaya Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, R. Madhavan, Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi, Gaurav Gera and Danish Pandor. According to Sacnilk, the first film earned Rs 1307 crore worldwide, while the sequel crossed Rs 1363 crore globally, cementing the franchise's position as one of the biggest box office successes in Indian cinema. The films follow Jaskirat Singh Rangil, also known as Hamza Ali Mazari, who is sent to Lyari in Pakistan to dismantle a terror unit.