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## Daily wager found dead in Siddipet lake after fishing trip

Siddipet: A daily wager, who went fishing in a lake, was found dead on Thursday at Alirajpet village. The deceased Dyapa Mallesham (45) left his home on Wednesday morning and as he failed to return home, the family members searched for him everywhere. However, they could not trace Mallesham until evening.

Some locals found his body floating in the water body on Thursday morning. The police registered a case. The body was taken to the government hospital in Gajwel for postmortem.

## Man dies of snake bite in Chevella

Hyderabad: A man died after a snake bite at Chevella in Vikarabad district on Thursday.

Syed Mohiuddin (37), a resident of Langar Houz in the city, had gone to Mudimyal village in Chevella mandal on Wednesday night for some work.

"During the early hours of Thursday, Mohiuddin stepped out of the house to go to the washroom when a snake reportedly bit him.

Mohiuddin alerted his relatives, who rushed him to Osmania General Hospital for treatment. He died at around 7.30 am while undergoing treatment," said the Chevella police.

## Modi, Macron attend VivaTech 2026; PM showcases India's AI and innovation prowess

New Delhi, June 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday jointly participated in VivaTech 2026, Europe's largest technology and start-

pointing to the growing scope of cooperation between India and France in critical and emerging technologies.

Following the keynote address, Modi and Macron interacted with Indian start-ups and innovators exhibiting advanced technologies and practical solutions in sectors such as healthcare, mobility, sustainability and industry.

India is the AI Country Partner for VivaTech 2026 and has mounted its largest-ever presence at the annual event, with pavilions showcasing the country's innovation ecosystem across artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, health-tech, clean technologies, mobility and advanced computing.

More than 80 Indian deep-tech companies and start-ups are participating in the event.

The Prime Minister's Office said Modi's participation is expected to further strengthen collaboration between the Indian and French technology ecosys-

tems.

India's engagement with VivaTech has steadily expanded over the years. Modi had delivered the keynote address at the event in 2021, while India became the first "Country of the Year" at VivaTech in 2022. The organisers have also recently formalised cooperation with the Bengaluru Tech Summit.

This year's participation assumes added significance as India and France are celebrating 2026 as the India-France Year of Innovation, reflecting the growing strategic convergence between the two countries in the field of technology and innovation.



up event, with the Indian leader outlining New Delhi's vision for human-centric artificial intelligence and highlighting the expanding India-France partnership in emerging technologies.

Addressing an audience comprising entrepreneurs, start-ups, investors and business leaders in Paris, Modi underlined how technology had driven transformative changes in India, ranging from digital payments and AI-enabled agricultural solutions to cutting-edge space applications.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of ensuring that advances in artificial intelligence and frontier technologies remain human-centric and inclusive, while

## Ram Temple embezzlement row: SIT quizzes trust member on cash counting, staff appointments

Ayodhya, June 18

The SIT probing the alleged embezzlement of funds at the Ram temple on Thursday questioned Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust member Dr Anil Mishra over the counting of donated money and the appointment

mented on the matter.

On June 13, the Uttar Pradesh government constituted an SIT following a request from the temple trust to probe allegations of misappropriation of donation money.

The SIT comprises Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, Inspector General of Police Kiran S and Finance Department Special Secretary Neel Ratan.

The probe follows allegations raised by Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, who, on June 7, cited reports claiming that crores of rupees from donations offered at the temple were missing and urged the courts to take cognisance of the matter.

On Thursday, Yadav on X said Ayodhya would prove to be a "Kuruksheetra" for those responsible for wrongdoing.

He said the controversy had hurt local businesses and livelihoods dependent on temple tourism and accused the BJP government of being opaque about the investigation.

Yadav demanded daily briefings on the SIT investigation, alleging that public trust in the agency had been eroded due to what he described as "widespread corruption under the BJP government."

The fund embezzlement row has triggered political sparring between the ruling BJP and the opposition parties.

## Pune: Narrow Escape For 40 Students As Drunk Driver Stops School Bus Near A Well

A major mishap was averted in Pune's Wadki area after a school bus carrying 40 students got stuck at the edge of a well.

The bus was taking the students of Modak International School home after the school hours when the driver, who was drunk, reportedly lost control of the vehicle while passing through an internal road. He could bring the vehicle to a halt only at the edge of a deep well.

Locals who witnessed the incident soon gathered at the place and helped the students get out of the bus.

On information, police reached the place and moved the vehicle with the help of a crane.

## CM Revanth To Release Rythu Bharosa Funds On June 30

Hyderabad: The Telangana government will begin releasing Rythu Bharosa funds to farmers on June 30, with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy launching the disbursement at a public meeting to be held in Madhira, Khammam district.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by CM Revanth Reddy at the Secretariat on Thursday. The government will credit the funds directly to farmers' bank accounts over ten days. Several other important issues, including the Metro rail phase 2 works and paddy procurement, were discussed in the special meeting convened with the Cabinet Ministers.

Under Rythu Bharosa, the state provides financial assistance of Rs 12,000 per acre per year. The amount is split between the two crop seasons, where Rs 6,000 per acre each for Kharif and Rabi are transferred directly to farmers.



## Ponnam aid for RTC employee's family, announces 11 pc fitment

Hyderabad: The family of 50-year-old K Shankar Goud, the TGSRTC employee who died by suicide during a corporation employees' strike on April 23, will receive a Rs 1 crore cheque as contributions from his colleagues, who remember his supreme sacrifice.

Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, on Thursday, June 18, directed officials to ensure a job for Goud's family member and expedite the allotment of an Indiramma House.

Shankar Goud is survived by his son Hemanth, daughter Shamili, and his wife Hemalatha, a person with disability. The family has been facing financial difficulties and has been living in a rented house.

On April 22, TGSRTC launched an indefinite strike after talks between the government and workers to address long-standing demands related to service conditions and welfare failed.

Goud set himself on fire at the Narsampet bus station where he worked. He died two days later.

Apart from the Telangana government's Rs 10 lakh ex gratia, TGSRTC workers donated from their month's salary to Goud's family.

Ponnam also announced that the 11 per cent fitment related to RPS-2021, as promised by the state government during the TGSRTC sammelan (conference), will be implemented from July 1. "Elections for TGSRTC recognised unions will be conducted soon," he said.

He also said that 1,137 compassionate appointments were made under the Bread Winner Scheme and Medical Invalidation, among which were 888 conductors, 10 drivers, 43 workers, and 196 constables.

The minister reviewed pending service matters, stating that 244 of the 490 employees removed from service had already been reinstated, while the remaining cases

would be examined expeditiously. He also sought a comprehensive report on the 1,050 electric buses currently operating in the state, including route-wise profit and loss.



Ponnam ordered the speedy completion of Nagarkurnool, Peddapalli Bus Depot and Mulugu Bus Station. "Foundation stones for Vemulawada and Kathlapur bus stations will be laid within a week," he assured.

He reviewed the restoration works of Munugodu, Chandur, and Marriguda bus stations and the site inspection of Nampally bus station. He directed the officials to expedite the Madhira bus station works and prepare plans so that the foundation stone for the bus station could be laid by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy during his visit soon.

The minister also suggested conducting foundation stone-laying ceremonies soon for the Huzurnagar, Kodad and Nagarkurnool bus stations. He directed officials to visit the bus stations at Mancherla, Chennur, Medak, Bellampalli, Parkal, Mulkanur, Dharmapuri a

## India to set up mega aluminium extrusion facility for defence aerospace needs

New Delhi, June 18

India is set to take a significant step forward in advanced metal processing, strengthening its ability to ensure a reliable supply of critical components for the de-

country's capability to produce large, high-strength and precision aluminium alloy extrusions required by the defence and aerospace industries.

Extrusion is a manufacturing process used to produce objects with a fixed cross-sectional profile by forcing material through a die.

"The project will help reduce dependence on imports of critical aluminium extruded components and support indigenous manufacturing," the ministry said.

Explaining the significance of the project, sources noted that aluminium alloys form the backbone of aircraft structures, missiles, rockets and military vehicles because they provide an optimal combination of light weight, high strength and corrosion resistance.

The new facility in Nagpur will enable India to manufacture large, single-piece structural components for fighter aircraft, transport aircraft and space launch vehicles.

The 10,000-tonne capacity refers to the pressing force the machine can exert to shape large, ultra-high-strength and heavy-gauge aluminium alloys.

Historically, India has relied on imports for many high-precision aluminium extruded components because domestic facilities lacked the capability to produce them at this scale. With India's growing emphasis on self-reliance in defence manufacturing, the country is expected to produce around 500 fighter aircraft over the next 15 years, in addition to thousands of armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Such programmes are expected to benefit significantly from this advanced metal-processing capability.



fence and aerospace sectors.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will lay the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art 10,000-tonne aluminium extrusion press at Yantra India Limited's Ordnance Factory, Ambajhari, in Nagpur, Maharashtra, on Friday.

Yantra India Limited (YIL) is a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Defence.

The proposed extrusion press is expected to become a key asset for the defence manufacturing sector. According to the Ministry of Defence, it will strengthen the

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English Daily

## Defection spree

Days after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi astonishingly declared that the INDIA bloc had already won the 2029 Lok Sabha polls, Opposition parties such as the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena are struggling to keep their flock together. The Congress and its allies have alleged that inducements and pressure tactics are being used rampantly by the BJP to make legislators switch sides. Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut has claimed that Maharashtra MPs are being offered Rs 50 crore each to defect. On Sunday, 20 rebel TMC MPs announced their merger with the Nationalist Citizens' Party of India, a Tripura-based "registered unrecognised" political outfit. The Aam Aadmi Party is already smarting from the loss of seven Rajya Sabha MPs, who joined the BJP in April, while the Samajwadi Party is also facing a poaching threat.

The political turmoil involving defections, mergers and splits raises troubling questions about the health of India's parliamentary democracy. What makes the situation extremely serious is the weakening of the anti-defection framework. The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution was introduced to curb political opportunism and instability. Yet, legal loopholes have turned defections into a recurring feature. Voters elect their representatives not merely as individuals, but as members of political parties with specific ideologies. When elected MPs jump ship without seeking a fresh mandate, public trust in the electoral process suffers. Democracy becomes vulnerable to transactional politics. These controversies put the onus on the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairperson to exercise impartiality and adhere to constitutional principles. Their decisions have a huge bearing on public confidence in parliamentary institutions. Defections are not new to Indian politics, but their scale and frequency are increasing alarmingly.

## Make the Visit of AICC In-charge and TPCC President a Success: MLA Naini Rajender Reddy



--Booth Level Agents (BLAs) Must Attend the SIR Awareness Meeting--Hanamkonda, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal West MLA Naini Rajender Reddy has called upon party leaders and Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to ensure the success of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll awareness meeting scheduled for June 22 in Hanamkonda. "The MLA stated that AICC In-charge Meenakshi Natarajan, TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, and several other prominent leaders from the AICC and TPCC would attend the meeting." "Naini Rajender Reddy spoke at a meeting of key leaders held on Thursday at the Hanamkonda District Congress Party office. Explaining the importance of the electoral roll revision process, he warned that any negligence in updating the voter list could have a severe impact on the democratic system." "He noted that Booth Level Agents (BLAs) play a crucial role in the SIR process. He stated that it is their responsibility to register every eligible voter, verify voter details, and oversee the process to prevent irregularities or errors. He emphasized that the success of the revision process depends largely on the vigilance and dedication of the BLAs. The MLA directed all Booth Level Agents (BLAs) from every booth within the Warangal West Assembly constituency to mandatorily attend an awareness meeting scheduled for June 22. He stated that the meeting would provide comprehensive insight into voter list revision procedures, Election Commission guidelines, and the specific duties and responsibilities of BLAs." "Explaining the next phase of the revision process, Naini Rajender Reddy noted that Booth Level Officers (BLOs) would begin a door-to-door voter verification drive on June 25. He urged BLAs to actively participate in these visits—coordinating with BLOs—to ensure that all eligible voters are included in the list and that details regarding deceased individuals or those who have relocated are accurately updated." "The MLA called upon Congress party workers and leaders to participate in large numbers during the visit of AICC and TPCC leadership and to make this awareness program a success. He emphasized that safeguarding the value of every vote through a transparent and accurate voter list revision process is essential for strengthening democracy, and he urged every party worker to play a responsible role in this initiative." "District Library Organization Chairman Aziz Khan, along with TPCC General Secretaries Boddireddy Prabhakar Reddy and E.V., were present at the meeting. Srinivas Rao, TPCC members Bhatti Srinivas Rao and Kuchana Ravali, District SC Cell Chairman Aruri Sambaiha, former corporators, division presidents, and other party leaders participated.

## Couple smothered to death in Asifabad

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: A couple was found dead under suspicious circumstances at Kosara hamlet near Thumpalli village on Wednesday night. Family members alleged that the two were murdered by unidentified persons. Police said that the deceased couple, Banoth Raju and Sunitha from Bhavaninagar in the hamlet, were found dead at their residence. Raju's daughter-in-law alerted her husband Anil after she failed to wake up Sunitha when she wanted her mother-in-law to look after her daughter early in the morning. Anil then approached the police, who rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies for post-mortem. After the post-mortem, police primarily suspected that the couple might have been smothered to death by unidentified persons from the hamlet due to previous enmity.

## Quality Seeds and Fertilizers for Farmers a Priority: Collector Haritha



"Indian Chronicle, Kagaznagar, Asifabad, June 18: District Collector K. Haritha has said that the administration is taking all necessary measures to ensure that farmers receive quality seeds and fertilizers. On Thursday, she con-

ducted a surprise inspection of Kalavathi Traders Fertilizer Shop in Buruguda village of Asifabad mandal. "During the inspection, the Collector examined cotton seed packets and verified the stock registers. She expressed displeasure with the shop owner for failing to maintain updated records of the seeds and fertilizers available in stock. "The Collector directed the dealer to regularly update stock details in the register and to clearly display information regarding the availability of seeds and fertilizers on the notice board installed at the shop. "Speaking on the occasion, Haritha made it clear that the government will not tolerate the sale of fake cotton seeds that mislead and cheat farmers. She warned that strict legal action would be taken against anyone involved in such activities. "She further stated that stringent action would also be taken against dealers found selling herbicides or other agricultural chemicals that have been banned by the government. "Emphasizing the welfare of farmers, the Collector said that surprise inspections of seed and fertilizer outlets would continue across the district and instructed all dealers to strictly comply with the prescribed regulations.

## Hunger and Hope Left Waiting: "Annapurna Canteen" Doors Remain Shut



-----Administrative Negligence Leaves Poor Citizens and Patients Disappointed-----Warangal, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Annapurna Canteens, established by the government with the noble objective of providing affordable meals to the underprivileged, hospital patients, and their attendants, are drawing criticism for failing to fulfill their intended purpose due to alleged administrative negligence. On Thursday, the Annapurna Canteen located on Market Street in Girmajipet, Warangal, remained closed even after 1:00 PM, causing considerable hardship to poor citizens, elderly people, and patients who depend on the facility for their daily meals. "Several underprivileged individuals who arrived at the canteen early in the morning in the hope of receiving lunch were left waiting for hours as the doors remained closed. Many eventually returned disappointed and hungry. Particularly affected were patients visiting nearby

hospitals for treatment and their family members, who often rely on the canteen as an affordable source of food during challenging times. "More than just meal centers, Annapurna Canteens have emerged as an important pillar of social welfare, offering dignity and support to economically weaker sections of society. When such essential facilities fail to operate according to schedule, the burden falls disproportionately on those who are already struggling to meet their basic needs. "According to local residents, delays and irregular functioning of the canteen have become a recurring concern, warranting immediate attention from the authorities. They expressed apprehension that negligence in implementing welfare schemes funded by public money undermines the very objectives for which such initiatives were launched. "Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the situation was the presence of elderly citizens, women, and patients suffering from various ailments among those waiting for food. Their prolonged wait under difficult circumstances has raised serious questions about the accountability and efficiency of the management responsible for operating the facility. "Residents have urged the authorities to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure that such incidents are not repeated. They have also called for appropriate action against those responsible and appealed to the city's In-Charge Commissioner to ensure that the canteen functions punctually every day without fail. "Social activists and local citizens believe that public welfare services must remain accessible to the people they are intended to serve and have urged officials to take immediate corrective measures. The incident has once again highlighted the importance of accountability in welfare delivery systems, especially when the beneficiaries are among the most vulnerable sections of society.

## Education is the Greatest Gift: Extend a Helping Hand to Underprivileged Children - Dr. Anita Reddy



-----Free Distribution of Notebooks and Stationery to Orphans, Hearing-Impaired Students, and Street Children-----Hanumakonda, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Emphasizing that education is the most valuable gift one can offer to society, Dr. Anita Reddy, Member of the Kakatiya University Governing Body and Chairperson of Anurag Helping Society, appealed to citizens to support the education of underprivileged children and ensure that poverty never becomes a barrier to learning. "Under the joint aegis of Anurag Helping Society and RUN Organization, a welfare program was organized at Mallikamba Mental Development Centre in Hanumakonda under the leadership of Dr. Anita Reddy. During the event, free notebooks and stationery were distributed to hearing-impaired students, inmates of Balasadanam Girls' Home and Swadhar Ashram, as well as orphaned and semi-orphaned children studying in government schools and children from street communities. "Addressing the gathering, Dr. Anita Reddy stated that the initiative was undertaken with the belief that financial hardship should never deprive a child of educational opportunities. She noted that for the past three decades, she and her organization have been supporting hundreds of economically disadvantaged students by providing free books and even paying educational fees whenever



necessary. "She emphasized that education is the most powerful tool for personal growth, social progress, and economic empowerment. Describing educational assistance as the noblest form of charity, she urged individuals from all walks of life to contribute, to the best of their ability, toward the education of poor and deserving children. "Dr. Anita Reddy also highlighted the importance of good character and discipline alongside academic excellence. She encouraged students to pursue their goals with dedication, proper planning, and perseverance, stating that success becomes attainable when one works with commitment and determination. "Advising students to view education as a source of joy rather than a burden, she explained that learning not only enhances knowledge and wisdom but also opens doors to financial stability and greater opportunities in life. She further stressed that every child of school-going age should have access to education and be empowered to build a bright future. "Among those present on the occasion were RUN Organization representatives Sharvani, Priyanka, Kalyan, Shailaja, Kalyani, and Sharada, along with teachers, students, and staff members. The event served as an inspiring reminder of the transformative power of education and the collective responsibility of society in nurturing the next generation.

## Dyson Study Highlights Commonly Neglected Areas in Household Cleaning

"Hyderabad, June 18 (Indian chronicle): Many people fail to regularly clean areas such as mattresses, curtains, walls, blinds, pet baskets, and window sills in their homes, according to the Dyson Global Dust Study 2023. The findings were shared by Dennis Mathews, Lead Research Scientist in Dyson's Microbiology Department, in a statement released in the city on Thursday. The study revealed that 42 percent of Indians clean only when dust becomes visibly noticeable. It also found that 63 percent of Indian respondents neglect mattress cleaning, while 68 percent overlook the cleaning of curtains, walls, and blinds. Additionally, 39 percent do not regularly clean pet baskets and bedding. Globally, 49 percent of respondents reported not cleaning window sills, the study noted. Dennis Mathews emphasized that household dust mites, allergens, and microscopic dust particles can contribute to various health problems. He advised homeowners to clean these often-



overlooked areas regularly to maintain a healthier living environment. He further stated that cleaning tools such as the Dyson V12s Detect Slim Submarine, Dyson Combination Tool, Extension Wand, Dyson Hair Screw Tool, and Crevice Tool can help effectively clean hard-to-reach areas within homes.

## Arvapalli si Eatla Saidu Suspended



The action was taken by superiors who took allegations of inappropriate involvement in a key phakso case matter seriously, apart from the display of negligence in duty, being alleged to have manipulated evidence in several cases. It appears that the superiors of these incidents have undertaken an investigation at the primary level. The suspension was imposed as an immediate action based on elements that have come out in the course of the investigation. This development has become a talking point within the police department. However, full details of this incident, and an official statement, are yet to come out. It is possible that more things may come to light after the investigation.

## Congress Leaders Visit and Console Journalist Palancha Satyanarayana



"--Strongly Condemn the Attack; Demand Strict Legal Action Against the Perpetrators"--Narsampet, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Congress leaders, including Narsampet Municipality Vice Chairman Gandham Narendra Gupta, former Floor Leader Vemula Sambaiha Goud, and party councillors, visited and consoled senior journalist Palancha Satyanarayana, who was recently assaulted by unidentified individuals. They enquired about his health condition and extended their support to him and his family. "Speaking on the occasion, the leaders strongly condemned the attack, describing it as an inhumane and unacceptable act. They stated that assaults on journalists are a serious threat to democratic values and press freedom, emphasizing that media professionals play a crucial role in informing the public and strengthening democracy. "They asserted that those responsible for the attack, irrespective of their identity or influence, must be brought to justice and subjected to strict legal action. They urged the police authorities to conduct a thorough investigation, identify the culprits, and ensure swift punishment for those involved. "The leaders further remarked that creating a safe and secure environment for journalists to perform their duties without fear is the responsibility of both the government and law enforcement agencies. They called for effective measures to prevent such incidents from recurring and to safeguard the rights and security of media personnel. "Among those present during the visit were councillors Elakanti Vijay Kumar, Muttineni Venkateshwarlu, and Narasimha Reddy, along with other party leaders. They wished journalist Palancha Satyanarayana a speedy recovery and expressed hope that he would soon resume his professional and public service activities.

## District Education Officer meets District Education Officer



Sangareddy Indian Chronicle Correspondent "On Thursday, Sadashivpet Mandal Education Officer Shankar met District Education Officer Rohini at Sangareddy DEO Office. On this occasion, DEO Rohini unveiled the wall poster of Nizampur K Primary School in Sadashivpet Mandal. On this occasion, the school principal congratulated Ramakrishna, who is working hard for the development of the school.

Earlier, DEO was respectfully honored. DCEB Secretary Limbaji, Sangareddy Mandal Education Officer Vidyasagar, and teachers Srikanth participated in this program.

## Learning Through Play at Bhavitha Centres; Government Committed to the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities: MLA K.R. Nagaraju



Wardhannapet, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Stating that disability should never be seen as a barrier in life's journey, Wardhannapet MLA K.R. Nagaraju said that Bhavitha Centres are empowering children with disabilities by providing them with the confidence, guidance, and skills needed to lead independent and meaningful lives. He emphasized that the State Government is committed to the holistic development and educational empowerment of persons with disabilities. "On Thursday, the MLA inaugurated a Bhavitha Centre for Children with Disabilities in Bheemaram. He later participated in a ceremonial lamp-lighting before Goddess Saraswati along with the students and took part in an Aksharabhyasam (initiation into learning) program with the children. Interacting closely with the students undergoing training at the centre, he enquired about their academic progress as well as their mental and physical development." Speaking on the occasion, Nagaraju said that Bhavitha Centres play a vital role in providing not only education but also essential therapy, specialized training, and personalized support aimed at enhancing the abilities and confidence of children with disabilities. He noted that the

government is implementing such initiatives on a priority basis to ensure equal opportunities and inclusive growth for all sections of society. "Later, the MLA visited the Mandal Parishad Primary School and inaugurated newly constructed classrooms. He observed that government schools play a crucial role in delivering quality education and shaping the future of young minds. He highlighted that nutritious food, disciplined learning environments, and dedicated teachers are among the key strengths of government educational institutions. "Nagaraju urged teachers to work diligently toward increasing student enrollment by strengthening public confidence in government schools. He stressed that the government is committed to providing modern infrastructure and a conducive learning environment, while giving special priority to the development of basic amenities in educational institutions. "The MLA further stated that educational institutions are instrumental in building the future of the nation and reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring that every child receives quality education and equal opportunities for growth and success. "Public representatives, local leaders, government officials, teachers, students, and parents participated in the programme.

## Exclude Handloom Products from the Centralized Tender System: Minister Konda Surekha

Representation Submitted to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on the Issues Faced by Handloom Workers Warangal, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): State Minister Konda Surekha has submitted a representation to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy urging the government to exempt handloom products from the centralized tender system and take positive steps to address the long-pending concerns of handloom workers across Telangana. "The representation highlighted that nearly 5,000 handloom workers belonging to more than 50 handloom cooperative societies across the State have been serving as the backbone of Telangana's textile production sector for over three decades. Under the leadership of the Warangal District Handloom Cooperative Societies Federation, these artisans have been continuously supplying essential textile products such as bed sheets, carpets, uniforms, and other fabric materials to BC, SC, ST, and Minority Welfare Hostels, Gurukul Educational Institutions, and various government educational establishments. "Minister Konda Surekha emphasized that the handloom sector not only preserves Telangana's rich weaving heritage but also provides livelihood opportunities to thousands of families dependent on traditional weaving. She noted that any policy decision affecting procurement mechanisms could have a direct impact on the employment and economic security of handloom workers. "Keeping in view the welfare, employment, and sustainability of the handloom sector, the Minister requested the Chief Minister to consider exempting handloom products from the centralized tender process. She stated that such a decision would safeguard the interests of cooperative societies and ensure uninterrupted livelihood for thousands of artisans who rely on government orders for their survival. "Konda Surekha further appealed to the Chief Minister to sympathetically examine the genuine demands of handloom workers and take appropriate measures to strengthen and protect the



sector. She expressed confidence that exempting handloom products from centralized tenders would help preserve traditional livelihoods, promote indigenous textile production, and provide much-needed economic stability to thousands of weaving families across the State. "The Minister reiterated that the government remains committed to supporting the handloom community and preserving Telangana's centuries-old weaving tradition while ensuring sustainable employment opportunities for future generations.

## Residents Asked to Report Tree Branches Obstructing Power Lines: BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj



UPPAL, JUNE 18 (Indian Chronicle): Tree branches posing a threat to electricity lines were removed in several colonies and bastis under Beerappagadda Division, includ-

ing Kalyanpuri, Sai Ram Nagar Colony, Sitarama Colony, Raghavendra Nagar Colony and Bank Colony, with the coordination of Electricity Department officials and the GHMC Horticulture Department. "Speaking on the occasion, BRS State leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj said that, in view of the approaching monsoon season, dangerous tree branches obstructing power lines were identified and cleared with the support of Electricity Department and GHMC Horticulture Department personnel to prevent power disruptions and accidents. He appealed to residents and colony association members to bring to his notice any tree branches that are obstructing power lines or are likely to cause interruptions in electricity supply. He assured that necessary measures would be taken in coordination with the concerned departments to ensure public safety and uninterrupted power supply.

## Aiming to Prevent Seasonal Diseases: Free Medical Camp at Sun Life Hospital

Hundreds Benefit from Free Health Check-ups and Medication Distribution Warangal, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): With the aim of promoting public health and preventive healthcare, Sri Sun Life Hospital in Warangal—led by Dr. Ananthula Anvesh—organized a free medical camp on Thursday. Patients from various sections of society received diagnostic services and free medicines at the camp. "Speaking on the occasion, renowned medical expert Dr. Narige Navakrishna advised the public to remain vigilant against seasonal diseases, especially with the onset of the monsoon. He warned that conditions such as viral fevers, dengue, malaria, and typhoid are more likely to spread during this period due to contaminated water and unhygienic conditions. "He emphasized that maintaining personal hygiene, consuming safe drinking water, and keeping surroundings clean are essential measures to prevent the spread of seasonal illnesses. He noted that raising awareness and adopting preventive healthcare practices would significantly help in reducing health risks during the monsoon season. "As part of the camp, free medical screenings were conducted for a range of health issues,

including hypertension, diabetes, thyroid disorders, liver-related ailments, diabetes-related complications, and blood-related disorders. Patients were provided with expert medical advice and necessary medicines free of charge. "A large number of patients from both rural and urban areas availed themselves of the services offered at the camp and underwent health check-ups. Medical experts emphasized that early detection and timely treatment are crucial for preventing complications and achieving better health outcomes. "The organizers stated that such free medical camps play a vital role in raising public awareness about healthcare and making basic medical services more accessible. They affirmed their commitment to conducting more community-based health initiatives as part of their social responsibility. "Attendees included journalists Devalapalli Srinivas, Thotakuri Ramdas, and Ananthula Ramesh Goud, alongside medical staff members Koduri Suresh, Rakesh, Geetha, Riyaz, Ashok, and Raghu. The camp received an encouraging response from the public, with participants praising the hospital's dedication to providing accessible and affordable healthcare services.

## Safeguarding Democracy is the Goal; Congress Fights Against BJP's Autocratic Policies:

Inagala Venkat Ram Reddy— Rejection of Meenakshi Natarajan's nomination is a blot on democracy Hanumakonda, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): The Congress party has intensified its struggle, alleging that attempts are being made to weaken India's democratic institutions. As part of this movement, Hanumakonda District Congress Committee (DCC) President Inagala Venkat Ram Reddy participated in a Satyagraha protest held at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad and sharply criticized the policies of the BJP-led central government. "Speaking on the occasion, Venkat Ram Reddy stated that free, fair, and transparent elections are the pillars of democracy and warned that any attempt to undermine the electoral process poses a grave threat to the country's democratic future. He alleged that constitutional institutions are being misused for political gain and that efforts are underway to stifle the voice of the opposition. Citing the slogan "Vote theft + Seat theft = BJP's theft of power," he remarked that the people of the country are closely observing the attempts to retain power through the manipulation of votes and elected seats. He emphasized that every vote is sacred in a democracy and that the electoral process must be transparent, impartial, and credible. Speaking on the rejection of Meenakshi Natarajan's Rajya Sabha nomination, Telangana Congress in-charge Venkat Ram Reddy alleged that the decision was politically motivated. He described the move—rejecting her nomination from Madhya Pradesh on minor technical grounds despite the absence of any serious legal or criminal objections—as an assault on democratic principles and constitutional rights. "He alleged that the rejection was aimed at denying the Congress a legitimate opportunity while paving the way for the election of BJP candidates. He stated that using administrative machinery to sideline political opponents harms democratic values and sets a dangerous precedent for the country's electoral system. "Expressing concern over the functioning of con-



stitutional bodies, he emphasized that institutions like the Election Commission must operate independently and free from political influence. Noting that growing public perception of institutional bias could undermine faith in democratic processes, he stressed the need for absolute transparency and impartiality in the conduct of elections. Venkat Ram Reddy affirmed the Congress party's commitment to upholding constitutional values, democratic rights, and the principles of truth and non-violence espoused by Mahatma Gandhi. He stated that this Satyagraha was organized to peacefully voice public concerns and safeguard the integrity of democratic institutions. Senior Congress leaders, DCC presidents, elected representatives, and party workers from across the state participated in this protest and expressed their solidarity with the movement. The leaders reiterated that safeguarding democracy, protecting the independence of electoral institutions, and upholding constitutional values are among the Congress party's top priorities.

## Officials Must Remain Accessible to Farmers at All Times: MLA K.R. Nagaraju

Advance Planning Essential for Monsoon Agriculture Season; Ensure Adequate Supply of Urea and Seeds Warangal, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Emphasizing the need for proactive measures ahead of the upcoming monsoon agricultural season, Wardhannapet MLA and retired IPS officer K.R. Nagaraju directed officials to formulate advance plans to ensure the uninterrupted availability of urea fertilizers and quality seeds for farmers. He stressed that officials must remain accessible at the grassroots level and create awareness among farmers regarding crop diversification and modern agricultural practices suited to changing climatic conditions. "The MLA was speaking at the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting held on Thursday at the Warangal District Collectorate Conference Hall. The review meeting was attended by Mahabubabad MP Balam Naik, Warangal MP Kadiyam Kavya, MLC Banda Prakash, District Collector Satya Sharda, MLC Baswaraju Saraiiah, and Narsampet MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy, along with senior government officials. "Reviewing the implementation of various Central and State Government development schemes, Nagaraju urged all departments to work in close coordination with public representatives to ensure effective delivery of welfare and development initiatives. "Focusing on the agricultural sector, he instructed officials to maintain sufficient stocks of seeds and fertilizers to prevent shortages during the cultivation season. He called for continuous monitoring of urea distribution to ensure that farmers do not face any inconvenience. He also emphasized the importance of educating farmers about the use of drone technology in agriculture and directed Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) to conduct awareness and training programmes at the village level. "The MLA suggested that, if necessary, additional personnel could be engaged through outsourcing arrangements to strengthen outreach activities and facilitate better coordination with farmers. He further stressed the need to provide scientific guidance on crop selection, helping farmers understand which crops are likely to yield better returns during specific seasons. "Turning to the healthcare sector, Nagaraju instructed medical officials to ensure that quality healthcare services are accessible to the poor and underprivileged.



He emphasized that doctors should remain available in government hospitals at all times and called for a special review of the functioning of MGM Hospital. He urged authorities to provide comprehensive facilities to patients who depend on government healthcare institutions for treatment. "Highlighting the advancements in public healthcare infrastructure, he noted that emergency helicopter services are available at a government hospital—an initiative rarely seen in the country—and urged medical professionals to deliver services that match such advanced facilities. "Reviewing the education sector, the MLA directed officials to ensure that students studying in government schools receive quality education along with improved infrastructure and learning facilities. He examined issues relating to student attendance, teacher shortages, and the overall condition of educational institutions. "Nagaraju instructed authorities to ensure that every school is equipped with essential amenities such as safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, adequate classrooms, and a clean learning environment. He also emphasized the importance of promoting hygiene awareness among students and directed schools to provide nutritious midday meals strictly in accordance with the government-prescribed menu. "The MLA concluded by stating that coordinated efforts in key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and education are vital for achieving sustainable and inclusive development. He reiterated that efficient governance and proactive administration are essential to improving the quality of life for citizens across the district. "The review meeting was attended by senior officials from various government departments, public representatives, and other concerned stakeholders.

## Sarpanch Takes Up MGNREGS Work to Protest Lack of Funds



Peddapalli District, Manthani (Indian Chronicle) June 18: "In a unique form of protest against the alleged neglect of governments towards village development, Gajulapalli Gram Panchayat Sarpanch Karengula Sudhakar joined Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) labour works, drawing widespread attention in the locality. "Sudhakar said that although both the Central and State Governments frequently announce fund allocations for rural development, the required funds

are not reaching Gram Panchayats, causing development activities to come to a standstill. He expressed concern that essential services such as sanitation, drinking water supply, street lighting, and maintenance of basic infrastructure are suffering due to a severe shortage of funds. "He stated that villagers regularly approach the Gram Panchayat seeking solutions to their problems, but the lack of financial resources has made it difficult to undertake necessary works. He urged the government to immediately release pending funds to Gram Panchayats and provide adequate financial assistance for village development. "Sudhakar explained that his decision to participate in MGNREGS work was intended to draw the government's attention to the hardships faced by villages and local bodies. He appealed to public representatives, officials, and the government to work together to strengthen Gram Panchayats financially and ensure the overall development of rural areas. "Local residents said the incident has once again highlighted the financial challenges and fund shortages being faced by Gram Panchayats, bringing the issue of rural local body financing back into public discussion.

## DMHO is angry with the doctors of Sadashivapeta Government Hospital...

Sangareddy Indian Chronicle Correspondent "District Medical Officer Dr. Lalita Devi held meeting with medical officers and medical supervisors and staff in Sadashivapeta, Sangareddy district.

On this occasion, DMHO said that quality medicine should be provided to the patient. She warned that action should be taken if the doctors neglect to follow the time schedule.

DMHO suggested that the attitude of the doctors of Sadashivapeta Hospital should change as there is already a negligent attitude in many aspects.



## Capgemini Backs HSBC Rugby Premier League 2026



ner. The tournament is being held at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad from June 16 to 28. A key highlight of this season is the introduction of the women's competition for the first time. In the men's category, Delhi Redz, Hyderabad Heroes, Kolkata Banga Tigers, Chennai Bulls, Mumbai Dreamers, and Bengaluru Bravehearts are competing. The women's category features Chennai Bulls, Delhi Redz, Mumbai Dreamers, and Kolkata Banga Tigers. Capgemini, which will continue as the Official Transformation Partner of the RPL until 2028, is working with the Indian Rugby Football Union (IRFU) to promote rugby development, strengthen grassroots participation, support player growth, and advance women's rugby in India. Organisers said hosting the league in Hyderabad reflects the city's strong sports infrastructure, excellent connectivity, and growing sporting ecosystem, making it an important hub for the development of rugby in the country.

“Hyderabad, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Capgemini is supporting the second season of the HSBC Rugby Premier League (RPL) 2026 as the Official Transformation Part-

## Journalists Attempt to Lay Siege to Secretariat; Police Detain Protesters at Gun Park



“Hyderabad, June 18 Indian Chronicle:

Protesting against what they described as the state government's discriminatory and neglectful attitude, journalists organized a “Chalo Hyderabad” program on Thursday to press for the fulfillment of their demands. Police stopped and detained journalists who marched from Gun Park towards the State Secretariat. Responding to the call given by the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) State Committee, journalists from various districts across Telangana gathered at Gun Park and staged a protest. On the occasion, TWJF Founder and State President Mamidi Somaiah paid floral tributes at the Telangana Martyrs Memorial at Gun Park and later submitted a memorandum to the memorial authorities. Addressing the gathering, Somaiah criticized successive governments for failing to resolve journalists' issues even after 12 years of Telangana's formation. He said journalists who actively fought for the separate Telangana state under the slogan “Telangana for Telangana Journalists” were being neglected by the rulers. He alleged that despite the Congress government completing two and a half years in office, it had failed to fulfill the promises made to journalists. He expressed concern that many small and medium-sized newspapers in Telangana were facing closure due to the government's failure to clear advertisement bills for the past

two and a half years. “Somaiah demanded the immediate release of pending advertisement bills and called for accreditation and health cards for all working journalists. He also urged the government to allot houses and house sites to journalists across the state, including in Greater Hyderabad. Other key demands included: “Empannelment of newspapers with valid RNI and PRGI registrations. “Free education for journalists' children in private and corporate schools and colleges. “Free medical treatment in corporate hospitals. “A free insurance scheme for every journalist. “Pension benefits for journalists above 60 years of age. “Allocation of ₹100 crore in the state budget for journalists' welfare. “Free travel facilities for journalists on RTC buses. “A large number of journalists from different parts of the state participated in the protest, carrying placards and raising slogans. Later, they organized a massive rally towards the Secretariat. Police intervened, stopped the march, and detained the protesters. The detained journalists were shifted to Panjagutta Police Station and Asif Nagar Police Station. “Somaiah warned that if the government failed to address the legitimate demands of journalists, it could face the same public dissatisfaction that led to the downfall of previous governments. “Several TWJF leaders and representatives from various districts, including Hyderabad, Khammam, Mahabubnagar, Mancherla, Suryapet, Warangal, Nagarkurnool, Rangareddy, and Medchal, participated in the protest.

## Banda Karthika Chandra Reddy Invited to ATA Convention in the United States

“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, June 18: “Telangana BJP Vice President Banda Karthika Chandra Reddy has received a special invitation to participate in the prestigious American Telugu Association (ATA) Convention in the United States. The ATA Committee has formally invited her to attend the 19th ATA Convention and Youth Conference as a special speaker. The three-day convention will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center, Maryland, USA, from July 31 to August 2, 2026. Karthika Chandra Reddy is expected to address the gathering on topics related to the Telugu language, culture, and youth leadership. “The official invitation letter, signed by ATA President Jayanth Challa and Conference Convener Sridhar Banala, was presented to her at her residence in Tarnaka on Thursday. “Several prominent Telugu personalities, business leaders, academicians, and community representatives from across the world are expected to participate in the convention. The invitation is being viewed as a recognition of Telangana's representation and women's leadership in public life.



## PSR Trust Extends Support to Poor Families



Khammam Nelakondapalli June 18 Indian Chronicle:

Former Agricultural Market Committee Chairman Shakamuri Ramesh stated that the PSR Trust is standing as a source of support and assurance for poor families in need. “On Thursday, financial assistance of ₹10,000 each was distributed from the PSR Trust to several families in

different villages of the mandal who had recently lost their family members. Ramesh visited the bereaved families, offered his condolences, and handed over the financial aid. “Speaking on the occasion, he said that the trust has been providing financial assistance to the families of the deceased irrespective of political affiliations. He noted that Minister Srinivas Reddy has been extending special support to such families and is committed to helping them during difficult times. “Ramesh assured that the minister would continue to stand by the affected families and provide necessary assistance whenever required. “The program, held at Konayigudem, was attended by Mandal President Kodali Govinda Rao and several local leaders, including Pakanati Kanna Reddy, Cherukupalli Rajesh, Cherukupalli Upender, Anam Venkata Reddy, Tigulla Bhavani, Vadlamudi Narsaiah, Mandadi Nagareenu, Vulloji Prabhudasu, Karla Ashok, Boyina Kondalu, Appa Rao, and Vadlamudi Venkateswarlu, among others.

## Good News for Ayyappa Devotees: Kerala Express to Halt at Khammam Soon



“Khammam, June 18 Indian Chronicle:

A major relief is on the way for Ayyappa devotees traveling to Sabarimala and for passengers heading to the southern states of India. The Kerala Express (Train Nos. 12625/12626), which operates between New Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram, is expected to soon have a scheduled halt at Khammam Railway Station. “During his visit to Khammam on Wednesday, BJP National Leader, former MLC, and Co-Incharge for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy, received a representation from BJP Khammam District President Nelluri Koteswara Rao regarding the long-pending demand for a Kerala Express stop at Khammam. “Acting on the request, Sudhakar Reddy held discussions with the Union Railway Minister and explained in detail the difficulties faced by passengers due to the absence of a halt at Khammam. Responding positively, the Railway Minister reportedly assured that the train would be provided a stop at Khammam. “Although Kerala Express passes through Khammam, a rapidly developing district with growing commercial and geographical importance, it cur-

rently does not stop there. As a result, thousands of pilgrims from Khammam, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Nalgonda, Suryapet, and Mahabubabad districts have been forced to travel to Warangal or Vijayawada to board the train, especially during the annual Sabarimala pilgrimage season. “The inconvenience has been particularly challenging for elderly devotees and pilgrims carrying the traditional Irumudi, requiring additional travel, expense, and physical effort. Apart from devotees, students, businesspersons, and employees traveling to Kerala and Tamil Nadu have also faced difficulties due to the lack of a halt at Khammam. “Recognizing these concerns, BJP leaders took up the issue with Sudhakar Reddy, who promptly intervened and pursued the matter with the Central Government. “The positive response from the Railway Ministry has been widely welcomed by residents of Khammam district and Ayyappa devotees. Local leaders and BJP workers expressed gratitude to Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy for taking up the issue and to Nelluri Koteswara Rao for bringing it to his attention and working towards a solution. “Many leaders and residents have welcomed the decision, stating that the new halt will benefit lakhs of passengers, reduce travel hardships, and provide a more convenient journey for devotees and other travelers alike.

## Elanpro, HCF launch Saksham initiative in Hyd

Hyderabad: Elanpro, in collaboration with the Hospitality Consultants Forum (HCF), brought Saksham to Hyderabad, a first-of-its-kind industry initiative that aims to drive knowledge sharing, encourage industry dialogue, and promote practical action across the sector.

## Welfare schemes must reach every eligible beneficiary: MP Dr. Kadiyam Kavya

--Special focus needed on agriculture, education, and health sectors--

Warangal, June 18 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal MP and District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) Co-Chairperson Dr. Kadiyam Kavya directed officials to work in coordination to ensure that welfare and development schemes implemented by the Central and State governments reach every eligible beneficiary at the grassroots level. “She spoke at the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting held on Thursday at the Warangal Collectorate conference hall; a comprehensive review of the performance of various government departments was conducted during the meeting. “Telangana Legislative Council Deputy Chairman Banda Prakash, Mahabubabad MP Balam Naik, MLC Baswaraju Saraiah, Narsampet MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy, Wardhannapet MLA K.R. Nagaraju, District Collector Dr. Satya Sharada, Additional Collectors G. Sandhya Rani and Y.V. Ganesh, along with senior officials from various departments, attended the meeting. “Continuous monitoring of fertilizer availability needed” “Speaking extensively on agricultural issues, Dr. Kavya emphasized the need for continuous monitoring of the availability of urea, fertilizers, and quality seeds for farmers. She opined that conducting awareness programs for just ten days prior to the Kharif and Rabi seasons is insufficient. Instead, she suggested conducting extensive awareness programs for at least two months to achieve the desired results. “She directed officials to address issues identified during ‘Kisan Melas’ and to engage directly with farmers to provide clear guidance on crop management, the use of balanced fertilizers, and the regulated application of pesticides. She also emphasized the need to curb the use of harmful herbicides and chemicals. “Need for Marketing Support for Organic Farming” “The MP noted that merely promoting organic farming would not yield the expected results without establishing proper marketing, branding, and promotional systems. She stated that farmers would be encouraged to adopt organic cultivation methods only when they secure reliable markets and assured income for their produce. “Dr. Kavya further emphasized that intercropping is an effective strategy to minimize risks and boost farmers' income. She suggested that the Agriculture Department should encourage at least 60 to 70 percent of farmers to adopt intercropping practices. She also called for greater focus on soil health management, the wider distribution of soil health cards, and the extensive implementation of soil testing programs across all mandals. “Expedited Implementation of Development Projects” “Highlighting the objectives



of the DISHA meetings, Dr. Kavya stated that the purpose of such review forums is to provide elected representatives with a clear understanding of ground-level realities. She directed officials to submit detailed progress reports regarding the implementation of decisions taken in previous meetings during upcoming sessions. “She expressed dissatisfaction that only 20 percent progress had been achieved on decisions made in earlier review meetings. She also pointed out that unnecessary delays in preparing Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) and finalizing tenders were slowing down development projects. “Noting that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy attaches special importance to the development of Warangal, she urged officials to demonstrate a similar level of commitment and speed in executing development works. “Strengthening the Education and Health Sectors” “Dr. Kavya emphasized the need to strengthen the education and health sectors across the district. She called upon officials to take effective measures to reduce school dropout rates and increase student enrollment in government educational institutions. “She stressed the importance of improving infrastructure in all government schools and raising awareness among children about personal safety, including concepts such as “good touch” and “bad touch.” She stated that creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive educational environment for students must be a priority. The MP reiterated that coordinated governance, the timely implementation of welfare schemes, and proactive administrative efforts are essential to achieve sustainable and inclusive development across Warangal district.

## Modern Bus Stop Should Be Brought Into Use: Pilli Sattaiah

Peddapalli District, Manthani ( Indian Chronicle ), June 18: BRS party state leader Pilli Sattaiah has demanded that the government and concerned officials immediately relocate and put into use the modern bus stop that has been lying unused on the roadside. “He stated that the modern bus stop, constructed at a cost of nearly ₹3 lakh for the convenience of passengers, has been abandoned near the old petrol bunk junction in Manthani town and remains unused. He urged the concerned authorities to respond promptly and shift it to a suitable location so that it can serve the public. “Sattaiah further appealed to the Municipal Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Commissioner to take necessary steps to ensure that public utility infrastructure such as bus stops is brought into effective use for the benefit of commuters.



## Case Registered Against Khammam V6 Reporter Khadeer



“Khammam, June 18 Indian Chronicle: Police have registered a case against V6 district reporter Syed Khadeer in Khammam. Based on a complaint lodged by Ramu Sudha, a resident of Parsibanda in Khammam city, the Khammam One Town Police booked Khadeer along with several others. “According to the police, a case has been registered under Sections 329(4), 115(2), 324(2), 79, 351(2), 296(b), 118(1), read with 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). “In her complaint, Ramu Sudha alleged that Khadeer and 12 others associated with him unlawfully entered her house, assaulted her family members, and attempted to kill them. “Police reportedly registered the case against Khadeer on June 16, and the matter came to light on Thursday.

## 750 Crore Allocated for New Warehouse Construction in Andhra Pradesh: Warehousing Corporation Chairman

“Khammam Nelakondapalli June 18 Indian Chronicle:

The Chairman of the State Warehousing Corporation, Rayala Nageswara Rao, announced that new warehouses are being constructed across the state at a cost of ₹750 crore to ensure adequate storage facilities for agricultural produce and to prevent storage-related difficulties for farmers. “On Thursday, he visited the warehouses located at the Agricultural Market Yard in Nelakondapalli mandal and inspected various records. He also conducted a physical verification of stock to ensure that the inventory matched the official records. “Speaking on the occasion, Nageswara

Rao said that warehouses with a total storage capacity of 7.5 lakh metric tonnes are being constructed at 50 locations across the state. He further stated that construction of additional warehouses with a capacity of 2.5 lakh metric tonnes at 25 more locations will begin soon. “He expressed confidence that warehouses with a combined capacity of 10 lakh metric tonnes would be completed and brought into operation within a year. “The chairman also revealed that e-commerce warehouses are being developed in the state capital on 23 acres of land at a cost of 70 crore for leading companies.

## Godman held for rape, sexual harassment of woman for 17 years, cartridges seized



GNS News Agency, June 18

Pune city police arrested eight persons including 59-year-old Radhamohan Mishra, a self-styled godman who allegedly raped a woman and subjected her to continuous physical and mental harassment for about 17 years. The victim, a 42-year-old woman residing in Pune city and working as a project associate manager with a corporate company, lodged a first information report (FIR) at Kharadi police station on June 16. Police arrested Mishra and another person, Swami Kanval Nayan (58), and six others including the godman's servants and aides, all residing in Renuka Park in Kharadi, in the early hours of Wednesday.

As per the FIR, the victim woman hailed from Haryana and her father was a doctor. While residing in Haryana in 2000, they happened to meet a person named Swami Kanval Nayan during a "satsang" programme. In February 2001, Nayan allegedly introduced the victim's family to Radhamohan Mishra, who headed an ashram in Panchkula. Nayan allegedly claimed Mishra was a god and asked the family to "surrender" to him. As stated in the FIR, the victim's father had been under the influence of Nayan and Mishra. In 2003, her father allegedly provided financial aid to Mishra to start a hostel in Kurukshetra. Her brother, who was then around 11-years-old, had also taken admission at the hostel. Around the same time, the victim took admission at a Dental College in Haryana. As mentioned in the FIR, Mishra allegedly called her to the hostel where he had inappropriate conversations with her. The FIR stated that after he showed her some graphic videos, Mishra allegedly asked

his "sevika" (servant) to beat the victim with a wooden stick repeatedly to check if she could withstand the pain. As per the FIR, the victim's father had constructed a house in Kurukshetra and her family shifted here in 2007. The same year in November, the victim's brother fell from the second floor of the house. He underwent treatment at a hospital and survived. However, Mishra claimed he saved the life of the victim's brother, the FIR stated. As per the FIR, Mishra did not want to victim to get married and during 2009 and 2010, he allegedly sexually harassed and raped her. In 2010, Mishra influenced the victim's family to shift to Pune with him. It was alleged in the FIR that between 2013 and 2016, Mishra allegedly raped the victim repeatedly, recorded her nude videos and tortured her with electric shocks.

The FIR mentioned that to rid herself of the harassment, the victim ran away without telling her parents and got married to a man who she met on a marriage portal, but Mishra allegedly continued to harass her and forced her to divorce. The victim alleged in the FIR that Mishra made her commit thefts at her father's room in 2025 and take property away under her name. As per a press release issued on Thursday, police booked Mishra and other accused under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 61(2), 64(2)(M), 68, 74, 75, 77, 123, 115(2), 351(2), 3(5) and sections of the Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act. Police arrested the accused and seized eight laptops, nine cell phones, 19 hard discs, 23 pendrives, 10 DVDs, a DVR machine, two CPUs, Rs 6.6 lakh in cash and 10 live cartridges from them, during investigation. Police produced the eight accused before a court in Pune on June 17. Police sought their custody to determine whether they were involved in sexually harassing more women. Police said they also wanted to investigate the source of the live cartridges recovered during a search at the house of the accused persons. Defence lawyers argued there were property disputes between the main accused Mishra and the victim's father and brother, which are pending in civil courts, and hence this offence was lodged. Defence lawyers also claimed the accused were arrested illegally. The court however remanded the accused persons to police custody till June 20 for further investigation.

## CtrlS datacenters gets Rs 7,000 Crore boost from CPP investments

New Delhi: CtrlS Datacenters has secured an investment commitment of up to Rs 7,000 crore from Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP Investments) at a valuation of Rs 44,914 crore to scale up its operations in India. As per the partnership, CPP Investments will inject Rs 4,000 crore to acquire an 8.2 per cent stake in CtrlS, and up to Rs 3,000 crore to set up a joint venture to develop hyperscale data centre campuses across the country.

CPP will hold a 48 per cent equity stake, while CtrlS will own the majority 52 per cent ownership in the JV, a statement said. The capital infusion aims to accelerate the development of next-generation data centre infrastructure to cater to the surging demand from hyperscalers, cloud

service providers, and artificial intelligence (AI) applications in India. "India's AI moment is not on the horizon, it is already here. The demand signals from hyperscalers, cloud service providers, and enterprises are clear and unmistakable. Our partnership with CPP Investment (is) not merely expanding capacity but also establishing the benchmark for AI-ready infrastructure in one of the world's most significant digital markets," said Sridhar Pinnareddy, Founder and CEO of CtrlS Datacenters. Founded in 2007, CtrlS operates 19 data centres across nine Indian markets with a combined capacity of over 370 MW. The company has 4.4 GW of projects at various stages of execution and has announced plans for overseas expansion into the Middle East and Southeast Asia, starting with Thailand.

## India-UK social security pact to cut costs for IT professionals

New Delhi: About 90-95 per cent of Indian professionals employed by Indian companies operating in the UK would benefit from the social security agreement between the two countries, a move that will reduce costs for firms and enhance the competitiveness of Indian service providers in the British market, an official said. The two countries, on June 17, announced that the Agreement on Social Security or the Double Contribution Convention (DCC) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will come into effect on July 15. The DCC will give a major boost to IT majors like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys. Professionals of Indian-origin contribute about USD 0.5 billion each year to the UK social security. Under the DCC, employees temporarily transferred by companies from India to the UK, or vice versa, will be exempt from making social security contributions in the host country for up to five years.

It was a key demand of India. Around 75,000 Indian professionals are working in Britain, while over 900 Indian firms have operations there. The average annual salary of a professional in the UK is estimated at GBP 40,000-50,000. According to estimates, about 15 per cent of the salary is paid towards social security contributions. Normally, a professional becomes eligible for social security benefits in the UK after around 10 years of service. "If an employer is contributing in India for the social security of the employee, they do not have to pay in the UK. For that, they have to share a certificate of coverage. From July 15, Indian employers can start enjoying this exemption," the official said. However, the exemption is not available for Indians working for other foreign companies in Britain. The agreement will support mobility and continued social security coverage of the employees on temporary overseas assignments. This will enhance India-UK partnerships in the service sector, leveraging the high skills and innovative service sectors of both countries.

The announcement is important as the UK is the second-largest export market for the USD 283-billion Indian IT industry, and contributes 17 per cent to its export basket. India's services exports to the UK stood at USD

21.6 billion in 2024, while imports were USD 13.7 billion. Meanwhile, UK Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle, in a statement, said trade is going to be cheaper, quicker, and easier for businesses on both sides. "We have extended the benefit for UK nationals moving to India to work and continue to build entitlement to a UK State Pension from 36 months to 60 months. They will continue to pay National Insurance Contributions during that period, without also having to pay social security contributions in India," he said. This is reciprocal for both British and Indian professionals and will be applicable to highly skilled professionals on pre-existing visa routes.

This is in line with the UK's arrangements with other countries such as Korea, Japan, and Canada. Kyle said that this will be achieved through the UK-India Double Contributions Convention Agreement, which will enter into force at the same time as the UK-India FTA. To benefit from the tariff reductions, UK businesses must register with HMRC and Indian businesses must refer to the Government of India guidelines, he said, adding, "we would now encourage businesses to use the next few days to register and ensure they are fully prepared to reap the benefits of this deal." The deal boosts UK GDP by 4.8 billion pounds and Indian GDP by 5.1 billion pounds, and bilateral trade by 25.5 billion pounds every year in the long run. It will bring a range of benefits to industries across the UK and India, with whisky tariffs dropping from 150 per cent to 40 per cent, automobiles from 100 per cent to 10 per cent under a quota and cosmetics will see tariffs of up to 22 per cent eliminated either from day one or after staging. The UK will cut tariffs on Indian goods coming into the country, such as clothes, footwear, and some food products. Less cost for British businesses importing Indian products could mean lower prices and more choice for consumers across the country. Further, the official said the agreement is expected to provide a significant boost to India's labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and footwear by granting them duty-free access to the British market. These sectors currently face import duties of around 8-10 per cent in the UK, and the tariff elimination will give Indian exporters a competitive edge over rival supplying nations, the official said.

## IAS officer arrested in Rs 79-crore Panchkula scam

GNS News Agency, June 18

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested senior IAS officer Ram Kumar Singh, former Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation (MC), Panchkula, in connection with the alleged misappropriation of government funds worth Rs 79.46 crore from the civic body's account maintained at the Sector 32 branch of IDFC First Bank in Chandigarh. He is the first Haryana-cadre IAS officer to be arrested in the case. Singh was placed under suspension on April 9. The arrest marks a significant development in the investigation into what has emerged as one of Haryana's biggest financial frauds, involving the alleged siphoning of more than Rs 504 crore belonging to multiple government departments through forged and non-existent fixed deposits. According to the CBI, the Municipal Corporation Panchkula account was opened in violation of Haryana Finance Department guidelines and was allegedly structured in a manner that facilitated fraudulent transactions. The agency alleged that Singh, while serving as MC Commissioner, entered into a criminal conspiracy with officials of IDFC First Bank and handed over multiple signed cheques through intermediaries on the pretext of creating fixed deposits. However, no fixed deposits were ever created. Instead, the funds were allegedly withdrawn using those cheques and diverted to shell companies controlled by the accused bank officials.

The CBI further alleged that the fraud was carried out with the knowledge and active participation of the then Commissioner and the Municipal Corporation's Senior Accountant, who has already been arrested in the case. Based on evidence gathered during the investigation, the agency found Singh's active involvement in the alleged conspiracy and arrested him on Thursday. Searches were simultaneously conducted at Singh's residences in Chandigarh and Karnal, where investigators reportedly recovered several incriminating documents. The Panchkula Municipal Corporation case forms part of a much larger fraud centred on the Sector 32 branch of IDFC First Bank, Chandigarh. According to investigators, funds amounting to approximately Rs 504 crore belonging to eight Haryana government departments

were siphoned off through forged fixed deposits, fabricated debit notes and other fraudulent banking instruments.

The diverted funds were allegedly routed through a network of shell entities and private beneficiaries. The CBI took over the investigation from the Haryana State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau following a request from the state government. So far, the agency has chargesheeted 17 accused in the Haryana-linked scam, including six officials of IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank, three Haryana government officials, two companies and six private individuals. Chandigarh cases also under CBI lens. The agency has also taken over two related cases from the Union Territory of Chandigarh — one involving Chandigarh Smart City Limited (CSCL) and the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, and another IAS-linked to the Chandigarh Renewable Energy and Science & Technology Promotion Society (CREST). The CBI has already filed chargesheets in both cases. In the CSCL matter, seven accused, including five bankers, one CSCL official and one private individual, have been chargesheeted. In the CREST case, the agency has named 13 accused, including five bankers, two CREST officials, four private individuals and two companies. A senior Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer has also been arrested in connection with the CREST investigation. Officials said the probe is continuing to trace the complete trail of public funds allegedly diverted through the banking network and identify all those involved in the conspiracy.



## Kerala HC issues notice on plea against bail for Vijayan security personnel



The Kerala High Court issued notices to five members of former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's security team on the state government's plea seeking cancellation of anticipatory bail in the alleged assault case involving Youth Congress workers during the 2023 Nava Kerala Sadas

Kochi: GNS News Agency, June 18 The Kerala High Court on Thursday issued notice to five members of the former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's security team on the state government's plea seeking cancellation of the anticipatory bail granted to them in connection with the alleged assault on Youth Congress workers during the Nava Kerala Sadas programme in 2023. Justice C. S. Dias ordered notice to the accused police personnel, who were granted pre-arrest bail by the Sessions Court, Alappuzha, and granted them time to file their counter affidavit. The matter has been posted for further hearing on June 27. The development came on a day when the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case inspected the office of the then ADGP (M.R. Ajithkumar, who was in charge of law and order). The team collected the visitor register, CCTV footage and other records from the office and the police club. The inspection followed statements by members of the earlier investigating team that certain case records were allegedly altered at

the ADGP's office.

A team led by Deputy SP Baiju Paulose carried out the examination. This is reportedly the first time an SIT has inspected the office of an ADGP as part of an investigation. The prosecution case is that on December 15, 2023, during the Nava Kerala Sadas programme, Youth Congress and KSU workers approached the KSRTC bus carrying the then Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Cabinet members and raised slogans in protest.

According to the police case, though the protesters were restrained and the movement of the ministers was ensured, the accused members of the escort team allegedly got out of their vehicle with lathis and assaulted the protesters. The state government alleges that the assault continued even after the situation had been brought under control and that the accused caused injuries with the knowledge that they could endanger the lives of the victims. The Sessions Court had granted anticipatory bail, observing that the government had constituted an SIT for a fresh probe and that the possibility of the accused influencing the investigation was limited as they were police constables and not senior officers. The court had also noted that custodial interrogation was unnecessary as the lathis allegedly used in the assault had already been surrendered. However, the state government has challenged the bail order, arguing that the SIT investigation revealed that the ministerial vehicle had passed without obstruction and that the accused personnel allegedly got down and proceeded towards the protesters despite there being no threat. The SIT also reportedly found that the weapons used were not part of the authorised equipment normally issued to escort personnel. The government has contended that the Sessions Court's observation regarding surrender of the weapons was factually incorrect and that continuation of bail could affect the investigation.

## 60% burns, cardiac arrest after fall into hot liquid: How advanced critical care helped 3-year-old in Pune recover

What began as a normal day for three-year-old Hardik Rathod from Thergaon in Pune turned into a terrifying ordeal for his family. While playing at home the child accidentally fell into a container with hot tamarind liquid that his father Vishal Rathod was preparing for the Chaat Centre. He suffered nearly 60 per cent burn injuries and developed cardiac arrest. "It was just a matter of seconds. Before I could run towards my son, he had accidentally fallen into the container. I had kept it down on the floor for cooling. Watching my boy in excruciating pain and fighting to survive was a nightmare," Vishal told The Indian Express. However a coordinated effort led by Dr. Milind M. Jambagi, the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) team, and Dr. Shrikant Pingale, Plastic Surgeon at Ankura Hospital for Women and Children, helped the critically injured child overcome multiple life-threatening complications due to burns, including shock, cardiac arrest, and respiratory failure, ultimately leading to a successful recovery after more than 40 days of intensive treatment.

Dr Jambagi who is also the Chairperson, Education Committee, World Federation of Pediatric Intensive and Critical Care Societies, Geneva said that the child had sustained severe burns involving nearly 60% of his body and had already suffered a cardiac arrest before being referred to Ankura hospital. "Such extensive burn injuries can affect multiple organs and increase the risk of severe infection, shock, breathing difficulties and other life-threatening complications apart from long-term disabilities. Our immediate focus was to stabilize his condition, support his vital organs,

control pain, prevent infections, and initiate advanced wound care. He underwent comprehensive treatment that included respiratory support, strict infection control measures, nutritional rehabilitation, repeated burn wound dressings, collagen dressings, debridement procedures and intensive rehabilitation. Throughout his prolonged hospital stay, a multidisciplinary team worked around the clock to monitor his progress and address every aspect of his recovery. Cases like these require constant vigilance, as even minor setbacks can quickly become life-threatening in severely burned children," Dr Jambagi said. Dr Shrikant Pingale, Consultant Plastic Surgeon pointed out that due to the quality of care the child never got any infection throughout his hospital stay. "This was possible due to the regular wound care, dressing, highly specialised and protocolised care given at the PICU at Ankura Hospital. He was eventually discharged in a stable condition on May 11," he said. The three-year-old is currently being followed up on an OPD basis for continued recovery and rehabilitation and is off any medications, according to the doctors. "Severe burn injuries in children can be devastating not only physically but also emotionally for families. This case highlights the importance of early first aid, timely referral to specialized pediatric critical care centers, strict infection control, nutritional support and coordinated multidisciplinary management," Dr Jambagi said. While Vishal was able to muster funds for the treatment via crowd funding and the hospital's support, watching his son slowly recover, start eating again and smile once, he said, feels nothing short of a miracle.

## PM Kisan Yojana 23rd Installment Date 2026: When Will 2,000 Be Credited?

PM Kisan 23rd scheme, Union Minister said that in West Bengal alone, more than 45.35 lakh beneficiary farmers will receive an instalment of around Rs 907 crore. The 23rd instalment of 'PM-KISAN' - where farmers get Rs 2,000 thrice a year - is likely to be sent out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in West Bengal on Saturday, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said. "Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will give a historic gift of development schemes for farmers, livestock rearers, and youth in West Bengal," Chouhan said.

According to a government press release, the Union Minister said that an investment of Rs 18,880 crore will reach the accounts of more than 9.44 crore farmers across the country. Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that in West Bengal alone, more than 45.35 lakh beneficiary farmers will receive an instalment of around Rs 907 crore. With this latest disbursement, the total amount distributed under the PM-KISAN scheme in the state will cross Rs 15,055 crore, while the total amount distributed across the country since the scheme's launch in 2019 will exceed Rs 4.46 lakh crore. The minister further announced that the PM will officially visit the West Bengal Hooghly district and will launch and inaugurate several projects related to agriculture, rural development, fisheries, roads, railways, and animal husbandry. According to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, these projects are aimed at helping farmers, creating jobs, and improving infrastructure in the state.



The minister further announced that the PM will officially visit the West Bengal Hooghly district and will launch and inaugurate several projects related to agriculture, rural development, fisheries, roads, railways, and animal husbandry.

## Sanjay Raut: 'Leaders like Sharad Pawar, Mamata, KCR who left the Congress should unite, make the party stronger'



GNS News Agency, June 18

A day after Congress leader Nana Patole claimed that Sharad Pawar had proposed the merger of his party with his, and leaders from the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) denied the claim, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Friday said leaders who left Congress in the past should make efforts to "come together". Raut told reporters in Mumbai that Congress needs to become stronger and leaders who had formed separate parties after leaving it should rethink their position in the present political situation.

"The Congress has to become stronger. Leaders who came out of the Congress and built their own parties, whether

Sharad Pawar, KCR, or Mamata Banerjee, should understand the situation in the country. If we want to fight those in power at the Centre, everyone will have to come together," Raut said. Raut urged Sharad Pawar to take the lead in making such an effort. "If Sharad Pawar takes the initiative and helps build a stronger Congress, parties like ours will also become stronger," said the Sena (UBT) leader. Raut's remarks came a day after Patole, the former Maharashtra Congress president, said Pawar had sent a merger proposal to his party leadership, but the process did not move forward. However, NCP (SP) state president Shashikant Shinde denied any such proposal was discussed in the party. Asked about Raut's statement, NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule, Pawar's daughter, said, "Sanjay Raut speaks openly on issues related to the country. In a democracy, everyone has the right to express an opinion. He is like an elder brother to me. We will take note of the suggestions he has given." Responding to the comments, senior BJP leader Chandrakant Patil said the Congress was a "sinking ship" and claimed leaders would continue moving towards the BJP instead. BJP minister Girish Mahajan said if such a merger happens, it may help create a stronger Opposition in Maharashtra. "If Rahul Gandhi and Sharad Pawar come together, they may work well. There should be a strong opposition. Right now there is hardly any opposition left in the state," he said.

## Maharashtra cyber fraudster who operated from Dubai held in Bangkok, brought to India

GNS News Agency, June 18

The Pimpri Chinchwad police on Thursday arrested a man linked to an international cybercrime syndicate, after he was apprehended in Bangkok through a Red Corner Notice and Lookout Circular (LOC) and brought to India. The accused Saurabh alias Ganesh Balasaheb Kale, 31, a native of Sangli district of Maharashtra, was part of a cybercrime racket operating from Dubai and Bangkok (Thailand) that swindled crores of rupees from several people across India. "Kale allegedly maintained direct contact with cyber racketeers based in China and other countries. He assisted the cyber criminals involved in task frauds, share market investment frauds, and digital arrest scams, thereby earning substantial illegal profits," stated a press release issued by Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime) Rohidas Pawar on Friday. Kale had started an office in Dubai for handling the cyber fraud transactions, Pawar said. Kale's name cropped up during the investigation of an online task fraud case lodged at the Dehu Road police station in Pimpri Chinchwad in June 2024. The complainant was an engineer who was coerced into investing money in an "online part-time job", assuring huge profits by completing some online tasks, and lost Rs 33,000. The police arrested 13 people in the case. One of the arrested, Deepak Gade, during interrogation, had said that he had sold details of various "mule accounts" in India to suspect Kale in Dubai. A technical investigation by assistant police inspector Pravin Swami revealed that Kale also procured bank accounts from various individuals in India and used them to receive proceeds of cyber fraud. The police said Kale was initially doing some marketing work in India. He shifted to Dubai in 2023 for forex trading, when he was suspected of having joined the international cyber crime racketeers from China, the police said.

Kale's name also came up in the investigation of a case filed at the Hinjewadi police station on June 20, 2024, in which a 67-year-old man was duped of Rs 18 lakhs in an



online trading scam. Kale was found involved in another major case lodged at the Cyber police station on March 24, 2025, in which a senior citizen residing in Sangvi was duped of Rs 2.52 crore, after being lured to invest in an online share trading business. Based on evidence collected, a proposal for provisional arrest and extradition was forwarded through the Maharashtra Government and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. Legal proceedings were initiated through Indian authorities in the UAE in 2024. But, in September 2025, it was known that Kale had left Dubai and fled to Thailand. The Pimpri Chinchwad police then communicated with the Maharashtra Government and the Ministry of Home Affairs, which resulted in the issuance of a Red Corner Notice and LOC against Kale. Then, while he was attempting to flee from Thailand to another country, Kale was detained by the authorities at Bangkok Airport. He was subsequently brought to India. On Thursday, the Cyber Police team took his formal custody at Mumbai Airport and arrested him in the Dehu Road Police Station case. A court remanded him to police custody till June 16 for further investigation. A team comprising inspector Ravikiran Nale, assistant inspector Swami, sub-inspector Sagar Poman, constables Deepak Bhosale, Hemant Kharat, Nitesh Bichevar, and Atul Lokhande is probing the case further.

## 'Congress is a sinking ship': Devendra Fadnavis mocks Opposition merger talk



GNS News Agency, June 18

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday dismissed speculation that regional parties were exploring the possibility of a merger with the Congress, saying the party was a "sinking ship". "All those in the Opposition who are weaving such a narrative can be described as 'Begani shadi mein Abdullah deewana' (being excited about somebody else's business). The Congress is a sinking ship. Nobody likes to step into a sinking ship," Fadnavis said. After Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee met Congress leader Sonia Gandhi in Delhi following her party's stunning defeat in the West Bengal Assembly elections, talk of mergers has gained traction amid calls for a united INDIA bloc. In Maharashtra, Congress leader Nana Patole claimed on Thursday that Sharad Pawar had earlier proposed merging his party with the Congress. While the NCP (SP) on Friday

denied the claim, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said leaders who formed separate parties after leaving Congress should rethink their position in the current political scenario.

"Congress has to become stronger. Leaders who came out of Congress and built their own parties—whether Sharad Pawar, KCR or Mamata Banerjee—should understand the situation in the country. If we want to fight those in power at the Centre, everyone will have to come together," Raut said, adding that Sharad Pawar should take the lead in such an effort. The BJP is not worried about such an eventuality, Fadnavis said. "As far as the BJP is concerned, either way, it will be a win-win situation. Even if we hypothetically assume that regional parties will merge with Congress, it is good for us. The consolidation of the Opposition creates more political space for the BJP. It is good for us," Fadnavis emphasised. "When there are multiple parties, they take up space. When they come together as one party, we get more political space. We have adopted a wait-and-watch policy," he added. Fadnavis addressed the media on Friday in Mumbai to mark Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 12-year tenure. Commenting on NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar's statement that there cannot be any comparison between Jawaharlal Nehru and Modi, Fadnavis said, "Modi has broken the record of Nehru as the longest-serving PM. This is a fact. Where is the question of comparison?" "Modi is not just the longest-serving PM, but also the best, given the socio-economic development the country has witnessed in the last 12 years," he added.

## Starlink denies report of India freezing approvals, says talks remain productive

New Delhi: Elon Musk-led Starlink has dismissed a report that India has frozen approvals for its satellite internet services, saying it remains engaged in "active and productive discussions" with the government and continues to receive encouraging feedback on its plans for the country. Responding to the report, Lauren Dreyer, Vice President of Starlink Business Operations, said the company remains committed to launching services in India and has complied with all regulatory and security requirements. The clarification came after a Bloomberg report claimed that India had effectively put on hold approvals for Starlink's commercial operations over concerns related to the use of its satellite terminals in the Iran conflict. "Starlink remains in active and productive discussions with the Government of India contrary to misleading stories based upon unsubstantiated claims from anonymous sources," Dreyer

said in a post on social media platform X.

She added that the company has worked with the government through all required regulatory and compliance processes in a transparent and responsible manner. According to Dreyer, Starlink has also developed a bespoke deployment model for India to align with the country's sovereign technology, regulatory and security requirements. "We have heard nothing but encouraging feedback on Starlink's capabilities and its potential to advance India's connectivity ambitions, especially in remote and underserved regions," she said. Dreyer further stated that the company remains fully committed to India and is working with the government to bring Starlink's services to the country soon. Starlink has applied for a licence to provide satellite communication services in India and has received a Letter of Intent (LoI) from the government.

## From exclusion to empowerment: How Antyodaya is reaching the last mile



GNS News Agency, June 18

New Delhi: The government's Antyodaya mantra has succeeded in bringing India's most backward and deprived communities into the ambit of inclusive development with the objective of ensuring that those who were left behind are placed at the forefront of opportunity and progress, according to an official factsheet issued on Friday. It highlights that these efforts were spearheaded with the Rs 24,104 crore Pradhan Mantri Janati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) programme targeted towards the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). They are among India's most isolated communities. Many lived without pucca housing, clean drinking water, electricity, or road access.

The government launched PM JANMAN in November 2023 to fill these gaps through coordinated effort of all concerned ministries. The programme targets 75 PVTG communities across 18 states and 1 UT, working through 11 interventions implemented by 9 ministries. The 11 interventions cover housing, road connectivity, piped water supply, mobile medical units, Anganwadi Centres, hostels, electrification, mobile towers, multipurpose centres, Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, and vocational skilling. As many as 7.8 lakh pucca houses have been completed in tribal villages, and over 28,303 villages have been given access to clean drinking water while 589,812 tribal households have been provided with electricity connections to uplift their living stan-

dards, the factsheet shows.

Tribal habitations saw greater infrastructure expansion. Students from deprived communities gained wider educational access. Sanitation workers received stronger institutional recognition and safety support. Backward and nomadic communities entered the focus of targeted welfare planning. In the past 12 years, the expansion of Eklavya Model Residential Schools has transformed tribal education infrastructure across remote districts. The network grew rapidly after 2018, bringing modern residential schooling and quality education closer to Scheduled Tribe communities that remained underserved for generations. As of 2026, over 1.56 lakh students are enrolled in 499 schools and another 323 schools are under construction. The change has also been visible geographically. Tribal regions, aspirational districts, and remote habitations became central to development planning and monitoring. Convergence across ministries strengthened last-mile delivery in areas once considered difficult to reach. Similarly, the PM-AJAY, launched in 2021, focuses on integrated development of Scheduled Caste-majority villages. The scheme supports infrastructure creation, skill development, and livelihood opportunities in underserved SC communities.

Under PM-AJAY, the Adarsh Gram component takes an area-based approach to develop SC-majority villages through convergence of schemes, village development plans, and gap-filling support for critical local needs. It covers 47,334 villages across 597 districts in 26 states. The programme reaches more than 4 crore Scheduled Caste citizens and over 83 lakh households. The programme has also strengthened village-level planning and infrastructure monitoring. More than 25,000 villages have completed infrastructure assessment exercises. This has helped in identifying gaps in roads, water supply, education, sanitation, and connectivity more systematically. A stronger emphasis has also been placed on youth participation and livelihood generation. Skill development, SHG participation, and village infrastructure creation has increasingly become part of a broader push towards long-term economic participation, the statement added.

## Centre, Assam and Nagaland sign pact to boost oil and gas exploration

GNS News Agency, June 18

New Delhi: The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on Friday signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with the state governments of Nagaland and Assam to increase domestic exploration and production of oil and gas. Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that since Assam alone accounts for nearly 22 per cent of India's crude oil reserves and around 15 per cent of the country's natural gas reserves, while Nagaland possesses significant hydrocarbon potential in the Naga-Schuppen Belt of the Assam-Arakan Basin, resources where hydrocarbons flow naturally and those which have huge untapped resources, the outlook for E&P (exploration and production) activities in the North East is extremely promising.

By creating a framework for cooperation between the concerned Governments, the MoU signed in the presence of Home Minister Amit Shah, provides certainty to investors, facilitates operational continuity, enables regulatory coordination and creates conditions necessary for long-term investment decisions, the minister said. "The North East gave birth to India's petroleum industry; today, it stands ready to power the next chapter of India's energy journey as Nagaland will produce oil and gas again after 31 years," Puri remarked. "With the signing of a historic tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Nagaland and Assam, India's quest towards increasing domestic exploration and production of



hydrocarbons under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes a giant leap as a new basin opens up for fresh wildcat exploration," the minister further stated. He also thanked Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa for "rising above differences" to chart the way forward for the region and the country. The resumption of mineral oil operations will generate direct and indirect employment, stimulate local entrepreneurship, strengthen physical infrastructure, create opportunities for contractors, service providers and small businesses, and contribute significantly to the economic development of surrounding communities and the entire North East Region, the minister added.

## Dawood syndicate rebuilding sharpshooter network, intelligence agencies warn



An Intelligence Bureau official said that, unlike similar networks in the past, this one is not being pieced together to target high-profile politicians or prominent public figures. Instead, its objective is to carry out targeted killings of individuals who are well-known within their localities.

GNS News Agency, June 18 New Delhi: The Dawood Ibrahim syndicate is reportedly assembling a fresh network of sharpshooters across northern India and neighboring states to execute targeted killings of high-profile individuals, intelligence agencies have revealed. An Intelligence Bureau official said that, unlike similar networks in the past, this one is not being pieced together to target high-profile politicians or prominent public figures. Instead, its objective is to carry out targeted killings of individuals who are well-known within their localities. "While the attacks may not attract national attention individually, the network is expected to execute a series of such killings," the official claimed.

An official said the pattern bears similarities to incidents witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir a few years ago, when shopkeepers and other influential local figures accused by terror groups of assisting Indian security agencies were selectively targeted. The Dawood gang's objective is to create fear and spread panic among the public. The plan is to foster a sense of anxiety and uncertainty through a sustained campaign of violence. "The targets are likely to be ordinary individuals chosen at random. While the operations would be carefully planned, the final selec-

tion of targets would be left to the network," another official said. The key instruction, the official added, is to ensure the killings occur at regular intervals and follow a discernible pattern.

The effort to build this network comes at a time when security agencies recently dismantled a Dawood-linked module allegedly operated by his aide Munna Jhingada from Pakistan. Investigators said the group was planning a series of blasts at key locations and had recruited several individuals, including a Nepali national. The module was busted through coordinated operations carried out by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police, the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Officials said the dismantling of the module dealt a major setback to the Dawood syndicate. The operation had reportedly been backed by Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter Services Intelligence, which had high expectations from the network and was banking on the syndicate's extensive links in India to ensure its success. Following the exposure of the module, which investigators said was intended to mirror the structure of the network behind the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, the ISI is believed to have instructed the syndicate to quickly devise a fresh strategy.

An official said the new sharpshooter network is also being overseen by Jhingada, alias Sayyad Muzzakkir Muddasar Hussain. According to investigators, he has long managed the Dawood gang's network of contract shooters and reported directly to Dawood's close aide, Chhota Shakeel. Jhingada later emerged as one of Shakeel's trusted shooters and is believed to have been involved in numerous killings. Impressed by his abilities, Shakeel allegedly assigned him the task of eliminating rival gang leader Chhota Rajan in Thailand. Following the failed attempt, Jhingada was arrested and spent 17 years in a Thai prison. After his sentence, he was extradited to Pakistan. "Given his background and his alleged involvement in several successful shootings in the past, he has now been tasked with leading the newly formed network of sharpshooters," the officials said. The official said the network would deliberately carry out low-profile killings across the country at regular intervals to establish a pattern. The objective, he said, is to create fear among the public, with people becoming hesitant to venture out due to concerns over random shootings. The choice of victims would be aimed at fostering a sense of anxiety, making people believe that anyone could be next. "The network is expected to recruit shooters from Punjab, Mumbai, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh," the official claimed. To avoid detection, operatives would generally not be deployed in their home states, where police may already have records on them. For instance, a shooter recruited from Uttar Pradesh would likely be assigned operations in another state, the official explained.

## Bangladesh halts construction of massive Lord Ram statue amid alleged extremist pressure



GNS News Agency, June 18

Dhaka: Bangladesh authorities have ordered the suspension of the construction of the world's largest statue of Lord Ram at the Sri Sri Radha Govinda and Kali Temple in Palashbari upazila of Gaibandha district, according to local media reports. The announcement was made by temple advisor Shyamal Kumar Mahant during a press conference held at the temple auditorium on Thursday evening, Bangladesh media reported. The decision has sparked strong reactions, with critics alleging that the suspension came under pressure from Islamist groups opposed to the project.

Exiled Bangladeshi author and human rights activist Taslima Nasreen strongly condemned the threats, incitement, and hostile rhetoric surrounding the construction of the Ram temple, questioning why a single Hindu place of worship is being targeted in a country where several hundred thousand mosques exist and continue to be built.

Taking to her social media platform X, Nasreen said: "There are several hundred thousand mosques in Bangladesh, and new mosques continue to be built across the country. So why is there so much opposition to the construction of a single Ram temple or a statue of Lord Rama? If religious freedom is truly for everyone, then it should apply equally to minorities, not only to the majority." "The threats, incitement, and hateful rhetoric directed against the Ram temple currently under construction in Palashbari, Gaibandha, are deeply concerning. No individual or group acquires the right to demolish another community's place of worship simply because they dislike it. In a state governed by the rule of law, religious disagreements are not resolved through violence or barbarism," she added. Nasreen stressed that the situation is particularly troubling given Palashbari's history of attacks on Hindu temples and idol vandalism, which has left the Hindu minority community feeling vulnerable. "Many Muslim-majority countries around the world—including Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Oman—have large Hindu temples. In those countries, the existence of temples is not viewed as a threat to the state. Why, then, is the construction of a single temple in Bangladesh being portrayed by some Muslims as an existential crisis?" Nasreen questioned. Meanwhile, Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, editor of the Bangladeshi newspaper 'Blitz' also expressed grave concern over the halt of temple construction amid pressure from Islamist extremist groups. "Amid massive protests of local jihadist and Islamist groups, authorities of the ongoing Sanatan Complex in Gaibandha district in Bangladesh have announced suspending all activities and stop building the idol of Lord Ram," Choudhury posted on X.

## India summons US envoy again over strikes on ships with Indian crew

GNS News Agency, June 18

New Delhi: For the second time this week, India on Friday summoned US charge d'affaires Jason Meeks and lodged a strong protest over the American Navy's strikes on three commercial vessels with Indian crew members off the coast of Oman. Meeks was called to the Ministry of External Affairs headquarters, a day after the government said three Indian crew members of a tanker were killed in the US action.

The US charge d'affaires was summoned, and he was conveyed India's strong protest over the US military's action. Meeks had also been summoned on Wednesday night. India on Thursday said three merchant ships with Indian crew members came under attack from American military off the coast of Oman this week, resulting in the death of three nationals. It was New Delhi's first public acknowledgement that the US Navy targeted the three ships with Indian crew members. New Delhi asserted that these attacks must stop.

A Palau-flagged oil tanker, Marivex, carrying 24 Indian seafarers, was disabled by US forces on June 8. All crew members were safely rescued. On June 10, the US struck another Palau-flagged tanker, Settebello, killing three out of the 24 Indian sailors on board. Another vessel, Jalveer,



a Guinea-Bissau-flagged tanker with 20 Indians, was attacked on Thursday. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Thursday that the three separate strikes on the Settebello, Marivex, and Jalveer "came from the US Navy". Jaiswal said two of the three vessels were subject to sanctions administered by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), while another had been classified as non-compliant. The OFAC is the financial intelligence and enforcement agency of the US Treasury Department, and it acts against vessels involved in violating US sanctions on the sale of Iranian and Russian oil.

## Finnish President hails India's growing global influence in talks with EAM Jaishankar



GNS News Agency, June 18

Helsinki: Finnish President Alexander Stubb described India as an "influential actor" on the global stage and underscored the importance of hearing New Delhi's perspective during a meeting with External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the Kultaranta Talks in Helsinki. Following the meeting, Stubb took to X and posted, "We met today at Kultaranta with India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar. We discussed the situation in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, efforts to end Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and the upcoming G7 summit. India is an influential actor whose views are important to hear."

The two leaders exchanged perspectives on the evolving geopolitical situation and underscored the importance

of diplomacy in navigating an increasingly uncertain global environment. Sharing the details of the meeting, EAM took to X and said, "Pleased to meet President Alexander Stubb of Finland on the sidelines of the Kultaranta Talks. We exchanged views on the evolving geopolitical situation and underscored the importance of diplomacy in navigating an increasingly uncertain global environment." "India and Finland remain committed to advancing our Strategic Partnership in Digitalization and Sustainability while strengthening coordination in multilateral fora on issues of shared interest," he added. EAM participated in a discussion with Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen and Foreign Minister of State Lana Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 'Emerging Powers and the New Geopolitical Competition' at the Kultaranta Talks. During the discussions, EAM Jaishankar noted that ongoing conflicts are imposing costs and triggering changes far beyond the regions and agreed that the international community must continue efforts to mitigate their consequences and create conditions for diplomacy. He emphasised the importance of de-risking and diversifying supply chains to build greater resilience and redundancy in an increasingly volatile world. The EAM also reiterated that India's energy choices are guided by the national interest, with purchases based on affordability and availability. He highlighted the centrality of India's relations with the Gulf region, underpinned by strong people-to-people ties, energy cooperation, and a growing strategic and defence partnership.

## Bangladesh clinch historic ODI series win over Australia

GNS News Agency, June 18

MIRPUR (BANGLADESH): Bangladesh secured its first-ever One-Day International (ODI) series victory over Australia on Thursday. A 2½-hour rain delay forced a revised DLS target of 192 in 41 overs, and Bangladesh reached 195 for five with six overs to spare to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

"It's an amazing feeling," batter Najmul Hossain Shanto said. "The way we played this series, we showed a lot of courage. We have been working really hard over the last few months, and we wanted to improve our game. I'm really proud to be part of this team." The depleted Australians began the match by losing three wickets without a run on the board. Half-centuries from Marnus Labuschagne (55 not out) and Xavier Bartlett (52) helped them recover to 187 for eight in 42 overs. Opening batter Soumya Sarkar, the only change Bangladesh made from the team that won the first game by 86 runs, and Shanto scored 42 runs each, while Towhid Hridoy remained unbeaten on 40 off 55 balls.

Shanto had a nervy start but steadied the chase with an 86-run partnership with Sarkar. However, he edged Riley Meredith behind to give the fast bowler his first ODI wicket in five years following his recall. Bangladesh wobbled at 144

for five in the 27th over, but Hridoy and captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz shared an unbeaten 51-run stand to secure the historic series result. "Bangladesh have outplayed us so far in this series, so congratulations to them," Australia captain Josh Inglis said. Shortly before the end, Mehidy took a blow to the helmet from a Nathan Ellis delivery and dropped to his knees before vomiting. He declined a stretcher and was allowed to continue. Mehidy then hit the winning runs with a six over fine leg. Shanto later said that Mehidy was taken to hospital for observation.

Australia opted to bat first, but Matthew Short registered his third consecutive duck in ODIs. He was followed by Cooper Connolly and Matt Renshaw, who were also dismissed without scoring. It was only the fourth time in ODI history that a team had slumped to 0 for 3. Left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (3-27) and Taskin Ahmed (3-33) shared six wickets between them, while Mustafizur also accounted for Alex Carey, who was caught at point. When Inglis holed out to deep cover, Australia had lost half their side for 68 runs. Labuschagne, batting at No. 7, and Bartlett revived the innings with a 103-run partnership. Labuschagne's first ODI fifty in 14 innings came after he survived a run-out chance on one when Tanvir Islam missed the stumps.

## Ukraine hits fuel supplies to Crimea, sparking fuel crisis on Russian-held peninsula



GNS News Agency, June 18 Kyiv: Ukrainian drone strikes on refineries, depots and pipelines. Tanker trucks attacked and left ablaze along the land corridor from Russia to Crimea. Motorists waiting in long lines at gas stations. In a new blow to the Kremlin's narrative that Moscow is winning the 4-year-old war in Ukraine, Kyiv's forces have targeted supplies to Crimea, triggering the worst fuel crisis on the Black Sea peninsula since it was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014.

The persistent attacks reflect the growing intensity and efficiency of Ukraine's drone strikes and have caught Russia off-guard and struggling for a response. As the country marks the Russia Day national holiday on Friday, signalling the start of summer vacations, the gas shortages are threatening to cause further disruptions to the tourism-dependent region with its beaches and resorts. In a rare public acknowledgment, the Kremlin has recognized the scope of the problem and promised to address the issue quickly. Ukraine's successes have highlighted its ability to inflict painful damage to Russia and change the course of the conflict while Moscow's advances recently have ground to a near halt. On Thursday, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine reached its 1,569th day, surpassing the duration of World War I. Crimea has been a jewel in Russia's imperial crown since it was seized from Turkic-speaking Tatars in the 18th century after Moscow defeated the Ottoman Empire.

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 when both republics were part of the USSR. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the diamond-shaped peninsula became part of newly independent Ukraine. Russia kept a naval base in Sevastopol, and when a Moscow-friendly Ukrainian president was ousted by a popular uprising in February 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent in troops to overtake Crimea. Weeks later, Moscow annexed the peninsula following a referendum that most of the world refuses to recognise.

Soon afterward, a Moscow-backed separatist insurgency erupted in eastern Ukraine, and fighting there raged with varying intensity until the February 2022 invasion. Russian troops concentrated in Crimea quickly seized large parts of southern Ukraine early in the war and secured the land route to the peninsula. Since early in the war, Ukraine has fired missiles and drones to try to dislodge Moscow's hold on the territory. The Ukrainian military sank several Russian warships in the Black Sea and at their Crimean bases, crippling Moscow's naval capability and forcing it to redeploy its fleet to Novorossiysk.

Ukraine also methodically targeted munitions depots, airfields and Putin's prized asset, the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea to Russia. The span was struck by a truck bomb in October 2022 that killed five people, blew up two sections of the bridge and required months of repairs. More attacks on the bridge followed in 2023 and 2025. Ukraine's attacks on the land corridor to Crimea since the Kerch Bridge attacks, Russia has channelled most fuel and other supplies along the highway and railroad via the occupied territories along the Sea of Azov coast. Those shipments were interrupted last month, when Ukrainian drones hit fuel trucks on the highway that Moscow once deemed to be safe, leaving

behind dozens of burning vehicles

Other relentless Ukrainian strikes hit refineries, oil depots and pipelines deep inside Russia, hurting its oil exports and causing domestic fuel shortages. The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War noted the synergy between the longer-range attacks and those disrupting supplies to Crimea and other occupied regions. "The long-range strike campaign is therefore reducing Russia's production capacity, while the mid-range strike campaign is hurting Russia's ability to transport the gasoline Russia is still able to produce," it said in an analysis. Making matters worse, Ukrainian drones this week repeatedly hit the Chonhar Bridge, which links mainland Ukraine and Crimea over a shallow strait. Authorities deployed pontoon bridges. The Ukrainian military said it struck the bridge to disrupt movement of troops, ammunition and fuel from Crimea.

It's not immediately clear how the fuel disruptions will affect Russian military operations, but residents of Crimea and other occupied territories are keenly feeling the blow. The peninsula has had periodic fuel shortages from Ukrainian strikes before, but this crisis is the worst since its 2014 annexation. At the end of May, authorities restricted the sale of gasoline to 20 litres (5 1/3 gallons) per vehicle owner per week using prepaid coupons. Those were snapped up immediately following their release on an official messaging app channel, and motorists lined up for hours, waiting to refuel.

Social networks have been abuzz with requests and advice on where to find fuel, and authorities launched a hotline for tourists who have found themselves trapped. While fuel shipments over the Kerch Bridge long has been suspended for security reasons since the Ukrainian attacks, fuel also has been carried by ferries. Those shipments are expected to increase. Some motorists bring their own gas over the bridge from the mainland, but they are restricted to carrying 100 liters (about 26 1/2 gallons) per vehicle. Some speculators are selling gas at double the market price.

Crimea attracted nearly 7 million tourists last year, and it had hoped to top that number this year. The business daily Kommersant reported that nearly 80% of hotel bookings were cancelled in late May and early June. Some hotels offered gasoline as a bonus for new bookings, offers that were quickly snapped up.

Some travellers were unsettled by a Ukrainian drone attack earlier this week on a passenger train traveling from Moscow to Crimea, injuring its driver and killing his assistant. That led to a brief suspension of service, with passengers taken by buses. An earlier attack on a commuter train in Crimea killed one person and injured three others, forcing authorities to shift schedules to limit service during daytime hours. Kremlin pledges action Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged the Crimean fuel shortages earlier this week and promised that "measures were being taken" to deal with them. The Russian Defense Ministry has been silent about the Ukrainian attacks on the land corridor, while some war bloggers have harshly criticized the military for failing to anticipate the strikes and its slow response. Some suggested military escorts for fuel trucks while others urged stepping up strikes on Ukrainian bridges, fuel storage sites and other infrastructure.

Amid the fuel crisis and the finger-pointing, Ukraine dealt another symbolic blow to Russia, striking a historic Sevastopol building that houses a huge panoramic painting that depicts the defense of the city during the 19th century Crimean War. The painting was effectively destroyed by fire during the attack, according to Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Kremlin-appointed head of Crimea's largest city. Given Putin's focus on Crimea, military blogger Valery Shirayev said, the attack would certainly anger the Russian leader. "It's hard to find another work of art, another part of national heritage, whose destruction would be as painful for Putin," he said.

## UN maritime chief condemns US strike that killed Indian sailors in Gulf of Oman



United Nations: International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez has condemned the US attack on a tanker in which three Indian crew members were killed. The UN agency, IMO, is monitoring the situation closely and calls for a full and transparent investigation into the incident involving the tanker Settebello, he said in a statement. "I strongly condemn any act from any party that endangers the lives of seafarers and the safety of international shipping", he said. "This is simply unacceptable".

"My thoughts are with the families of the three seafarers who lost their lives and with all those awaiting news of the crew members", he added. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has confirmed that 21 Indian sailors were rescued from the ship and three were killed.

## US plans to deport Iranians to Central African Republic, sources say

DAKAR/NAIROBI, The Trump administration plans to deport a number of Iranians and other migrants to Central African Republic, a chronically unstable country racked by violence and poverty, two lawyers and an official briefed on the matter told Reuters. The Iranians include two women who face potential torture and persecution if they are forced to go back to Iran, their lawyer, Emily Trostle, said. One is a Christian convert and the other is a pro-democracy activist, she added. The Reuters Inside Track newsletter is your essential guide during the World Cup. Sign up here. The U.S. State Department and the presidency in the Central African Republic — which recently reached a deal to accept so-called third-country deportees from the U.S. — did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Both the women were detained upon arriving in the U.S. in November 2024, Trostle said. They applied for asylum in the U.S. and had secured a form of protection known as withholding of removal from a U.S. immigration judge,

Trostle said. Obtaining that protection meant judges found they faced a risk greater than 50% of being persecuted or tortured in Iran. The official briefed on the matter told Reuters the first flight to Central African Republic under the deal was expected to take about 20 people, also including Syrians and Afghans. The plane could leave as early as Thursday, the two lawyers said. A Turkish national who fled political persecution and also had withholding of removal may be on board as well, said the person's lawyer, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The Trump administration has used third-country deportation deals — including with Central African Republic's neighbour the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is now facing an Ebola outbreak — to deport people it can't legally send home. Washington has defended the deals as lawful, though rights groups and advocates have said the details of the deals are opaque and many of the deportees are ultimately repatriated. The U.S. and Israel launched heavy strikes on Iran in late February

## India demands end to US attacks on ships after three sailors killed



NEW DELHI, - India urged the United States to halt strikes on shipping on Thursday after three U.S. attacks on Indian-crewed tankers this week, including one that killed three sailors. The deaths are the first reported since a U.S. blockade on Iran-linked shipping began on April 13 in which U.S. forces have disabled eight ships and turn back more than 100 others.

Get the latest news from India and how it matters to the world with the Reuters India File newsletter. Sign up here. "These attacks must cease and end," Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters. "We also call for dialogue and diplomacy so that we can have an early return to peace and stability in the region." Jaiswal said the U.S. Navy has attacked three ships with Indian crews this week, including one on Thursday.

He said the ministry had summoned the U.S. chargé d'affaires in New Delhi on Wednesday to convey its "deepest concerns over the ongoing attacks" after a strike on the tanker Settebello off Oman in which three Indian sailors died. The U.S. embassy did not respond to requests for immediate comment. The U.S. military's Central Command said a U.S. aircraft had carried out a precision strike on the Settebello's engine room "after the crew repeatedly failed to comply with directions from American forces". It said the Settebello "violated the ongoing blockade by attempting to transport oil from Iran". The ship's manager, IOS Marine FZE, rejected claims that it ignored warnings or was carrying Iranian crude and called for a transparent international investigation into the matter. Vessels are anchored in the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, /Stringer Pur-

chase Licensing Rights, opens new tabThe Settebello "holds no affiliation whatsoever with Iran or Iranian oil", it said in a statement posted on X by Forward Seamen's Union of India. The Omani Navy responded to the Settebello's distress call after it reported an engine fire and 21 Indian sailors were rescued. Family members of Shivanand Chaurasia, one of the sailors who died, told reporters he had gone to sea about nine months ago and had told his father earlier this week that everything was fine. Indian Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the deaths of the three sailors was a "profound loss to our maritime family". India has more than 300,000 sailors working in global shipping fleets, according to government data.

The U.S. attacks come ahead of next week's Group of Seven summit where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to hold bilateral talks with U.S. President Donald Trump. Centcom said the U.S. blockade had disabled eight non-compliant vessels, redirected 134 ships that complied, and allowed 42 vessels supporting humanitarian aid to pass. U.S. forces disabled the unladen Marivex oil tanker, which also had Indian crew aboard, in the Gulf of Oman on Monday after it attempted to sail to an Iranian port. Ships being targeted by the U.S. blockade include Iranian vessels as well as so-called shadow fleet tankers, which are typically older vessels without Western insurance used to transport sanctioned oil and sailing under the flags of various nations to obscure their true ownership, cargo and movements. "I strongly condemn any act from any party that endangers the lives of seafarers and the safety of international shipping. This is simply unacceptable," Arsenio Dominguez, secretary-general of the UN's shipping agency the International Maritime Organization, said on Wednesday. Hritam is breaking and daily news correspondent covering South Asia. Previously, he reported on Indian companies, markets and multiple regulatory bodies. Before Reuters, he was associated with two US-based newspapers. Nidhi Verma is an award-winning journalist working with Reuters. Presently, she is working as Team Leader-Energy in India. She has more than two decades of experience in covering India and global energy sector. Her stories show a new dimension of the energy sector, the nuances of the oil trade, the role of geopolitics and the diplomatic efforts that a country makes to mitigate the impact of external shocks.

## Suman Kalyanpur & the triumph of quality over quantity



A trick question for more than six decades has been to play a film song that sounds like a Lata Mangeshkar hit number, and ask if anyone can identify the singer. While everyone choruses "Lata!", the singer is revealed to have been Suman Kalyanpur. Few could tell the voices apart. To further complicate matters, both Lata and Suman were trained by the Bhandi Bazaar gharana musicians and had similarities in style. This led to many calling her a Prati Lata or a parallel Lata, and Raju Bharatan, a popular film music journalist, called her the poor man's Lata. The film media was filled with gossip items about how Lata didn't want Suman to record songs, and like most gossip, this was untrue.

Suman Kalyanpur was born Suman Hemmady, the surname indicating her ancestral village near Udipi in South Kanara district, Karnataka. Unlike the Mangeshkar sisters, she was middle class and had a degree in arts from the famous JJ School of Art, Mumbai. She was blessed with a sweet voice, clear enunciation and an ability to sing high notes, but she regarded herself as a light classical singer at best and made no claims of great classical training.

She entered the film industry when Talat Mahmood spotted her talent at a college show. Her first song was a duet with him in 'Mangu' (1954). This was followed by stints in the chorus. In 1957, Hansraj Behl gave her a duet with Mohd Rafi in 'Miss Bombay'. The song, 'Din Ho Ya Raat Ho', was a hit, and Behl went on to give Suman some famous Punjabi songs like 'Lamian Te Kallian' and 'Mainu Tere Piche Sajna'. Suman got her breaks when Lata decided she wouldn't work with a particular lyricist or music director. Lata's first target was Sahir Ludhianvi and this meant Suman got to sing for N Dutta, who was Sahir's favourite composer. Another early target was Sardar Malik. In his biggest musical hit in 1960, 'Saranga', Suman sang a fan favourite solo, 'Likh De Piya Ka Naam'.

In the early 1960s, Suman sang several songs for Roshan and Ravi, many of which are still popular, in particular the duet with Asha that featured with the credits of the blockbuster 'Barsaat Ki Raat', namely 'Garjat Barsat

Sawan Aayo Re', Roshan's reworking of an old bandish in Gaud Malhar. But it was when Suman sang for SD Burman in 'Baat Ek Raat Ki' that the industry sat up and noticed her. Her duet with Hemant Kumar, 'Na Tum Hamein Jaano', became an instant classic. Music lovers fell in love with Suman's singing — a long aah in a musical cadenza behind Hemant Kumar's voice, before the female voice joins the duet. So when Lata decided to sing for 'Guide' after a long gap with SD Burman, there was gossip that it was Suman's singing that had "forced Lata to patch up".

Out of the 740-odd songs Suman recorded, 140 or so were duets with Rafi, almost 20 per cent. This high number is because of the famous Lata-Rafi quarrel when they didn't sing together for years. Madan Mohan, a diehard Lata fan, gave her a lovely duet in 'Ghazal': 'Mujhe Yeh Phool Na De'; Kalyanji-Anandji made her sing that old-time favourite 'Na Na Karte Pyaar Tumhi Se Kar Baithe'; Naushad and Suman collaborated in 'Saaz Aur Awaaz' and 'Palki'. But it were the Shankar-Jaikishan blockbusters 'Janwar' ('Mere Sang Ga'), 'Rajkumar' ('Tumne Pukara Aur Hum Chale Aaye') and 'Brahmchari' ('Aajkal Tere Mere Pyaar Ke Charche') that cemented her fame. In particular, the 'Brahmchari' song. As Shammi Kapoor had fallen in love with Mumtaz and had proposed marriage to her, the song seemed to offer a behind-the-scenes look! Suman Kalyanpur always treasured her three Sur Shringar Samsad awards for the best classical-based film song of the year. These were for 'Manmohan Man Mein Ho Tumhi' ('Kaise Kahoon', 1964), 'Ankhiyan Tarsan Lagi' ('Boond Jo Ban Gayi Moti', 1967) and 'Aayi Re Aayi Re' ('Sati Sulochana', 1969). However, she never won a Filmfare Award. Despite that, her classical songs have remained a source of inspiration for singers as varied as Kavita Krishnamurthy and Sonu Nigam. In fact, Sonu once sung 'Baad Muddat Ke Yeh Ghadi Aayi' ('Jahan Ara') on stage with her. The Central government honoured her with the Padma Bhushan in 2023.

While her Punjabi, Bhojpuri, Odia, Bengali and Assamese songs remained radio favourites for decades, it was probably Maharashtra where she had the most diehard fans. Apart from singing in Marathi films, Suman Kalyanpur sang numerous devotional songs and many poetic compositions called Bhav Geet. These became perennial favourites in morning radio shows. In view of the high respect in which she was held, the Maharashtra government gave her a state funeral when she passed away on May 31. For music lovers, she represented the triumph of quality over quantity. Her evenness of tone was remarkable. And when she was asked to sing in a slow tempo, her sweetness of voice, combined with an ability to convey emotional pain, was unique. Her fans adored songs like 'Jo Humse Guzarti Hai' ('Mohabbat Isko Kehne Hain'), where she brings out Nanda's pain of separation in a melancholy Khayyam tune, or 'Lo Gham Ka Mara' ('Maikhana') with its mixture of dialogue and song.

## Gymkhana Club and the power of myths



Delhi's chatterati, who always need something more than just fried peanuts with their gin and tonic, are abuzz these days with the latest canapes: the Modi government's hostile takeover of Gymkhana Club. It's not a done deal yet, but rest assured that our higher judiciary, with judgments like Ram Mandir, SIR, Umar Khalid, Aravallis, Hindenburg/SEBI, Pegasus, etc, under its belt, will finally approve non-passive euthanasia for this last watering hole for the drones of South Delhi.

No one, of course, believes the reason cited by the government itself for the action: that the 27 acres is needed for security/defence purposes. This is the default position for all decisions which push the boundaries of legality and/or good sense. Hence, there is much feverish speculation about the real motives for this surgical strike: the Club's administrative and financial mess, non-payment of dues to the government, turning the area into a semi-militarised zone so that a Bangladesh, Nepal or January 6 type of incident never happens, fear of the Cockroach Janta Party, a real estate operation which will ultimately benefit the Melody-loving leader's cronies. But all this assumes that this government acts rationally, which past decisions do not bear out. I have, therefore, a different take which matches the leopard's spots, as it were. The BJP is a party which is founded on and which survives on myths — past, present and future. It originates from the myths of ancient India — our epics, Akhand Bharat, the existence of plastic surgery, aeroplanes, nuclear missiles thousands of years ago, etc. In the present, it rules on the strength of other myths — Vishwaguru, fastest growing economy, leader of the Global South, wolf warrior diplomacy, "ghar me ghus ke maareng", developed country by 2047, Net Zero emissions by 2075, and so on. None of these myths are based on facts or have a rational basis, but constant reiteration has converted them into legal fiction and kept the BJP in power for over a decade. Gymkhana Club is a victim of two such myths — Lutyens' Delhi/Khan Market gang (which works actively against the BJP), and colonial legacy (which diminishes our own glorious culture). Both are fake, or at least selectively applied to suit the narrative.

The BJP believes that the privileged residents of Lutyens' Delhi are inimical to the party and conspire against it, and that Gymkhana Club is its hub. Wrong. There is no such thing as Lutyens' Delhi and the Khan Market gang became the Khanna Market gang in 2014. The 2,800 hectares known as Lutyens' Delhi is occupied by politicians, mostly of saffron hue, who subsist on subsidies many times those enjoyed by the members of Gymkhana: serving bureaucrats who cannot even take a toilet break without written approval from their political masters; and industrialists fully house-trained by the ED, CBI and the Income Tax Department. They are the BJP!

The retired bureaucrats and defence forces officers who haunt the Gymkhana bar also did a "ghar wapsi" years ago. I am a member of various groups of retired officers, and I can confidently state that the vast majority of my brethren — 75-80 per cent — support the BJP ideology; 10-15 per cent may not but will not open their mouths for fear of jeopardising their pensions. The rest are so soaked in gin and tonic they can't press their own doorbell, let alone an EVM button. Lutyens' Delhi (and the Gymkhana) are, therefore, BJP territory, as both Sanjay Jha and Vir Sanghvi have also pointed out, and the BJP knows it. So why take over the Club? Pause that question for the nonce, dear reader.

The "colonial mindset" myth is used as an alibi for this government's failures, to distract attention away from them, and to find a convenient whipping boy to rally the troops, or voters. Gymkhana is the whipping boy this time, to burnish the BJP's non-existent credentials as the champion of the poor, and to divert the voters' attention away from the goodies being gifted daily to the crony oligarchs. How can this bunch of effete elites and their colonial-era club (so goes the specious argument built on a false myth) be allowed to grab valuable land and live a subsidised life when 800 million have to be fed on doles? Such a narrative contains all the ingredients of the colonial myth — alibi, distraction and scapegoat. That it is patently false (like the Khan Market gang myth) is beside the point. Myths appeal to us precisely because they provide an escape from reality. Gymkhana Club is a victim of these two myths. But it is just the beginning: this narrative, perhaps a counter to the cockroach movement, will be rolled out across the country. Maharashtra has already served notices on 16 prominent clubs in Mumbai. For, what an authoritarian or fascist government needs at all times is an "enemy" to rally the nation behind it. Voltaire had said, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him." Replace "God" with "Enemy" and you have the reason why colonial-era clubs are the new enemy, and why 6,000 members of Gymkhana will now have to find another watering hole in this urban jungle. Never underestimate the power of myth-making. Am I sad? I don't really know. I was not a member of Gymkhana — my application was rejected after a waiting period of 10 years without assigning any reason. But I shall miss its nonpareil mutton cutlets. They probably were a colonial hand-down, but then not all legacies are bad, are they?

## Divisions of our own making



I am no historian, economist or social anthropologist. Let's get that out of the way at the very beginning so that I am not torn apart for being flippant or naive. However, I do have a great memory (even at 75) and can remember almost all that happened to fashion my life in these seven decades. My friends call me a storehouse of useless information and even if they have never always meant that as a compliment, I take it as one. What I enjoy is to document all the trivia that has a history of its own, and that links others of my generation to a galaxy that is light years away from the globalised world that has rendered faceless or useless all those who are not connected digitally.

The '50s and '60s were the foundational decades of our country as we know it now. Moreover, for those of us, like me, who were born then, it went along with a way of life and an upbringing that left a deep imprint on each one of us. Everything that is still good in this country dates to that time, but all that eventually derailed the innocent promises of that age can also be traced back to those decades. My birth in 1951 was also when India was given its Constitution. So I like to believe that the values that it was founded on were also the same we were given as my generation grew up. Today, when I look around, I find that all those who stand up for those eternal human values are mostly from our age group. You will find them in each public demonstration against the erosion of human rights, the division of this country along caste and creed, the centralisation of power and the snuffing of weak voices.

This is, of course, a romantic view and peculiar to a certain section of the upper middle class, who had a long history of a liberal education behind them but who lived modest lives. In the mofussil towns of UP, this meant that we were products of a mixed education. We went to missionary schools that still taught us British rather than Indian history, prayed in chapels and abided by the rules of a Chris-

tian way of life. Our 'home' lives were markedly different, yet I strongly believe that exposure to an education by Roman Catholic nuns made me a better Hindu and sharing my tiffin box with Farzana made me guilt-free about eating halal meat. I often joke that our exposure to the Avadhi culture of Lucknow made me a Shia Brahmin but the truth is deeper than that flippant remark. Our ease with switching from one language to another as we spent the day was perhaps another seamless acceptance of different voices, views and sounds. And in case this makes our generation sound like a bunch of sanctimonious prigs, let me add that caste, religion and epithets were then not politically erased by any high-minded moral police. I remember a municipal sweeper (be-turbaned and attired in a khaki uniform) who came every day to clear the smelly stuff that our personal mehtar emptied into a tin shed, hidden in a khet far from the house and called a bumpoliss (don't ask why). We would meet him again as we walked to school, carrying a headload of nightsoil on his head, singing, 'Har phool main khusboo hai, har patta khoos-khoos hai' (Every flower has a fragrance and each leaf looks happy). As soon as we saw him, we'd hold our noses and dart over to the other side of the road and cross our fingers (antioli, that our Brahmin maliji said would avert the sin of meeting a mehtar). I blush in shame as I remember this because the singing sweeper was the sweetest, most playful character and pretended to frighten us by coming towards us.

Today, children would be (rightfully) punished for this cruelty but we were innocent kids then and never questioned how we could hurt sentiments and human dignity by our behaviour. Servants were cared for by families and generations worked for the same family for years, yet they ate their food from china plates, while we ate from silver or steel thalis. Their tea was served in glass or chipped mugs while we drank milk or tea from steel, copper or brass. There is much to be said for sanitising our everyday language from politically-loaded words and concepts but the muscle memory of those long-held beliefs remained embedded. To those who did not have the benefit of a liberal education or upbringing, these beliefs were waiting to be exploited by political parties that slyly made it 'kosher' to be proud of being a Hindu or Muslim instead of being proud to be an Indian. Added to this is the division of the country along linguistic lines that has resulted in a disturbing form of sub-nationalism. Many cannot read or write in their own mother tongues yet they insist on calling those who come from a different state 'outsiders'. The recent political wars fought in Bengal over who could or could not belong there also exposed the harm that the champions of this chauvinism have done to the state.

## RIL, Meta partner to develop 168 MW AI enabled data centre in Gujarat's Jamnagar

New Delhi: Reliance Industries Limited and social media major Meta Platforms have partnered to develop a 168-megawatt data centre in Jamnagar, Gujarat, within two years, a joint statement said on Wednesday.

This is the first built-to-suit data centre capacity in India for Meta and represents a significant milestone in India's emergence as a global hub for AI infrastructure, the statement said. "RIL will develop a data centre with 168 MW capacity to be delivered within two years, with an option to scale. Meta will lease capacity from the facility," the statement said.

The data centre will be powered by renewable energy and cooled with desalinated seawater. Meta is also separately partnering with two leading clean energy providers in India, CleanMax and Fourth Partner Energy, to back nearly 1GW of renewable energy, the statement said.

"This partnership with Meta marks a transformative moment for India's digital infrastructure. Building India's first built-to-suit data centre for a global technology leader of Meta's scale demonstrates India's readiness to be at the

forefront of the global AI revolution," Reliance Industries Limited, Chairman and Managing Director, Mukesh Ambani said. "Jamnagar will become a landmark destination for hyperscale AI computing, and we are proud to partner with Meta to make this vision a reality," he added.

"The data centre will serve Meta's global infrastructure, supporting its core business and AI compute needs, underscoring India's growing role in the worldwide digital and AI ecosystem," the statement said. Under the agreement, RIL will provide comprehensive end-to-end services spanning the entire lifecycle of the data centre, from design and construction to the ongoing management of utilities, renewable power supply, network connectivity, and fully managed operational services. The project positions RIL as a single-window solutions provider for hyperscale AI infrastructure in India. "The strategic location in Gujarat offers significant advantages for large-scale data centre operations, including delivery capability, renewable energy, water availability, proximity to India's western submarine cable landing stations and Jio's extensive fibre network," the statement said.

## Tata Motors to increase prices of cars, SUVs by up to 1.5 pc from July 1

New Delhi: Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd on Friday said it will increase prices of its passenger vehicle portfolio, including both internal combustion engine (ICE) and electric vehicles (EV), by up to 1.5 per cent from July 1. "This price revision is being undertaken to partially offset the impact of rising input costs and sustained inflationary pressures," the company said in a regulatory filing. While Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles continues to absorb a significant portion of these increases, a part of the impact is being passed on to customers through this adjustment, the company stated. "The extent of the price increase will vary across models and variants, ensuring that the overall value proposition of each offering is maintained," it added.



## VVIP culture is Indian culture



like you. But I am a nobody who needs crowds to magically part for me wherever I go. I need traffic jams to melt when I travel by road. Whether it's the bank, the airport, the toll booth or the temple, queues must auto-dissolve when I approach, and reconfigure themselves after I have passed. The word 'queue', nay, the letter 'Q' itself, is banned from my dictionary. People often seek me out for tips on how to become a VVIP. It's simple. You need two qualities: an unshakeable conviction that you are the exception for whom the rules shall be broken, and a profound lack of shame. If you are shameless enough, rest assured you'll make a great VVIP one day. Indian society is founded on a fixed hierarchy, aka the caste system. The higher rungs have always commanded an exclusive set of perks and privileges. VVIP culture is merely a modern iteration of this ancient set-up. If tomorrow all of India's VVIPs were to disappear, millions wouldn't know who to kowtow to, and who to lynch. VVIPs are a ritual class that performs the critical role of offering guidance to the primeval Indian reflexes of sycophancy and obedience. They are the free-floating aristocrats without whom Indian democracy would implode, and the justice system would flail about blindly, unable to distinguish those who're above the law from those who aren't.

India's USPSome say India should have a system of annually auctioning a fixed number of VVIP 'tags' to a select pool of cronies, just like we do with public assets and government contracts. But this is a bad idea because India's billionaires are already accused — falsely, in my opinion — of owning India's politicians. So having them gallivanting around with personal bodyguards paid for by the tax-payers not only makes for poor optics, it could even lead to accusations of 'suit boot ki sarkar', etc. The greatest strength of India's unique VVIP system is that a VVIP doesn't need to contribute anything of value. All you need is alphabetic security of your choice: Y, Y+, Z, Z+, C, C+, along with a capacity to feel sadistic joy as thousands of commuters bake patiently in the sun for hours, waiting for your cavalcade to zip past. Brazil produces dozens of soccer geniuses every year. China has an assembly line of Olympic class table tennis players. India's USP is an unending pipeline of VVIPs. All those Soros-funded doomsayers who go on and on about India's stagnating per capita income never give us the full picture: we have the world's highest CAGR of VVIPs per capita. Why isn't that something to celebrate?

It was reported the other day that a 66-year-old former vice chancellor was arrested for impersonating a VVIP. Being a VVIP myself, the news made me very sad. Should we be penalising people for pursuing the second biggest achievement open to Indians? I don't need to spell out the biggest — escaping from India (and not getting deported). But for those stuck here, their best hope for a good life is to become a VVIP. There is a rationale to this: if you can't get out but still want to escape, being a VVIP is the only way to keep India at bay. What is a VVIP? They are nothing but a humble person who, by erecting a high security cocoon, glides through life with minimal friction, at a safe distance from the pululating swarms of fellow Indians.

Being a VVIP also enables me to do public service, such as having my security guards loitering outside a barber shop, intimidating passers-by, while I get a free head massage with sesame oil. As a VVIP, I get to meet other VVIPs in luxury resorts and exchange views on issues of mutual interest, such as hawala, real estate, and vandalism. Above all, nothing can beat the sense of safety I feel on the streets of Delhi when I realise that the police won't stop me if I break the speed limit, or break the red light, or someone's leg or head. If my body guards and I accidentally bash up someone from the wrong community, the cops will take one look at the blue beacon on my car and automatically arrest the person we beat up. Contrary to popular myths, VVIPs are not an arrogant lot. Maybe at a superficial level, someone like me might seem unapproachable. But deep inside, I am a nice person. Deep inside my security cordon, to be precise, I think of myself as a nobody, just

## Justice Yashwant Varma case: How High Court judges are repatriated and why the NJAC was struck down?

The Supreme Court collegium on Monday (March 24, 2025) recommended the transfer of Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma to the Allahabad High Court. Justice Varma has been embroiled in controversy following allegations that wads of burnt currency were discovered at his residence during a fire. His transfer was proposed after Delhi High Court Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya recommended an in-house inquiry against him. Meanwhile, Justice Varma has dismissed the allegations as a "conspiracy to malign" him.

How are High Court judges transferred?

Article 222 of the Constitution empowers the President, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI), to transfer a judge from one High Court to another. This provision has been the subject of extensive judicial interpretation, particularly through three landmark rulings colloquially known as the First, Second, and Third Judges Cases. In *S.P. Gupta v. President of India* (1981), commonly referred to as the First Judges Case, the Supreme Court held that consultation with the CJI did not necessitate concurrence, thereby affirming the executive's primacy in judicial appointments and transfers. However, this position was overturned in *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India* (1993), or the Second Judges Case, where the Court institutionalised the collegium system. The ruling established that in the event of a disagreement between the President and the CJI, the latter's opinion would prevail. More importantly, the court underscored that judicial transfers must serve the public interest and improve the administration of justice. Justice J.S. Verma, who authored the judgment, further clarified that the CJI must consult the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court, relevant Supreme Court judges, and at least one senior High Court judge or any other individual whose views are deemed significant, including senior members of the Bar, where appropriate. The court further reasoned that involving multiple judges in the decision-making process serves as an inherent safeguard against arbitrariness. Consequently, it limited judicial review of transfer decisions, asserting that such matters should remain insulated from "legislative debates" and unwarranted interference by "strangers and busybodies" in judicial affairs. Notably, the court clarified that a judge's consent is not a prerequisite for either an initial or subsequent transfer. In the Third Judges Case (1998), it further refined the collegium system, mandating that transfer recommendations be made by the CJI in consultation with the four seniormost judges. Additionally, it required inputs from Supreme Court judges who had previously served in the High Court from which the judge was being transferred. Following the collegium's recommendation, the Law Minister reviews it and advises the Prime Minister, who then forwards the recommendation to the President. Once approved, the transfer is formalised through a gazette notification, and the judge assumes office in the new High Court.

What are the criticisms? A recent report by the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) raises serious concerns about judicial independence in India, citing growing executive interference, opacity in appointments, and weak accountability mechanisms. It highlighted that judicial transfers, carried out without the affected judge's consent, are often justified on ambiguous grounds such as "public interest" and the "better administration of justice." This, the report noted, makes it difficult to distinguish legitimate transfers from punitive or retaliatory actions. To mitigate these concerns, the ICJ recommended that Parliament establish a "Judicial Council" to oversee appointments and transfers based on transparent, objective, and predetermined criteria. It further stressed that the council should comprise a majority of judges in accordance with international standards of judicial independence.

Why was the NJAC struck down?

To address concerns over the collegium system's opacity, the Modi government in 2014 proposed sweeping reforms to judicial appointments. In August, Parliament enacted the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014, and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014, establishing an independent body to replace the collegium system for appointing judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts. The NJAC was to be chaired by the Chief Justice of India and include the two senior-most Supreme Court judges, the Union Law Minister, and two eminent civil society members. One would be nominated by a panel comprising the CJI, Prime Minister, and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, while the other had to belong to the



Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, or be a woman. The amendment witnessed rare political unanimity, passing in Parliament with near-complete consensus—543 members voted in favor, with the sole dissent from veteran jurist Ram Jethmalani—and was subsequently ratified by 16 State legislatures. However, within days of its enactment, the law was challenged before the Supreme Court. The primary contention was the veto power granted to any two dissenting NJAC members, which could potentially allow the Law Minister and the two eminent members to override the judiciary's majority within the commission. On October 16, 2015, a five-judge Bench ruled with a 4:1 majority that the NJAC was unconstitutional and violated the "basic structure of the Constitution". The Bench underscored that "the veto power with the Law Minister or with non-judge members, as against a Supreme Court Judge who is a member of the collegium, may involve interference with the independence of the judiciary". However, the lone dissenter, Justice Jasti Chelameswar, was unsparing in his criticism of the collegium's lack of transparency. He observed that, aside from occasional leaks, its records remained "absolutely beyond the reach of any person, including judges of this court who are not lucky enough to become the Chief Justice of India." He further argued that the inclusion of two civil society representatives in the NJAC could have acted as a safeguard against "unwholesome trade-offs within the collegium and incestuous accommodations between the Judicial and Executive branches."

What lies ahead?

In a press release, the Supreme Court clarified that Justice Varma's transfer to the Allahabad High Court, where he will rank ninth in seniority, was "independent and separate from the in-house inquiry procedure." However, the Union government is yet to approve the recommendation. Justice Varma's transfer appears intended to avert an administrative impasse in Delhi. As the third senior-most judge, he was a member of both the High Court Collegium and several key administrative committees. With his judicial work suspended due to the ongoing inquiry, his continued presence in Delhi would have effectively paralysed crucial decision-making processes. The development has also been leveraged to revive the political argument for the NJAC. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar remarked that "things would have been different" had the top court not struck down the "historic legislation." Meanwhile, the CJI has assured the listing of a petition seeking the registration of an FIR and a thorough investigation into the incident.

## NIMS, IISc launch AI project for healthcare in India

Hyderabad: The Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, have launched a joint research initiative to develop Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for healthcare.

The project aims to create innovative AI models tailored for Indian patients to assist in the early diagnosis, risk assessment, and personalised treatment of breast cancer, oral cancer, kidney diseases, heart ailments, and obesity. Beyond improving diagnostic speed and accuracy, these AI models will be designed to support clinical decision-making and enhance the accessibility of medical services for the general public, Dean of NIMS, Dr P Chandrasekhar said. A team of scientists from IISc, Bengaluru on Thursday visited NIMS and participated in a series of interactive sessions.

## Addressing the growing health crisis of digital addiction in children and adolescents



Netflix's latest drama "Adolescence" may have heightened concerns on the impact of screen addictions among the young. The health and psychological impacts of digital addiction and excessive screen time are increasingly becoming a cause for concern. "Adolescence" has got people talking about parenting in a digital age. While it gives a glimpse into the lives of teenagers, their social media experiences and how it shapes or influences their worldview, at the root of it lies the dark side of social media and increasing screen culture among the young. What worries doctors most is digital addiction's impact on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents.

"Overuse of digital devices can impact mental health, sleep, physical activity, academic performance, and social skills in children. It is important to watch for the following signs of digital addiction in children - irritability when devices are taken away, decline in academic performance, social withdrawal, sleep disturbances, eye strain or headaches and neglect of hobbies and outdoor play," said Janani Sankar, medical director of Kanchi Kamakoti CHILDS Trust Hospital (KKCTH). The factors that lead to digital addiction in children are well-known. As Dr. Janani listed out: easy access to devices, lack of parental control or supervision, online gaming and social media rewards, lack of outdoor and social activities and peer pressure. "Reduced attention span, sleep issues, behavioural problems, obesity due to physical inactivity and poor academic performances are the consequences of excessive screen time," she added.

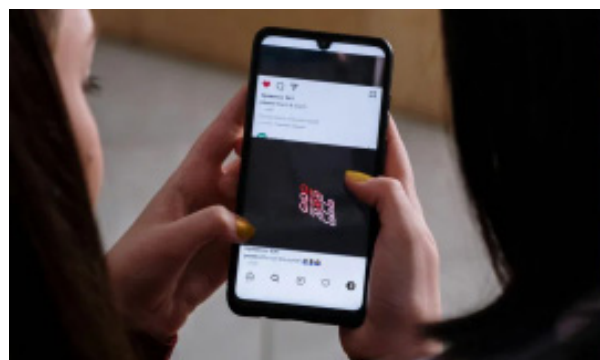
P. Poorna Chandrika, professor of psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health observed that the long-term effects of screen addiction included reduced attention span, decrease in cognitive function, sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, social isolation and loneliness. "Screen addiction, excessive use of gadgets and gaming have become common complaints among parents," she said. She pointed out that after the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers observed vast differences in the attention span and concentration levels among students. "Children turn to social media for immediate gratification and happiness. Parents find it easier to feed food or make young children eat by playing videos on mobile phones or television or tabs. We must remember that gadgets can become addictive for children. It can become a hazard in the hands of children," Dr. Chandrika said. She raised the need for parental monitoring by way of child locks to ensure that children watch appropriate content and earmark "no-gadget spaces" at homes such as living rooms or dining spaces.

Excessive screen time impacts the eyes to a large extent. T.S. Surendran, chairman and paediatric consultant, Sankara Nethralaya pointed out that when he started his practice at Sankara Nethralaya four decades ago, refractive errors, mainly myopia (short sightedness), accounted for four per cent, and it is now 15%. "There is more awareness among the public on screening and we have school screening programmes as well. Children access various gadgets such as mobile phones and ipads. The percentage of refractive errors went up after COVID-19. The most common is myopia followed by hypermetropia and astigmatism," he said. There is a rise in both myopia and induced squints due to use of digital devices, Dr. Surendran said, adding: "Studies have shown that exposing children to outdoor games, and activities prevents the child from developing myopia and also prevents further progression of myopia." Parental monitoring and understanding signs

Three symptoms can tell parents that a child has some eye issue, mostly refractive errors - a child goes closer to the television, moves toys closer to the eyes and squeezes the eyes, he added. "Screen addiction can cause dry eyes (secretion of tears reduces) as children may not blink that many times. Prolonged screen time - laptop, tablet or any gadget use - can cause this. It is important to reduce screen time to 30 minutes a day," he said. Screening is important to identify refractive errors in children. Like master health check, paediatric eye check from the age of one is important to identify issues. "Sankara Nethralaya takes up school screening initiatives. We have found that the percentage of refractive errors is lesser in rural parts when compared to urban cities. Children in rural areas engage in outdoor games," Dr. Surendran said. Digital de-addiction methods to help children manage screentimeDr. Janani said that digital de-addiction refers to the process of reducing or eliminating excessive screen time and dependency on digital devices. "It is important to set screen time limits, avoid devices in the bedroom and while eating at the dining table. Parents should set an example by avoiding overusing mobile devices. We should encourage hobbies and outdoor play. Reading books, outdoor games and sports, arts and crafts, music or dance classes, board games or puzzles and family time and storytelling should be taken forward as alternatives," she said.

Schools can play a vital role by taking up digital wellness education, enforcing device-free periods, encouraging group activities and sports, and by conducting workshops for parents and children, Dr. Janani suggested. On their part, KKCTH is insisting that children read books at the hospital. "We do not allow children waiting in the outpatient departments and those admitted to use mobile phones. Instead, we give them books to read," she pointed out. The hospital also has a digital de-addiction clinic. Parents should seek professional help if screen use is severely interfering with daily life, if they see signs of withdrawal, depression, or anxiety when not using devices and involvement in risky online behavior. "Digital devices are a part of modern life, but children must learn to use them responsibly. Digital de-addiction is not about total removal, but balanced and mindful usage for healthy development," she said.

## Why social media triggers FOMO and how to deal with it



GNS News Agency, June 18

Hyderabad: Open your phone for five minutes, and suddenly it feels like everyone else is living a better life than you. A quick scroll through social media can show friends at events, influencers travelling, or people achieving milestones, all within seconds. What starts as casual browsing often turns into comparison, leaving you with a strange feeling that you're somehow behind. This is what's commonly known as FOMO, or the fear of missing out. And in the age of constant connectivity, it has become more common than

ever. FOMO doesn't always show up in obvious ways. Sometimes it feels like restlessness when you're offline, the urge to keep checking updates, or the discomfort of seeing others "doing more" while your own day feels ordinary. Even simple downtime can start to feel unproductive when measured against what you see online.

A big reason behind this is how social media works. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook mostly show highlights of celebrations, trips, achievements and curated moments. What you rarely see is the routine, the boredom or the struggles behind those posts. This creates a distorted picture of reality where everyone else seems to be constantly ahead. Over time, this constant comparison can affect how you view your own life. It can quietly build pressure to keep up, stay updated and not "fall behind," even when there is nothing wrong with your own pace. The truth is, social media doesn't show life as it is, only fragments of it. And those fragments are often the best moments, not the real ones in between. FOMO fades when attention shifts back to real life. Limiting screen time, taking intentional breaks, and focusing on offline experiences can help reduce that constant feeling of comparison. At the end of the day, you're not missing out on life, you're just seeing a carefully filtered version of someone else's.

## Think Your Earphones Are Harmless? Here's What Experts Say

Excessive earphone use at high volumes can cause hearing loss and infections, experts warn. Prolonged exposure damages inner ear cells, while poor hygiene increases risks. Doctors recommend the 60-60 rule and regular breaks to protect hearing



Hyderabad: From work calls to music and binge-watching, earphones have become a constant companion in daily life. Many people now spend hours plugged in, often without realising the impact it could have on their hearing. While earphones are convenient, prolonged use especially at high volumes can strain the ears. Listening at loud levels for extended periods may damage the tiny hair cells in the inner ear, which are responsible for transmitting sound signals to the brain. Over time, this can lead to reduced hearing sensitivity or even permanent hearing loss. Another common issue is ear infections. Wearing earphones for long hours can trap moisture and create a warm environment, making it easier for bacteria to grow. This may result in irritation, discomfort or infections, particularly if the devices are not cleaned regularly.

"Continuous use of earphones at high volume is one of the most common causes of early hearing problems we see today," says Dr. Anil Kumar, an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist. "It's important to follow the 60-60 rule, listening at 60% volume for no more than 60 minutes at a stretch and to give your ears regular breaks," he adds. Experts also suggest switching to over-ear headphones occasionally and avoiding the use of earphones in noisy environments, where people tend to increase volume unknowingly. Earphones are hard to avoid in today's digital world, but mindful usage can go a long way in protecting your hearing in the long run.

## Consumer inflation rises to 3.93% in May, higher costs from West Asia war get passed on to households



The increase in CPI inflation comes a week after the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) left the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, with the central bank lowering its growth forecast and raising its inflation view for 2026-27. On June 5, the RBI cut its GDP growth forecast for 2026-27 to 6.6% from 6.9% and raised the inflation projection to 5.1% from 4.6%, with Governor Sanjay Malhotra warning there are indications that average crude oil prices this fiscal would be "substantially higher" than the \$85 per barrel. As per the RBI's latest forecasts, inflation is seen averaging 4.2% in April-June, 5.1% in July-September, 5.9% in October-December, and 5.4% in January-March 2027. Over April-May, CPI inflation has averaged 3.7%.

The RBI is mandated to target a CPI inflation of 4% in the medium-term in a range of 2-6%. As such, the forecasts show inflation reaching the upper bound of the RBI's target range in the last three months of 2026. Last week, the RBI also raised its expectations of core inflation to 4.7% from 4.4%. Core inflation measures the change in prices of non-food, non-fuel items, whose prices can be volatile. The movement in prices of non-food, non-fuel items, therefore, are seen as an indicator of underlying price pressures in the economy. Siddharth Upasani is a Deputy Associate Editor with The Indian Express. He reports primarily on data and the economy, looking for trends and changes in the former which paint a picture of the latter. Before The Indian Express, he worked at Moneycontrol and financial newswire Informist (previously called Cogencis). Outside of work, sports, fantasy football, and graphic novels keep him busy.

Consumer prices in India rose 3.93% in May compared to a year ago as producers continued to pass on more of their input cost increases to households, according to data released on Friday by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). At 3.93%, the May headline inflation rate, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), is higher than the 3.48% recorded in April. Inflation, which is the year-on-year change in prices, has now risen every month in 2026. After having risen to 4.2% in April from 2.9% in March, inflation for the 'restaurant and accommodation services' category increased further to 5.75% in May, reflecting the impact of eateries raising menu prices due to hikes in commercial LPG prices on account of the West Asia war. The increase in prices of 'restaurant and accommodation services' in May compared to April was 1.8%.

## Domestic cell mandate triggers supply crunch, may hit rooftop solar installation



for rooftop solar installations under the PM Surya Ghar scheme, the recent extension of domestic cell sourcing norms to additional segments, including commercial and industrial projects, has significantly increased demand for solar modules manufactured using locally produced cells. Industry stakeholders say the sudden surge in demand has outpaced available domestic manufacturing capacity, creating a supply-demand mismatch. This has led to shortages of DCR-compliant modules and a sharp rise in prices, potentially slowing the rollout of rooftop solar systems and other distributed renewable energy projects across the country. Several vendors who install solar systems under the PM Surya Ghar scheme told The Indian Express that they are grappling with a severe shortage of DCR-compliant solar modules. They said that even when modules are available, prices have risen sharply. Vendors from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Odisha reported waiting periods of 25-30 days for DCR-compliant panels, with many approaching the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) seeking intervention.

"The industry is currently facing a severe shortage of DCR-certified solar modules. Leading manufacturers such as Adani, Waaree, Premier Energies and other major suppliers are operating at full capacity and have long waiting periods for deliveries," said Vijay Kumar, President of the Solar Ardent Association in Haryana and Managing Director of Indivm Energy Private Limited. According to Vijay, the supply crunch has left many rooftop solar installers across the country struggling to procure modules in the required quantities, leading to delays in project execution and uncertainty for consumers who have already received approvals or made advance payments. "Consumers are waiting for installations, vendors are unable to fulfil commitments, and project pipelines have slowed significantly," he said, adding that the rooftop solar ecosystem, which had gained considerable momentum over the past year, is now facing disruptions as supply has failed to keep pace with demand. Arshi Chadha, founder of Delhi-based Bridgeway Power, echoed similar concerns. "Availability is extremely limited and, even when modules are available, prices have risen by nearly 20-23% since the June 1 mandate came into effect," Chadha said. According to Chadha, the increase in DCR module prices has raised the cost of installing a rooftop solar system for a household by at least Rs 20,000, adding to the financial burden on both consumers and installers.

The Centre's plan to install rooftop solar panels in 75 lakh households by year-end may hit a few bumps due to the limited availability and rising costs of these panels made from domestically-manufactured solar cells. About 40 lakh rooftop systems have been installed under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana so far, adding over 12 GW capacity. Vendors and installers empanelled under the scheme across multiple states told The Indian Express that they are struggling to procure Domestic Content Requirement (DCR)-compliant solar panels, which are mandatory under the scheme. DCR-compliant solar panels are those in which locally manufactured solar cells — components that convert sunlight into electricity — are used.

Taking cognizance of the issue, Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Secretary at Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) on Monday held a meeting with domestic solar cell manufacturers to emphasise the need to ensure adequate availability of domestically-manufactured solar PV cells and DCR solar modules, especially for vendors and installers engaged in setting up of Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE) solar projects like solar rooftop plants and solar agricultural pumps, while also keeping the prices reasonable. "Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), through REC Limited and National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), is keeping a close eye on the availability and prices of domestically manufactured solar cells and modules and is closely monitoring the situation," the ministry said in response to queries sent by "With domestic solar PV cell manufacturing capacity expected to rise substantially in the next few months, the demand supply situation is expected to improve further," it added.

New mandate triggers price rise According to the ministry, prices of DCR solar PV modules — domestically manufactured modules made using domestically produced solar PV cells — fluctuated between March and May 2026. Prices declined from their February 2026 levels during March and April before rising again in May. The ministry attributed this price increase in May to a likely surge in demand from developers seeking to commission net-metering and open-access renewable energy projects before the May 31, 2026 deadline, after which the exemption from mandatory domestic cell sourcing requirements expired.

From June 1, the government made it mandatory for all domestic, commercial and industrial solar projects to use only locally manufactured solar cells in the solar panels deployed in those projects. While the move is aimed at reducing India's dependence on imports and strengthening the domestic solar manufacturing ecosystem, industry stakeholders say it has also exposed a critical supply gap. India currently lacks sufficient domestic cell manufacturing capacity to meet the rapidly growing demand for solar installations. In 2025-26, India added around 45 gigawatts (GW) of solar capacity. Against an annual solar module production of around 60-65 GW, India's solar cell manufacturing capacity stands at only about 30 GW. As a result, a significant portion of the country's module production has historically relied on imported cells. Even though the Domestic Content Requirement (DCR) has long been mandatory

## TCS ties up with Anthropic for AI adoption

TCS will setup a dedicated Business Unit focused on delivering strong customer value propositions, joint industry solutions and deep AI expertise on the Claude family of models through early access to Claude models, TCS said. "In regulated industries, most AI initiatives stall at the pilot stage, where the requirements for accuracy, auditability and oversight are far more stringent, and the consequences of error significantly higher. This partnership is designed to overcome those barriers," it said in a statement.

Combining TCS' governance, controls and implementation expertise will enable enterprises to deploy Claude confidently in production, not just in experimentation, TCS said. Dario Amodei, Co-founder and CEO, Anthropic, said, "We built Claude to be safe, trusted, and helpful, particularly in contexts where accuracy matters most. This partnership deepens our commitment to India, our second-largest market, with TCS bringing Claude to enterprises and professionals across the region and globally, including 50,000 of its employees." As a global premier partner in the Claude Partner Network, TCS will bring Claude models to enterprises that demand accuracy, deep integration, resilience and strong governance, TCS said. Combining scaled internal deployment, joint go-to-market offerings, industry co-innovation, and workforce enablement, the partnership gives clients a practical path to enterprise-wide adoption and measurable outcomes, it said. TCS said it will equip 50,000 associates across engineering, finance, legal, marketing, and sales with Claude through enterprise-wide

licensing. By deploying Claude internally, TCS will gain firsthand experience to transform its own operations while applying those insights to drive client success, TCS said.

TCS and Anthropic will jointly go to market with AI solutions and services across industries including highly regulated sectors, such as financial services, public services, life sciences, healthcare, aviation, telecom, and medtech, it said. Together, they will co-innovate solutions for domain-specific workflows, modernisation, and customer experience transformation, backed by TCS' consulting, engineering, and managed services capabilities, it said.

K Krithivasan, CEO and MD, TCS, said, "Enterprise AI value comes from understanding business context, orchestrating complex systems, and applying deep AI engineering talent. By combining Claude with our industry expertise, engineering rigor, and large-scale transformation capabilities, we will help customers move faster to production, especially in industries where trust, resilience, and regulatory discipline are critical." "This partnership reflects TCS' broader strategy to help clients become perpetually adaptive enterprises by turning frontier AI into transformation at enterprise scale," he said. N Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons, said, "This partnership reflects our shared conviction that AI will be foundational and transformative for enterprises worldwide. By combining Anthropic's capabilities with Tata Group's scale, trusted relationships, and nation-building commitment, we will accelerate enterprise re-invention and equip India's youth with the skills to lead in the AI era."

## Sameera Reddy's Mapusa market finds offer a glimpse into Goa's culinary traditions: 'Maddache Godd'



Rashi Chahal, nutritionist, La Femme, added that coconut jaggery is packed with vitamins (particularly B vitamins) and minerals such as potassium, magnesium, and zinc. According to her, it provides a natural source of energy and can help replenish electrolytes, making it a popular choice in tropical regions for its cooling properties and nutritional value. Inside Goa's cuisine Food author Rajyasree Sen, in her column Dishing It Out, wrote that Goan cuisine has a kick to it, from the chillies used, which is often tamed down by the use of coconut milk. She says that chillies feature generously across Goan recipes.

"The red ones go into the fiery peri peri and recheado masalas. Chicken cafeal, on the other hand, is green and herby, spiced with green chillies and coriander. Recheado, slathered over fresh fish and grilled or fried, is particularly addictive, best enjoyed on its own or with fluffy rice," she told indianexpress.com. According to Sen, the cuisine of Goa was developed by Catholic monks, with a "mix of Iberian with Saraswath Hindu sensibilities and flavours". Sen writes that Goa's Hindu Saraswath cuisine and Saraswath Brahmin cuisine are especially popular, and many home chefs now open up their homes to guests for meals in Goa. Gaurav Herwadkar, executive sous chef, Conrad Pune, added that it often involves traditional cooking techniques such as roasting, grinding, and slow cooking to enhance the flavours of the dishes. "Coconut is a staple ingredient in Goan cuisine, and various forms of coconut are used, including grated coconut, coconut milk, and coconut oil. Kokum, a dark purple fruit, is often used for its tangy flavour and natural colouring," he told indianexpress.com. Herwadkar added that the cuisine makes extensive use of spices such as mustard seeds, cumin, coriander, turmeric, and red chillies. The spices contribute to the bold and flavourful nature of the dishes.

## One of India's rarest wild cats spotted in Kuno: Why it matters

One of India's rarest wild cats, the Caracal, was recently captured on a camera trap in Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, marking a rare sighting after decades. Often referred to as the "ghost of the grasslands" because of its elusive nature, the species has become increasingly difficult to spot due to habitat loss and shrinking grasslands. Conservationists and forest officials have hailed the sighting, announced around World Environment Day, as a positive sign for Kuno's ecological health and a potential indicator of a healthy predator-prey balance within the landscape.

While many reports have described the camera-trap image as the Caracal's "return" to Kuno, Conservationist Indrajit Ghorpade thinks otherwise. "It is inaccurate to say the Caracal disappeared and has now reappeared in Kuno," he says. "They have always been there. The problem is that they were neglected, rarely studied, and therefore rarely talked about or seen." According to Ghorpade, sporadic sightings have continued over the years across parts of central and western India, particularly from Ranthambore through the Chambal Valley landscape. Sightings have also been reported from areas around Panna, while isolated populations survive in parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. "The Caracal is naturally shy and elusive, living in harsh landscapes that are difficult to monitor," he explains. "That makes sightings extremely rare, but not impossible." A forgotten predator of India's grasslands The Caracal, like the cheetah, was historically trained by royalty for hunting," says Ghorpade. "Over time, its habitat shrank dramatically, leaving only small, isolated populations." He believes the species is among several grassland animals that have been overlooked in conservation planning for decades.

"I have always felt that grassland species such as the Great Indian Bustard, Jerdon's Courser, the Indian wolf, and the Caracal were neglected after independence, unlike flagship species such as the tiger," he says. A rare wild cat called Caracal has been spotted in Kuno National Park in Sheopur district in Madhya Pradesh after several decades, marking a significant milestone in the state's wildlife con-



servation efforts. The sighting came during a recent camera trap survey. According to Ghorpade, prey availability will ultimately determine whether Caracal populations can survive and expand. "In my opinion, prey availability determines their range," he says. "Like wolves, they may move outside protected areas in search of food if resources are insufficient."

The recent sighting could indicate that habitat protection efforts are beginning to create conditions where rare species have a better chance of survival. "With increasing emphasis on habitat protection and the creation of new sanctuaries, ecosystems have an opportunity to recover," says Ghorpade. "Biodiversity should rebound if these landscapes continue to receive protection and remain relatively undisturbed by human activity." Kuno's low human footprint, interconnected habitats, and ongoing conservation efforts may be contributing to a more favourable environment for elusive predators such as the Caracal. However, Ghorpade underlined that there has been no serious census, study, or research programme for many endangered species. "There is a need for a structured, long-term conservation programme similar to those developed for tigers and, more recently, the Great Indian Bustard. Such efforts would include dedicated population monitoring, habitat management, scientific research, and public awareness initiatives," he emphasises.

## David Hockney, the British artist who went in search of Californian colour, dies at 88

Initially, almost as much as his paintings, Hockney was known for his own image — thick-rimmed spectacles, peroxide hair, shiny gold jacket — which became a symbol of Britain's Swinging Sixties. As an art student in the northern English city of Bradford — where he was born to an accountancy clerk father and a devout Methodist mother — Hockney rebelled against convention. He gave titles to his abstract paintings such as "Going to be a Queen for Tonight" and "Doll Boy" at a time when homosexuality was punishable by prison.

To continue his studies, in 1959 he moved to London where he had a meteoric rise in the British pop art movement and rubbed shoulders with stars from dancer Rudolf Nureyev to Mick Jagger. But Hockney yearned for the excitement he saw in the work of American artists. Using money from the sale of his art, he visited New York for the first time in 1961 — where he became a friend of Andy Warhol — and moved to California three years later. "I thought people who produced such work must live in colour, so I went in search of it," he is quoted as saying in a biography written by art critic and friend Peter Adam. One of Britain's greatest ever artists, a Yorkshireman to his bootstraps, my neighbour in Kensington (often saw him on local manoeuvres, albeit in a wheelchair more recently) and a wonderful character. Loved his quote: 'Laugh a lot, it clears the lungs.' "I had spent the first 20 years of my life in the gothic gloom of the North. Here I felt free." His pictures of swimming pools and naked men in showers became icons of a sun-drenched lifestyle that he documented with luminous acrylic paint before dividing his time between Los Angeles, London and Paris in the late 1960s and 1970s.

He remained unpretentious despite his success. "I am actually still a student," he told Adam. "I just happen to have quite a lot of credit cards in my pocket." In 1985, when he was invited to the White House to dine with President Ronald Reagan, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, he was held up for half an hour by security officers because he was the only guest to arrive on foot, his biographer wrote.

"YOU DON'T RETIRE DOING THIS" Hockney's images of love, sex and material wealth led to claims by some art critics that his work was trivial. But he won greater renown than any other British artist of the 20th century. One of his most famous paintings, "Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)" — showing a figure swimming underwater and a man gazing into the pool — sold for \$90.3 million in 2018, the most expensive work by a living artist sold at auction at the time.

As he grew older and his life turned more domestic, dogs replaced men in Hockney's work, at a time when many of his friends were dying of AIDS. He said he cried for two days when Stanley, one of his beloved dachshunds, died in 2001, having been immortalised in scores of paintings and sketches. He brought us such joyful, fun, beautiful art. In the late 1990s, Hockney began returning more frequently to visit his mother in the northern English county of Yorkshire, where he had grown up, and a terminally ill friend encouraged him to paint the local landscapes. Feeling "in-

creasingly lonely, he moved from California to the sea-side town of Bridlington on England's North Sea coast. For a decade he painted clumps of bare trees in winter, fields full of ripe crops and tracks stretching towards the gentle rolling hills of the Yorkshire Wolds region.

It was the most productive period of his entire career as he rushed to capture scenes that, he said, changed more dramatically with the seasons than did those of California. "You don't retire doing this," he told the BBC in his broad Yorkshire accent when asked about his unflagging energy. "You just do it until you fall over."

The former enfant terrible of British art, a cigarette almost always in his hand, never stopped trying new techniques. He used faxes to share his work and then iPads to produce it. His Yorkshire paintings led to a stained-glass window for Westminster Abbey, in central London. In 2018, Hockney bought a farmhouse in Normandy, in northern France, and turned his eye to the fields and flowers of his garden there. The 90-metre-long "A Year in Normandie" frieze was inspired by the nearly 1,000-year-old Bayeux Tapestry. Hockney's work ethic — instilled in him from getting up daily at 6 o'clock to work in hospitals for two years, when he refused to do his military service in the army — barely waned in his later years. "I tend to think that you should work every day," he said. "And I do."

## Tech layoffs fuel massive surge in AI and GenAI upskilling programs

Hyderabad: With layoffs sweeping across the IT and Financial tech sector as companies increasingly shift towards AI-driven automation into their operations, the focus now shifted to skilling and upskilling in artificial intelligence and GenAI. In response to the situation, the educational institutions and edu-tech companies have come up with programmes that help students and professionals secure their future. The International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) — Hyderabad, in association with the TalentSprint, is offering a PG certificate programme in AI and ML. This programme is aimed to empower careers of the mid to senior level professionals.

Bridge module, programming, math foundations, and classical algorithms, deep learning, advanced deep learning, generative AI and agentic systems, experiential learning and industry hackathons are part of the curriculum. For registration and more details, visit the link <https://talentsprint.com/>. The IIT Guwahati has also launched a unique MTech. degree program in Robotics and Artificial intelligence, designed for both fresh graduates and working professionals aiming to enhance their skills on AI-driven robotics systems.

## Kangana Ranaut explains backlash against Ranveer Singh after Dhurandhar: 'Pakistan prem hai'



had faced similar criticism, she said: "Main yahi kehna chahti hoon ki, ek toh industry jo hai, you know, a bit of... inme hai thoda Pakistan prem hai. Adhiktar filmein toh hume Pakistan prem hi sikhate hain na. Abhi tak sikhate aayi hain." (What I want to say is that in the industry there is some love for Pakistan among many people here. Most films have, in a way, taught us to sympathise with or admire Pakistan. That's what they have been doing for years.) Referring to Dhurandhar, she added, "Jab ek aisi film aati hai, jo hume Pakistan ka asli chehra dikhati hai... toh inko phir dard hota hai ki humne jo aaj tak kiya uska kya value." (When a film comes along that shows Pakistan's real face, then some people feel uncomfortable. They start wondering what value remains in everything they have been doing and promoting all these years.)

Earlier, while reacting to reports that Ranveer had been banned by the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE), Kangana said she could relate to the situation, having faced similar challenges throughout her own career. "Yeah, of course. I was the first one to be banned. They put cases on me. They tried to frame me legally. They tried to put me in jail," she told Fever FM. Recalling her own experiences, she added, "At one point, I had so many cases on me that my lawyer was attending to all these dates. It's peshiyan hi peshiyan (hearing after hearing). And after that, I was banned by the media. It was a big ban by the media." Kangana talks nonsense. However, Kangana's remarks drew a sharp response from FWICE chief advisor Ashoke Pandit, who addressed the issue during a press conference. "A lot of people in the industry have started abusing us. Yesterday, Kangana also said something. They are not understanding the whole issue, and people are just commenting. Kangana also said that even I have been banned by the industry. I said, 'You talk nonsense, that's why I banned you.' I don't care. There is a big issue concerning the industry here. You don't even know the issue. You are just saying things. We are not against Ranveer. We are talking about what has happened."

Kangana Ranaut has once again come out in support of Ranveer Singh, who has been at the centre of controversy following his alleged exit from Don 3 just before the film was scheduled to begin shooting. Kangana, who had previously spoken in the actor's defence, has now shared her views on why she believes Ranveer has been singled out and targeted in the aftermath of the massive success of the Dhurandhar franchise. 'There is some love for Pakistan'

In an interview with News18, Kangana was asked why Ranveer had suddenly become a target. Initially brushing aside the question, she replied, "You should ask him that. How would I know?" However, when reminded that she too

## Kriti Sanon's family sells four Mumbai apartments for Rs 8.88 cr, makes 107% profit



Actress Kriti Sanon, along with her sister Nupur Sanon and mother Geeta Sanon, recently sold four residential apartments in Mumbai's Andheri West, earning a capital appreciation of over 100 percent on their investment. According to property registration documents reviewed by Square Yards through the website of the Inspector General of Registration, Maharashtra, all four transactions were reg-

istered in April 2026. The apartments are located in Raheja Classique, a premium residential project in one of Mumbai's most sought-after neighbourhoods.

As per reports, Geeta purchased two of the apartments in July 2013 for Rs 1.40 crore. Four years later, in June 2017, Kriti and Nupur acquired the remaining two units for Rs 2.90 crore. After holding the properties for 13 and 9 years, respectively, the family sold all four apartments for a total of Rs 8.88 crore. Of the four units sold, two larger apartments were priced at Rs 3.23 crore each. Registration documents show that these apartments have a built-up area of 60.78 sq m (654.23 sq ft) and a carpet area of 50.63 sq m (545 sq ft). Each unit also comes with a dedicated parking space. The transactions attracted stamp duty of Rs 19.41 lakh and registration charges of Rs 30,000 each. The remaining two apartments were sold for Rs 1.21 crore each. These units have a built-up area of 22.86 sq m (246.06 sq ft) and a carpet area of 19.05 sq m (205 sq ft). Both transactions involved stamp duty payments of Rs 7.29 lakh and registration charges of Rs 30,000 per unit. In total, the Sanon family had invested Rs 4.30 crore in the four properties and realised approximately Rs 8.88 crore from the sale, generating a profit of nearly Rs 4.58 crore—an impres-

## Salman Khan moves Delhi HC against Kala Hiran, seeks stay on teaser and film release



Bollywood actor Salman Khan has approached the Delhi High Court seeking interim relief against the makers of the film Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legacy, alleging that the project unlawfully exploits his personality rights and could adversely affect his reputation as well as ongoing judicial proceedings connected to the 1998 blackbuck hunting case. An application under Order XXXIX Rules 1 and 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure has been filed in an already pending commercial suit before the High Court, seeking an ad-interim injunction restraining the film's producer Amit Jani, Jani FireFox Films, director Bharat Shrinat, Akshay Pandey and other persons associated with the project from producing, promoting, distributing, exhibiting, streaming or releasing the film pending adjudication of the suit.

According to the plea, the film and its promotional material are allegedly inspired by or based on events relating to the 1998 blackbuck hunting case involving Salman Khan. The actor contends that although his name may not be expressly used, the film's posters, promotional content and public statements by those associated with the project make him readily identifiable to viewers.

The petition states that a poster released in May 2026 depicts a character bearing an alleged resemblance to Salman Khan and wearing a bracelet resembling the actor's widely recognised blue bracelet, which the plea claims has become uniquely associated with him in public imagination. The application further alleges that the character is shown holding a firearm, despite Khan having been acquitted in proceedings under the Arms Act, 1959, thereby creating what the actor describes as a misleading narrative. Khan has submitted that the film's storyline appears to draw upon matters that remain the subject of ongoing judicial proceedings before the Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court. The plea argues that dissemination of content based on such matters could prejudice pending proceedings and interfere with his right to a fair trial.

The application also refers to media reports and public statements attributed to producer Amit Jani in which the film was described as being inspired by the blackbuck case and the dispute involving gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. The

petition cites interviews, social media posts and promotional material allegedly linking the film to Salman Khan and contends that these materials are being used to generate publicity and commercial interest by drawing upon his public persona. According to the plea, Khan had earlier issued a legal notice dated April 24, 2026, calling upon those associated with the project to cease and desist from developing, producing and promoting the film. The application states that despite the notice, promotional activities allegedly continued, prompting the actor to seek urgent judicial intervention. The petition further alleges that certain social media posts made by Amit Jani after receipt of the legal notice sought to publicise the dispute and contained statements that the actor considers defamatory. The application claims that the continued circulation of promotional material and public statements is causing damage to Khan's reputation and goodwill. Salman Khan has argued that the film amounts to a violation of his personality and publicity rights, which were recognised and protected by the Delhi High Court in an earlier order dated November 11, 2025. According to the application, the film, its posters, character depictions and promotional content allegedly seek to capitalise on his fame and identity without authorisation for commercial gain. The actor has sought directions restraining the defendants from releasing, publishing, advertising or disseminating any teaser, trailer, poster or other promotional material relating to Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legacy, as well as an order restraining further development and production of the project until the dispute is finally decided. The respondents named in the proceedings include producer Amit Jani, Jani FireFox Films, director Bharat Shrinat, Akshay Pandey and other persons allegedly connected with the development and promotion of the film. Kala Hiran: The Battle for Legacy is being produced under the banner of Jani FireFox Films. The makers have previously maintained in public statements that the project is a creative work and have opposed attempts to restrain its release.

## Farmer files police complaint against Drishyam 3 makers, Mohanlal over use of car number

With the blockbuster success of director Jeethu Joseph's Drishyam 3, Mohanlal has added yet another feather to his cap, becoming the only Malayalam lead actor to have three movies in the Rs 200 crore club and the Top 5 in the list of the highest-grossing Malayalam films of all time. Drishyam 3 hits Rs 230 crore milestone globally. The movie has thus far grossed Rs 236.59 crore worldwide, according to industry tracker Sacnilk, making it the fourth-highest-grossing Malayalam film ever, trailing only behind Manjummel Boys (Rs 241.03 crore), L2: Empuraan (Rs 266.81 crore), and Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra (Rs 303.86 crore). However, amid the success, Drishyam 3 has found itself embroiled in a controversy after a cardamom farmer accused the makers of using his actual vehicle registration

## Director Buchi Babu Sana admits Peddi trailer cut was a mistake: 'It was just too much'



Director Buchi Babu Sana has admitted that the trailer for the Ram Charan-starrer Peddi, released on June 4, was poorly cut and damaged the film's prospects before a single ticket was sold. In a post-release interview, he said as too much was packed into one scene, it did not represent the film accurately, and it gave early detractors the ammunition they needed. In the interview, Jagapathi Babu sat across Buchi Babu and described what the days leading up to and after the release felt like from the inside. "There was so much negativity. Even the people who wanted it guaranteed it wouldn't happen. I was disappointed. I thought it wouldn't meet my expectations at the start," he said. Talking about the trailer cut, the director said, "In the trailer, too many things were packed into one scene, it was just too much. We just can't afford such things with big movies." Buchi Babu Sana also credited individual content creators for driving that turnaround more than any organised campaign. "Lots of people are giving reviews. Some have followers in the hundreds of thousands, like 500k, 600k, even a million. When they give a review, they put the phone down and in-

stead of just talking about it on the side, they post reels or video clips. They're giving personal reviews, and that word-of-mouth is really working."

Talk after Peddi's release Post the release of Peddi, the film courted controversy over the sexualisation of Janhvi Kapoor's character Achhiyamma. Viewers also called out sequences involving non-consensual physical contact framed as romance. Director Buchi Babu Sana responded publicly, clarifying that the intention was never to objectify or disrespect any female character. He wrote on X, "As a filmmaker, I believe cinema should entertain, inspire, and connect with audiences. It should never make anyone feel uncomfortable or disrespected. We have heard the feedback regarding certain scenes in Peddi and have taken it seriously." As a filmmaker, I believe cinema should entertain, inspire, and connect with audiences. It should never make anyone feel uncomfortable or disrespected. We have heard the feedback regarding certain scenes in Peddi and have taken it seriously. Despite the trailer damage and the controversy, the film began to find its footing by day two. Buchi Babu described the shift. "By the end of the day, if you look at the reviews or reactions on the first, second, third day, they're turning positive," he said, adding, "Now the audience is going, families are going, and they're saying the movie is really good." Directed by Buchi Babu Sana and produced by Mythri Movie Makers, Sukumar Writings, and Vriddhi Cinemas, Peddi is a sports action drama set in 1980s rural Andhra Pradesh, with a budget of Rs 350 crore and music composed by AR Rahman. The film follows a spirited villager who unites his community through sports to defend their pride. Buchi Babu Sana made his directorial debut with Uppena in 2021, which won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Telugu. Peddi marks only his second feature and his first collaboration with Ram Charan, making its commercial performance particularly significant for both of them.

## Deadpool cinematographer George Richmond injured in paragliding crash in Himachal Pradesh



Hollywood cinematographer George Richmond injured in paragliding crash in Himachal Pradesh Hollywood cinematographer George Richmond injured in paragliding crash in Himachal Pradesh George Richmond, the director of pho-

tography known for films such as Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore, Kingsman: The Golden Circle, Free Guy, Deadpool and Wolverine, was injured in paragliding accident in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district, officials said on Friday. He had to undergo a surgery and is now recovering.

Richmond sustained serious injuries on his neck in the June 8 accident and was rescued in a joint operation by the local authorities and the Indian Air Force. He underwent a surgery at a Chandigarh hospital on Thursday. "He has been kept under observation. His vitals are stable and he is recovering," Dr Vijay Goni, Prof and Head, Department of Orthopaedics at the institute, told Part of a group of five that was on a long-distance cross-country flying expedition from Kangra district's Bir Billing to the Deo Tibba region, he reportedly crashed in the rugged mountainous terrain. He was found during a search and rescue operation and later airlifted by an IAF chopper to Kullu. On June 9, he was referred to the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh where the surgery was done.

## Priya Sachdev remembers Sunjay Kapur on death anniversary, co-signs note with mother-in-law



On the first death anniversary of businessman Sunjay Kapur, his wife Priya Sachdev Kapur shared an emotional tribute in his memory. Taking to social media on June 12, Priya posted a note recalling the void left by his passing and remembering the life they built together. Sharing an in memoriam post, Priya wrote, "A year without you. Still the first thought in the morning and the last thought at night." The tribute featured a photograph of Sunjay alongside a message that celebrated his life and legacy. "A year has passed since you left, yet your presence continues to guide us every single day. You never believed in standing still. You embraced life with energy, curiosity and conviction, inspiring those around you to dream bigger, work harder and give more of themselves."

The note continued, "You remain deeply loved and forever remembered in the values you lived by, the lives you touched and the love you gave so generously. Your love remains our strength. Your memory remains our blessing." The message was signed by "Mrs. Rani Kapur and Mrs. Priya Kapur & Family." Rani and Priya have been embroiled in a legal dispute over Sunjay's Rs 30,000 crore estate. The dispute began soon after Sunjay's death. Sunjay Kapur, the chairman of auto components company Sona Comstar and former husband of actor Karisma Kapoor, died in London on June 12, 2025, while playing polo. He was 53. Initial

reports suggested that he suffered a cardiac arrest, while other accounts pointed to the possibility of an anaphylactic shock. His mother, Rani Kapur, had also raised concerns and hinted at a possible "transnational conspiracy" behind his death. However, British medical authorities later concluded in August that he had died of natural causes. At the time of his death, Sunjay was married to Priya Sachdev Kapur. The couple, who tied the knot in 2017, shared a son, Azarias Kapur. Priya and Sunjay also raised Safira Chatwal, Priya's daughter from her previous marriage to American hotelier and actor Vikram Chatwal. Priya and Vikram divorced in 2011. A former model and Delhi-based socialite, Priya is the daughter of businessman Ashok Sachdev. She studied business management at the London School of Economics and also appeared in Yash Raj Films' 2005 release Neal 'n' Nikki. Before his marriages to Karisma Kapoor and Priya Sachdev Kapur, Sunjay was married to fashion designer and entrepreneur Nandita Mahtani. In the months following Sunjay Kapur's death, a legal battle erupted over his estate, which is estimated to be worth around Rs 30,000 crore. The dispute involves Sunjay's wife, Priya Sachdev Kapur, his children from his marriage to Karisma Kapoor — Samaira and Kiaan Kapoor — and his mother, Rani Kapur. At the heart of the case is a will submitted by Priya Kapur, which she claims reflects Sunjay's final wishes. However, the document has been challenged by both Samaira and Kiaan, as well as Rani Kapur, who have questioned its authenticity. The children have alleged that the will is forged and have further claimed that an incomplete list of Sunjay's assets was submitted, with several high-value holdings allegedly omitted. As Class-I heirs, Samaira and Kiaan are seeking their share of the late businessman's movable and immovable assets. Last month, the Delhi High Court directed that Sunjay Kapur's assets be preserved while the dispute is being adjudicated. The court restrained Priya Kapur from selling any assets and ordered that the businessman's bank accounts should not be operated until further orders. The court also observed that the responsibility to dispel doubts surrounding the will rests with Priya Kapur. It noted that the children had established a prima facie case and warned that failing to preserve the assets could result in injustice if the will is ultimately found to be invalid.

## Why was Tunisia's Hannibal Mejbri compared to David Beckham?



GNS News Agency, June 18

The Manchester United dream didn't quite come through the first time around for Hannibal Mejbri, given the despairing state the club was in during his 2020-2024 stay at their academy. But the Paris-born Tunisian wunderkid gathered enough testimonials to create a buzz around his game. Now signed with Burnley in EFL, Hannibal, the 23-year-old, will travel to his second World Cup with an enhanced reputation. Tunisia beat France 1-0 at the last World Cup – to no material consequence as they exited finishing third, with a match he didn't play in. But Hannibal is all the rage this time. The half foot Afro from Man Utd U23 days is replaced by braids, but the words of Nicky Butt remain relevant.

"Hannibal (Mejbri)'s a leader. The way he plays his football is 100mph, he's non-stop running up and down," Butt described to Manchester Evening News. "Leaders are always looked at like a Roy Keane, a Steve Bruce, a Bryan

Robson, those kind of verbal, real aggression, real leaders," he would say, before dropping the comparison with David Beckham. "And then you've got leaders like Paul Scholes or David Beckham or Ryan Giggs, who's quiet but really leads by example of how they play and how they work hard." Hannibal had been a bright spark in a 4-0 loss to Liverpool circa 2022 when Roy Keane lamented lack of guts in United, and also debuted coming on as sub in the 2-1 win at Wolves on the final day of the Premier League season. But he never quite settled in at the club, opting to go to Burnley.

It was around the same time that Tunisia made a move, and persuaded him to switch allegiance from France, where he was born. Manchester Evening News reported that his decision was greeted with national celebrations in Tunisia. The unveiling had a palace front like stage erected to showcase their catch after he played for France U16 and U17. All of Barcelona, PSG and Spurs had shown interest before he joined Manchester United in August 2019 from Monaco, and it was a big day for Tunisia to snare him ahead of France. At Hannibal's Tunisia unveiling, dignitaries and journalists waited in the crowd at an auditorium as his entry was given a musical countdown. "After the tension built up, Mejbri finally stepped onto a stage, surrounded by strobe lighting and bursts of flames," Evening News reported. The stage had been set by his Manchester United teachers way before when his composure on the ball was compared to David Beckham. Tunisia became the first country to qualify for the World Cup without conceding a single goal owing to the physicality of their defense. They will hope Hannibal scores up front.

## Curacao – blue curacao mixer, FIFA debut and a teetotaler coach in Dick Advocaat

GNS News Agency, June 18

It's a heady cocktail, goes the cliché. But Curacao, in the former Dutch West Indies Company account books, with fewer than 2 lac people, has made the World Cup the first time. Curacao will now forever be known for its heroic football team. But well before that, Blue curacao liqueur that distinctive blue mixer used to rustle up Blue lagoon or Blue Hawaii, owed its origins to a bitter orange that took a liking only to this unique island. Significantly, the laranja citrus fruit had skin-deep value. The flesh was too bitter and cannot be eaten, but the peel could be dried for an aromatic orange oil extracted by — Dutch distillery Bols company. This was turned to liqueur, called 'cream of the sky.' The blue color was added — solely for effect. It was easily the first time you might've heard the name Curacao.

The football team had a different Dutch connection. It is coached by Holland's Dick Advocaat now on his 28th international football team at age 78. He has coached as much as the lifetime of some of the best football fans. Prior to Curacao, he helmed Iraq, Netherlands, Serbia, Russia, Belgium, South Korea, UAE besides club teams across Holland, Russia, Turkey, Belgium, Serbia and rest of Balkans. He is the oldest coach at this 2006 edition. The team with Juninho & Leandro Bacuna brothers, Chong and Martha come from the smallest participant — a Caribbean islands off Venezuela coast. Tahiti Chong who's been at Manchester United has the best hairdo at the World Cup.

Advocaat who coached Netherlands twice has extended his stewardship to the constituent country after Dutch Antilles dissolved in 2010, making it the newest nation too. The orange liquid, later dyed blue, is called Papiamentu, same as the language spoken. Patrick Kluyvert, Guus Hiddink have all served stints tending to this tiny ambitious nation. They have the second lowest rank of 82 after New Zealand's 85. Willemstaad is the capital and its distillery sounds like a rousing KKR anthem — chobolobo.

Advocaat had a break in his stint to tend to his ailing daughter, and returned subsequently. Back then he was quoted as Sky Sports as saying, "I've always said that family



comes before football. This is therefore a natural decision. But that doesn't change the fact that I will miss Curacao, the people there, and my colleagues very much. "I consider qualifying the smallest country in the world for the World Cup one of the highlights of my career. I'm proud of my players, staff, and the board members who believed in us." Curacao have beaten Barbados, Bermuda, Jamaica, Aruba, St Lucia, and hammered Haiti 5-1 in qualification. However they lost friendlies to China, Australia and Scotland. Advocaat returned in May at the Scotland friendly, and told Guardian, "I don't care because I don't feel that age. I have definitely changed a lot. There are things that normally under me would not be possible that are possible. That has to do with the squad — they are paid amateurs and you can see it. You have to change sometimes. At the highest level you cannot change; you have to be sharp and clear so that everybody knows what they have to do. But we did what we had to do to become members of this World Cup." On their underdog status he added to Guardian, "We are not the favourites, we know this when we start. But people who aren't favourites can surprise. Today, you can even go on (to the next round) with two or three points." Germany might be a tad difficult though in their opener. Beyond the football, there's something to chuckle in blue Curacao alongside an Advocaat (a boozy Dutch alcohol made of egg yolk, sugar, brandy vanilla and nutmeg).

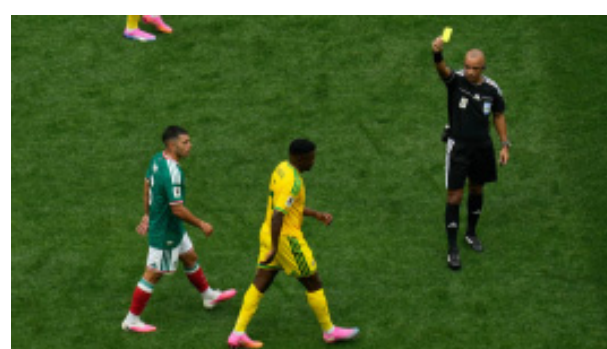
## World Cup opener referee who England branded a 'cheat' hands out 3 red cards

GNS News Agency, June 18

Someone, in England, in the winter of 2022, sat down and rewrote Wilton Sampaio's Wikipedia page. The entry was changed to describe him as "a Brazilian cheat" who had "lost his guide dog." A note was added: Please return dog if found, the dog has a match to ref. It was taken down within hours. The joke lasted a news cycle. The name stuck.

Last night at the Azteca — 80,000 people, the whole world watching, Shakira having just left the stage — Wilton Pereira Sampaio walked out of the tunnel for his third World Cup as a referee. By the time he walked back in, he had handed out three red cards, a World Cup opening match record, and had done something no referee had ever done at a World Cup: raised a microphone, for the first time, to explain a decision live. Players and commentators scratched their heads. Nobody was quite sure what he had said. The moment went viral before the match was over. He is 44 years old, from Teresina de Goiás, a small municipality in the northwest of Goiás state that most Brazilians would struggle to place on a map. He began refereeing at 15.

In 2012, he was voted the best referee in the Campeonato Brasileiro Série A — the highest recognition in Brazilian domestic football. It is the kind of distinction that tends to disappear from the conversation once a crowd has decided what it thinks of you. His brother Sávio is also a FIFA referee. Two brothers from a town nobody had heard of, both at the highest level. In 2018 in Russia, Sampaio was in the VAR bunker when the technology was introduced at a World Cup for the first time. He watched from screens as football rewrote its own laws, every decision now reversible, the game suddenly suspicious of itself. Four years later he was on the pitch in Qatar, refereeing four matches including a quarter-final. That quarter-final was England against France. England lost 2-1. What actually happened was more complicated than what followed: Sampaio awarded England one penalty, had a second reversed in their favour by VAR, and France scored both their goals from open play. Kane missed from the spot. Then came the noise. BBC Sport called his performance erratic. The Guardian said at times it looked as if he was guessing. Gary Neville called him "awful." Harry Maguire said the number of decisions he got wrong was "actually incredible." But in the logic of elimination, nuance is the first casualty. Wikipedia was edited. The



dog was lost. The name was made. FIFA watched the same match and came to a different conclusion. They gave him last night.

The game produced three red cards. The first was straightforward — a denial of a clear goalscoring opportunity, no argument. The second was contested: Zwane's raised hand near Alvarado's face, reviewed by VAR, Sampaio walked to the screen, watched it, and decided. The third, in stoppage time, went to a Mexican player — the home side, in a home stadium, the match already won. He was not refereeing for the crowd.

Brazilian referee Wilton Sampaio went to the VAR, confirmed the aggression, Then He Had To Announce it on Loudspeaker — for the first time in World Cup history — he raised a microphone to explain his decision live, to the stadium, to the players, to the world. The players on the pitch looked at each other. The commentators fell silent trying to follow. Nobody was quite sure what he had said. Here is the thing about that moment. Referees have spent a century being shouted at and saying nothing back. The microphone was a new idea — transparency, accountability, the game explaining itself as it happens. And the first man to try it, in the biggest game of the opening night, in a language not his own, in front of 80,000 people, stumbled. Not incompetence. The sheer difficulty of being asked, for the first time, to speak. In Brazil, while the match was still being played, the word going around was lendário — legendary. They meant it as a joke. They also meant it. England still thinks he lost his guide dog. He walked out at the Azteca anyway.

## Peru Police dress up as World Cup mascots to arrest suspected drug dealer



According to a short video shared by AFP, one of the officers is seen telling, "Thanks to the intelligence work carried out by the team, we were able to establish that the person we are about to arrest was a die-hard football fan, living and breathing World Cup fever. So we proceeded to disguise my green squad personnel as World Cup mascots to approach him without arousing any suspicion at the market area." In the visuals, the mascots are seen chasing the alleged drug dealer before they nab him on top of a building. For the World Cup there are three mascots for three host countries.

Peru isn't featuring in the tournament as they failed to qualify for the World Cup. They finished ninth out of 10 teams in the CONMEBOL, where seven teams make the World Cup finals. Despite having an easier path for qualification, with a record seven teams getting entry, they managed to get only 12 points from 18 matches, which was seven behind the team in the seventh spot. So far in the World Cup history, they have made the finals on five occasions, with their last being in 2018. Their best spell came in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when players like Teófilo Cubillas helped them qualify for the 1970, 1978, and 1982 tournaments, out of a possible four editions in that period. They had also taken part in the inaugural World Cup edition in 1930.

At the 1970 edition hosted in Mexico, Peru had their best run, making it to the quarterfinals, where they officially finished seventh. Eight years later when Argentina hosted the World Cup, they again made it to the quarterfinals. For the 2026 World Cup, the three mascots represent each of the three host countries. Maple, the Moose represents Canada. Zayu, the Jaguar, from the jungles of southern Mexico, embodies the rich heritage and vibrant spirit of the country. And finally, Clutch, the bald eagle reflects the USA, which hosts the majority of the matches in the tournament.

## Arsenal's Champions League miss – start of a Brazilian backline World Cup bond

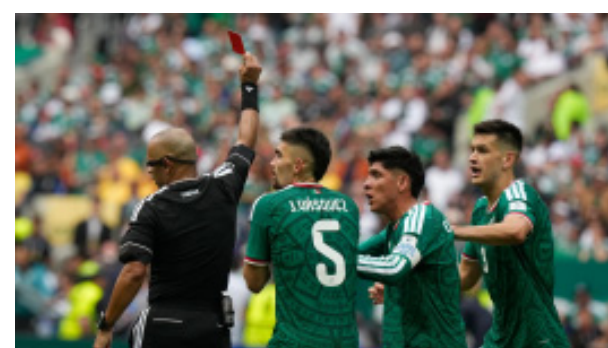
The European season had wound down with PSG securing their second straight Champions League title, and captain Marquinhos about to lift the trophy. But it came with his Brazil teammate Gabriel missing in a shootout, after going over the crossbar as Arsenal lost the final. It was reason enough for the victorious captain to pause and tend to the disappointment of his national team buddy. Brazil is all about creativit of Neymar, Vinicius Jr and Raphinha, and further still will depend on Matheus Cunha and Lucas Paqueta to score goals. But it is their lesser talked of defense that will determine how deep get go into the World Cup.

It's why the empathy shown by Marquinhos towards Gabriel when on opposing sides in club football's biggest final, remains significant. Marquinhos told TNT, "When that moment happened, the first thing I thought of was the time I missed the penalty in the World Cup (quarter-final shootout defeat to Croatia). I know how difficult that moment is for a player; it's a weight that really falls on your shoulders. There's no way around it; it's our responsibility, it's our moment there." The forlorn figure of Gabriel standing alone after the shootout immediately alerted Marquinhos to the need to throw an arm of consolation around him, given how tough it gets. Recalling the moment at Brazil's World Cup training camp this week and ahead of their Morocco clash, Marquinhos told reporters, "I was ready and prepared to celebrate. But when I started running, I saw him right in front of me and my team going past him, the same image as after my penalty (miss) in 2022." That's when he started thinking about his Brazil teammate, having empathy, because he had been through a moment like that and knew



the responsibility. He would urge Gabriel to zoom out of that one moment and look at the whole year. "I told (Gabriel) to stay strong, to hold his head high because he'd had an incredible season and an incredible match. I told him that, in my opinion, he was the best centre-back in the world this season. He simply didn't deserve to carry that burden because, of course, we all want to score penalties." Marquinhos wanted Gabriel to realise that his missed penalty should not become the defining conclusion of his season. The Brazilian would remind Gabriel of his centrality to Brazil's fortunes at the World Cup. "I told him that nothing about that moment would take away from the wonderful season he'd had and that we were going to need him very much. Those were my words to him, so that he could get over that moment as quickly as possible because we were going to need him very soon here."

## Three red cards on opening night: Is the 2026 FIFA World Cup about to get brutal?



The 2018 World Cup had four red cards. So did 2022. On Thursday night in Mexico City, the 2026 tournament nearly matched both in a single game. Three players were dismissed as Mexico beat South Africa 2-0 at the Azteca. Two for South Africa, one for Mexico. The most in any opening match in World Cup history.

Pierluigi Collina, who has run FIFA's refereeing operation since 2017, is widely regarded as the greatest referee of all time. In 105 matches as an official, he averaged fewer than 0.15 red cards per game. He was famously reluctant to reach for his pocket. The man who barely showed reds as a referee is now presiding over a system that showed three in one night. That is either coincidence or the consequence of something deliberate.

The new rules matter here. The 2026 World Cup is the first major tournament to use IFAB's landmark new laws, which Collina helped design. They include red cards for players covering their mouths during confrontations, five-second countdowns for throw-ins and goal-kicks, and broadened VAR powers. Collina's stated aim: "We are trying to clean the game as much as possible." VAR can now intervene if a player receives a red card that resulted from an incorrect yellow card decision, and in cases of mistaken identity. It can also step in during cases of incorrectly awarded corner kicks. The scope is significantly wider than before. Look at Thursday's three dismissals through that lens and they become less random. South

Africa's Sphephelo Sithole went first, for denying Brian Gutierrez a clear goalscoring opportunity. Gutierrez was through on goal, Sithole brought him down. Referee Wilton Sampaio produced the red without hesitation. No argument here, old rules or new.

The second was different. Substitute Themba Zwane was dismissed after a VAR review for what was ruled violent conduct — an arm raised near the face of Mexico's Roberto Alvarado in an off-the-ball tussle. Sampaio was sent to the pitchside monitor. What he saw there was ambiguous: an open hand, not a closed fist, contact difficult to confirm. Zwane looked bewildered. But under Collina's new framework — which specifically targets off-the-ball behaviour and confrontational conduct — this is precisely the kind of intervention the new VAR powers were designed to enable. Whether it was the right call is debatable. Whether it was deliberate policy is less so. Referee Wilton Sampaio, of Brazil, show the red card to South Africa's Themba Zwane. Referee Wilton Sampaio, of Brazil, show the red card to South Africa's Themba Zwane. (AP Photo) Mexico's Cesar Montes followed in stoppage time, dismissed for a foul on Khuliso Mudau on the edge of the box. A yellow seemed likely given Mudau's wide position. Sampaio produced the red. VAR reviewed and did not intervene — suggesting Mudau would probably have had a clear run on goal. On reflection, supportable. So: one clear decision, one contentious one that fits the new framework, one that VAR left standing. The comparison that looms is 2006. That tournament produced 28 red cards across 64 games — a record that still stands — and its signature moment was the Battle of Nuremberg, where Portugal beat the Netherlands in a last-16 tie that referee Valentin Ivanov turned into a card exhibition: four reds, 16 yellows, a match remembered more for its bookings than its football. But 2006's chaos was atmospheric, a product of physical play and permissive refereeing slowly corrected across the tournament. What Thursday suggested is something structurally different: not referees losing control, but a framework designed to find more red cards, finding them.

## Batting must lead the way for this Indian team as bowling is still developing, says Anjum Chopra

New Delhi: Former India captain Anjum Chopra has said batting must lead the way for the Indian team at the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup, stressing that the bowling unit is still developing and will need to dig deeper if the side is to go all the way to the trophy. India will enter the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup carrying the tag of ODI world champions, but their recent form has been patchy. Over the last six months, the side registered series wins at home against Sri Lanka and away against Australia, but stumbled in both recent overseas assignments against South Africa (4-1) and England (2-1). "That India has to understand or the players need to probably take their roles very much seriously. Not that they don't — they do, but what I understood is that whether it is batting or bowling leading the way, the team has to decide." In my view, batting leads

the way in this Indian team. If that has to happen, then there is no room for faltering of the batters because we are playing five specialist batters in this lineup and team. If five batters specializing only in one field are there, then there is no room for failures," Anjum told IANS in an exclusive conversation ahead of India starting their campaign against Pakistan on Sunday. From the three-match T20I series against England, India played a returning Yastika Bhatia at number three, which meant Jemimah Rodrigues and Harmanpreet Kaur went down to number four and five respectively. Though Yastika finished as the leading run-getter in the series with 119 runs, her strike rate of 126.79 was the lowest among the top five scorers. Anjum felt Yastika's move to number three was dictated by limited options in the middle order.