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Telangana to expand oil palm cultivation to 10 lakh acres

Khammam: The State government was aiming to expand oil palm cultivation to 10 lakh acres in Telangana in the coming days, said Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao

Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, he said that Telangana now holds the top position in the country in terms of oil palm cultivation. Construction of seven oil palm processing units was underway across the State, and the factory at Kalloor would commence operations this year.

Gaddar's daughter Vennela slams Pawan Kalyan's remarks on Telangana

Hyderabad: Telangana Samskruthika Sarathi chairperson and daughter of balladeer Gaddar, Vennela, strongly condemned Jana Sena chief and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's remarks questioning whether Telangana was anyone's "jagir" (fiefdom). Stating that the people of Telangana respect Pawan Kalyan as an actor and as an admirer of Gaddar, Vennela said his comments on Telangana Formation Day were unacceptable and hurt the sentiments of those who fought for statehood. She asserted that Telangana was not achieved through political lobbying but through decades of struggle and sacrifice by thousands of people.

20 killed, several injured in massive fire at Delhi's Malviya Nagar restaurant

New Delhi: At least 20 people were killed, and dozens were injured after a massive fire broke out at the multi-storied Lemon Green Restaurant in Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Wednesday morning, officials said.

So far, 37 people were rescued and taken to the hospital, while a search for others is underway, they added.

Officials said that some people tried to jump from the upper floors of the building to save their lives. The injured have been sent to a nearby hospital. Some of the injured are reported to be in critical condition.

Senior officials from Delhi Police, Delhi Fire Services and rescue services are present at the scene and monitoring the situation.

Upon receiving the information, ten fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the scene. The fire was soon brought under control. However, the damage was extensive.

Speaking to the reporters, SDM Jitender Kumar said, "I received information in the morning, and teams were instructed to reach the spot immediately. I myself was supposed to go for training, but I left it and came here. It has been found that a restaurant was operating in the basement of the building. The exact cause is not yet known, but most likely the fire started there. The investigation is still underway."

The search and rescue operations are still ongoing



at the site.

The rescue officials are trying to locate other people possibly trapped on different floors of the building.

"Strict action will be taken against those who are violating the rules. It is necessary to take strict action against them. I will also instruct the concerned department to ensure action is taken against those who are illegally carrying out such activities and running operations under the guise of permissions," SDM Kumar added.

Further details are awaited.

This comes a day after ten people were injured after a suspected LPG cylinder explosion led to the collapse of a building in Delhi's Mukundpur area on Tuesday morning.



Telangana, Germany's Thuringia sign MoU on tech, skills and startups

Hyderabad, June 3

The German state of Thuringia on Wednesday, June 3, signed an MoU with the Telangana government for cooperation in technology, skill training, startups, Life Sciences and other areas.

The agreement was signed when a high-level delegation led by Mario Voigt, Minister-President of German State of Thuringia met Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy here, an official release said.

Referring to Telangana as "a leading centre for progress and innovation in India", the Minister-President said the "impressive" success story of Telangana holds a special place in India-Germany partnership dynamics.

"We would like to partner with the successful state of Telangana and create a win-win situation for both sides," he said.

CM Reddy sought the support of Thuringia state leadership in reshaping the skilling curriculum under the state government's Young India Skills University (YISU), Advanced Technology Centres (ATCs), and Polytechnic institutes.

Responding to this, Voigt said a need-based, tailor-made skilling curriculum could be created for Telangana, in collaboration with Thuringia's industry and academia, it said.

The chief minister also explained that Telangana's workforce played a key role in the success of Silicon Valley and that a vast majority of top global executives hailed from Hyderabad.

He stated that the fast changing dynamics of AI demands a pivotal transformation in addressing skilling and training, especially training in languages like German.

He sought the support of Thuringia in creating a hub

KTR slams Pawan Kalyan, says no outsider can dictate terms to Telangana

Hyderabad, June 3

BRS working president KT Rama Rao had hit back at Jana Sena chief and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday, dismissing his remarks on Telangana as ill-informed and politically motivated. He asserted that Telangana was the fiefdom of its people and no outsider would be permitted to dictate terms to the State.

"Telangana belongs to its four crore people who bled, sacrificed, and fought for this land. The people who struggled for Telangana have every right to protect its identity and self-respect," he said. City & Local Guides

Speaking at the Meet the Press programme organised by the Press Club of Hyderabad on Wednesday, Rama Rao responded point-by-point to Pawan Kalyan's recent remarks, which triggered a political controversy between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. He said any attempt to belittle the sacrifices behind the Telangana movement would be firmly resisted.

At the same time, he stressed that Telangana remained welcoming to all. People from Andhra Pradesh and other States had lived, worked and invested in Telangana without facing discrimination even after bifurcation, he said. "States may be divided administratively, but people should continue to live together with mutual respect," he added.

Taking exception to Pawan Kalyan's observation that regionalism was more dangerous than terrorism, Rama Rao questioned whether the movement led by Potti Sriramulu for a separate Andhra State should also be viewed through the same lens. He alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was encouraging industries to move from Telangana and other States to Gujarat, and asked whether such actions amounted to economic regionalism.

Rama Rao also rejected suggestions that Telangana's regional identity could weaken national unity. Referring to comments about people might refuse to sing the national anthem or national song in future, he said Telangana had a long history of struggles against oppression and did not require lessons in patriotism.

for German language training in Hyderabad. "Germany's industry ecosystem could provide a roadmap of skilling requirements and Telangana's Young India Skills University would adapt to the needs," he said.

The CM explained his vision to attract Fortune 500 companies to 'Bharat Future City', being developed by the state government on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

Asserting that Hyderabad offers a world-class environment for businesses, he recalled that the city had hosted participants from over 100 countries during Miss World 2025 at a time when there were geopolitical tensions in the region.

"We are ready to partner with Thuringia and looking forward to furthering collaboration in skilling and investment opportunities," the CM said.

Voigt said an official visit of an exclusive German group of semiconductor companies to Telangana could be planned to assess opportunities and explore matchmaking on both sides.

"We are more than willing to host industrial groups and cater to the business needs of Telangana," the release quoted him as saying.

Telangana IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu welcomed the suggestion and declared that a wide range of top global semiconductor companies have presence in Hyderabad.

"We are also advancing towards the area of semiconductor manufacturing soon," he said.

Telangana Labour Minister G Vivek Venkataswamy explained that the state-run TOMCOM (Telangana Overseas Manpower Company) is already making significant progress in German language training, the release added.



"This land fought against the Nizam. Communists marched on this soil. Sacrifice and struggle are not new to Telangana. We do not need lessons on patriotism from Pawan Kalyan," he said.

While expressing respect for Pawan Kalyan as Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and admiration for him as an actor, Rama Rao said no outsider could claim authority over Telangana. "We will welcome him as a guest, but nobody can sit in our Secretariat and dictate terms on matters concerning Telangana," he said.

Questioning claims that Jana Sena was being prevented from functioning in Telangana, Rama Rao pointed out that the party had contested the 2023 Assembly elections and recently fielded candidates in municipal polls. "Who is stopping you? Stop creating an imaginary grievance and presenting it as an attack on democracy," he remarked. Hyderabad City Guide

The former Minister also criticised Pawan Kalyan's reservations over the formation of Telangana, stating that those unhappy with the State's creation had no reason to hold rallies on Telangana Formation Day. He said if permission for a meeting was denied, the issue should be taken up with the Congress government.

"Telangana was not achieved casually. Thousands sacrificed their lives for it. Anyone speaking about Telangana must understand and respect its history, culture, aspirations and sacrifices," he said.

Telangana to implement revised land values from June 5: Ponguleti

Hyderabad, June 3

Telangana Minister for Revenue and Housing Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, on Wednesday, June 3, said that revised land values will be implemented from June 5, following a cabinet decision to adjust land prices to reflect market conditions.

He said the decision was taken after conducting an extensive study based on the report given by financial expert Arvind Subramaniam.

The new values were determined scientifically after examining the development potential of the areas, growth rate, recent land auctions, market conditions, demand, new roads, growth corridors, Outer Ring Road (ORR), Regional Ring Road (RRR), industrial development, and infrastructure expansion, Srinivasa Reddy said.

"In 2021-22, the then Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) government had increased land prices twice in six months and increased registration charges from 6 per cent to 7.5 per cent without any comprehensive exercise and using unscientific methods," he alleged.

These revisions were carried out without any field study, leading to government-assigned values at much lower or higher than the market value, the minister said.

He said that many problems were arising in land



transactions due to the huge gap between the actual market prices and the government values, and to rectify this, a revision of market values has been undertaken in all 144 Sub Registrar Offices (SROs) in the state.

The minister said that no increase has been proposed in areas where market values are already high. On the other hand, minimum basic rates have been determined for agricultural lands, plots, and flats in the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), CURE area, and other areas of the state, depending on the level of development.



Former MP Madhu Yaskhi Goud's Wife Injured in US Car Crash

Hyderabad, June 3

Dr. Suchi Yaskhi, a senior physician and the wife of former Member of Parliament (MP) Madhu Yaskhi Goud, sustained severe injuries in a major road accident in the United States. According to medical professionals, she suffered multiple rib fractures in the crash.

The incident took place while the family was returning from Boston to New York after enrolling their daughter, Dr. Gagana Yaskhi, into her MD post-graduate medical course. Due to an excess of luggage, Madhu Yaskhi Goud and Dr. Suchi Yaskhi had decided to travel in two separate vehicles.

While en route, torrential rainfall caused the vehicle carrying Dr. Suchi to lose traction. The car spun out of control and overturned multiple times on the slick highway.

Dr. Suchi was rushed to a nearby medical facility, where she is currently undergoing treatment. Doctors have stated that while her injuries—including the fractured ribs—are serious, her condition is stable, and she is progressively recovering. The unfortunate accident occurred just a day before the couple was scheduled to fly back to India.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Only collective, sustained efforts can work

THE drug crisis has been brewing for years in Jammu and Kashmir. Why it has taken so long to enforce a crackdown of this magnitude is worrisome. That said, better late than never seems an apt counter to criticism over why such action now. Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, who is touring all 20 districts of the UT, has been spearheading the 100-day 'Nasha-Mukt J&K March'. In south Kashmir's Kulgam district, the campaign received endorsement from unlikely quarters, a splinter group of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami. Beyond the optics, it sent a message that's hard to miss. Ideological differences aside, the fight against drug addiction is a lost cause without collective and sustained efforts. The daily update on the arrest of alleged smugglers and peddlers confirms how widespread the drug menace is. Cancellation of driving licences, revocation of passports, claims of breaking the back of the narco-terror networks — the immediate outcomes of a clampdown are far too many. It gives an impression of a victory of sorts, even if illusory. Two metrics truly matter. The number of kingpins taken to task, and the situation on the ground the day after the authorities lower the tempo. Punjab is a case study on how even well-thought-of interventions in the fight against drugs can fall way short. The complexities involved call for comprehensive year-round strategies, not occasional operations. The key piece of the puzzle is gauging and then trying to address the underlying causes of addiction, be it unemployment, disillusionment, socio-economic inequalities, ready availability of drugs or peer pressure. Any laxity in the recovery and rehabilitation programmes, and the gains are lost. Addiction is not playful indulgence. It's a disease with no easy remedies. If choking the drug supply lines is critical, so is curbing the craving.

Excel Further in Spiritual and Social Service : Rahamathulla Mohammed



“---Bakhtiyar Biyabani's Birthday Celebrated with Grandeur” Kazipet Dargah, June 3 (Indian Chronicle) : A special programme was organised on Wednesday to mark the birthday celebrations of Mr. Bakhtiyar Biyabani, son of Mr. Khuro Pasha, the Peethadhipathi of the renowned Hazrat Syed Shah Afzal Biyabani Dargah in Kazipet. “On the occasion, Hanumakonda District Congress Party Youth Leader Mr. Rahamathulla Mohammed met Bakhtiyar Biyabani, felicitated him with a traditional shawl, and extended his heartfelt birthday greetings. “Speaking at the event, Rahamathulla Mohammed lauded Bakhtiyar Biyabani's service-oriented outlook, humble nature, and commitment to social causes, describing him as an inspiration to the younger generation. He noted that his efforts to uphold the rich spiritual legacy of the Dargah while contributing to the welfare of society were highly commendable. “He wished Bakhtiyar Biyabani a long life blessed with good health, prosperity, happiness, and continued success. He expressed hope that he would achieve greater milestones, scale new heights in life, and play an even more active role in public service, thereby emerging as a guiding force for society. “Rahamathulla Mohammed further stated that the Dargah stands as a symbol of communal harmony and spiritual values. He emphasized the need for the younger generation to preserve and carry forward such sacred traditions for future generations. He also called upon people to work collectively towards promoting peace, brotherhood, and humanitarian values in society. “Later, the birthday celebrations were held in a cordial atmosphere, with a cake-cutting ceremony marking the occasion. Religious leaders, social activists, youth representatives, well-wishers, and admirers extended their greetings to Bakhtiyar Biyabani and wished him continued success in all his future endeavours. “Among those present were Dargah representatives, Congress Party leaders, youth activists, and several local dignitaries.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Extends Birthday Wishes to Former Minister Harish Rao



“UPPAL , JUNE 3 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): On the occasion of the birthday of senior BRS leader, former minister, and Siddipet MLA T. Harish Rao, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy met him on Wednesday, felicitated him warmly, and conveyed his heartfelt birthday wishes. “Speaking on the occasion, Lakshma Reddy wished Harish Rao a long, healthy, and prosperous life. He expressed hope that Harish Rao would continue to achieve greater heights, assume many more distinguished positions, and remain committed to public service. “Sangareddy MLA Chinta Prabhakar and other leaders also participated in the program.

Collector Haritha Stresses Punctuality During Surprise Inspections



Attendance registers reviewed; officials instructed to expedite canal and tank restoration works. “Indian Chronicle,

Asifabad, June 3: District Collector K. Haritha conducted surprise inspections of several government offices in the district headquarters on Wednesday. During the inspections, she visited the Irrigation Executive Engineer's Office and the Panchayat Raj Buildings Sub-Division Office and examined the staff attendance registers. “The Collector instructed employees to strictly adhere to office timings and maintain punctuality in the discharge of their duties. “Later, while reviewing the functioning of the Irrigation Department, Haritha directed officials to expedite the repair works of tanks and canals and ensure the uninterrupted supply of irrigation water to farmers. She emphasized the need to complete desilting works in canals at the earliest so that water reaches even the tail-end ayacut areas. “The Collector also instructed officials to complete repairs to canal sluices and maintain cleanliness in and around government office premises.

Plastic Use Poses Serious Threat to Environment: DFO Balamani

“Indian Chronicle, Asifabad, June 3: An awareness programme on the harmful effects of plastic usage and the importance of environmental conservation was conducted in Dubbaguda village of Sirpur (T) mandal as part of the Praja Palana – Pragathi Pranalka initiative. “Speaking on the occasion, District Forest Officer (DFO) C.H. Balamani said that the use of single-use plastic poses a serious threat to the environment, wildlife, and human health. She urged people to reduce plastic consumption and adopt eco-friendly alternatives such as cloth bags. “Forest Department officials Appayya, Srinivas, Praveen Kumar, and Mohan called upon villagers to act responsibly in keeping their surroundings clean and transforming their villages into plastic-free communities. “Forest Department staff and local residents participated in the programme. Villagers expressed their commitment to reducing plastic usage and extending full support to environmental protection initiatives.



Nutritious Diet for Enhanced Health—Complementing Sportsmanship: Lion Dr. Divi Ajith Kumar

“---Distribution of Nutritious Food to Boxing Trainees” Hasnarpary/Hanamkonda, June 3 (Indian Chronicle) : As part of their commitment to encouraging young sporting talent, the Hasnarpary Lions Club has been providing bananas and eggs daily to students participating in a boxing training camp that has been underway for the past 25 days. “Speaking on this occasion, Lion Dr. Divi Ajith Kumar emphasized that boxing is a sport demanding physical strength, agility, endurance, and mental concentration. He noted that, alongside rigorous training, a balanced and nutritious diet plays a pivotal role in enabling athletes to excel in this sport. “He explained that bananas are rich in carbohydrates, potassium, Vitamin B6, and fiber, serving as a natural source of energy. These provide instant energy during training sessions, help reduce muscle fatigue, and enhance overall physical performance. In particular, potassium contributes significantly to muscle function, aiding in the prevention of muscle cramps and stiffness. “Highlighting the importance of eggs, Dr. Ajith Kumar stated that they are one of the best sources of high-quality protein, containing all the essential amino acids necessary for muscle growth and recovery. Regular consumption of eggs not only



aids in repairing muscles fatigued during rigorous training but also provides essential vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats necessary for physical development. “He further stated that providing bananas and eggs to boxing trainees improves their health, energy, endurance, and athletic performance, thereby laying a strong foundation for their future success in sports. He added that such initiatives play a pivotal role in nurturing a generation of healthy, disciplined, and self-confident young athletes. “Boxing coach Seelam Narendra, along with Lions Club members Inumula Krupakar, Shyam Sundar, Thota Sampath, Nalla Kiran, Goparaju Yadagiri, and others, attended this event.

Rare Guinness World Record Achievement by a Mother and Her Two Daughters



“---International Recognition for Exceptional Keyboard Performance” The Jeevana Family Brings Pride to Hanumakonda “Hanumakonda, June 3 (Indian Chronicle): A mother and her two daughters from Hanumakonda have brought immense pride to their district and state by showcasing their extraordinary musical talent on the global stage, securing a prestigious place in the Guinness World Records. Their remarkable achievement in keyboard performance has earned them international recognition and widespread acclaim. “The feat was accomplished at the prestigious Guinness Achievers Meet, held recently at Victory Auditorium in Gachibowli, Hyderabad. Conducted under the supervision of Guinness World Records officials, the event witnessed the participation of approximately 2,000 keyboard artists from 22 countries, who demonstrated their musical excellence through a continuous one-hour performance. “Among the participants, 777 performers who exhibited exceptional skill and dedication were officially recognized as Guinness World Record holders. Pastor Augustine Dandingi, founder of an organization dedicated to promoting music education, presented certificates to the achievers and extended his congratulations on their remarkable accomplishment. “Notably, BSNL employee Ms. Jeevana Kalakota from Hanumakonda, along with her



daughters Sarah Doosman Kanagala and Nissy Doosman Kanagala, secured their place among the distinguished record holders. It is a rare and extraordinary achievement for three members of the same family to simultaneously receive Guinness World Record recognition. “Sarah Doosman Kanagala is currently studying in Class VIII, while Nissy Doosman Kanagala is a Class VI student at St. Gabriel's High School. Achieving such recognition at a young age has drawn widespread appreciation from various sections of society. “The young achievers, along with their parents Jeevana and Reuben Doosman, were congratulated by community elders, academicians, teachers, and well-wishers.

Many also praised the school management and faculty for identifying, nurturing, and refining the students' musical talents, enabling them to achieve international recognition. “Observers noted that this success serves as an inspiration for aspiring young musicians and students. They expressed confidence that the trio will continue to achieve greater milestones at national and international levels in the coming years. The rare accomplishment has brought significant recognition to Hanumakonda, with locals expressing immense pride and joy over the family's achievement.

The process of purchasing and loading of grain should be expedited:

- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanti (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle... June 3):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanti said that the process of purchasing and loading of grain should be expedited. On Wednesday, District Collector Anurag Jayanti inspected the Vasavi Rice Mill in Nagaram, Valigonda Mandal, along with Revenue Additional Collector Venka Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said. He inquired about how many grain-loaded lorries are currently in the rice mill. The lorries

that come with the load should be unloaded at any time. He asked how many lorries are coming to the mill with a load of grain every day. He asked how long it takes to unload each lorry and asked the porters to unload it as soon as they arrive. They should inquire whether there are enough porters in the mill to unload the grain and if there are not enough porters, they should hire more people and import the grain. “They said that under no circumstances should the vehicles that come with a load of grain be allowed to stop at the mills.

Netradyne, NHEV Partner to Boost India's E-Highway Network



“Hyderabad, June 03 (Indian Chronicle): In a significant move to enhance the safety and efficiency of long-distance electric vehicle (EV) transportation in India, AI-powered fleet safety technology company Netradyne has entered into a strategic partnership with NHEV (National Highways for Electric Vehicles). Announcing the collaboration on Wednesday, NHEV Program Director Abhijit Sinha, along with Netradyne Senior Vice President (EMEA & APAC Business) Durgadutt Nedungadi, said that Netradyne's AI-driven solutions will be deployed across commercial EVs operating on NHEV corridors. The partnership aims to enable real-time vehicle tracking, driver behavior analysis, predictive risk detection, and vehicle maintenance monitoring. Officials said the initiative will strengthen operational safety, improve fleet performance, and support the rapid expansion of India's electric mobility ecosystem along e-highways.

Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Inspects 70 Lakh CC Road Works Near Chilkhanagar Hanuman Temple – Chilkhanagar Division No. 1 in Development Across Uppal Constituency



“UPPAL , JUNE 3 (INDIAN CHRONICAL): Former Chilkhanagar Division Corporator and GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj inspected the ongoing CC road construction works being undertaken at a cost of approximately ₹70 lakh in the street adjacent to the Hanuman Temple in Chilkhanagar Division. She was accompanied by GHMC officials and BRS party leaders during the inspection. “Speaking on the occasion, Geetha Praveen stated that the development of Chilkhanagar Division is being carried out in a planned manner. She said that the division had first completed the construction of new sewerage pipelines and water supply lines, and is now moving forward with the completion of CC road works. “She emphasized that GHMC officials should continuously monitor the road construction process and directed the contractor to strictly adhere to quality standards while ensuring that residents do not face inconvenience during the execution of the works. “Among those present were Work Inspector Kedar, BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, senior leaders Eddula Kondal Reddy, Jaladi Mohan, Ravinder Goud, Srisailam, Masa Shekhar, Mohammed, Sundar, Jilla Praveen, Naveen Goud, along with local residents, including a large number of women who participated in the programme.

Infrastructure development work in government schools should be completed within the stipulated time

:- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanti (Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau..Indian Chronicle... June 3):- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanti has instructed the concerned officials to complete the infrastructure development work in government schools within the stipulated time. On Wednesday, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) in Lothkunta village of Valigonda mandal was inspected along with the District Collector and Revenue Additional Collector Venka Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said...In the backdrop of the reopening of schools on June 12, the development work being carried out in KGBV was inspected. He inquired from the concerned officials about the arrangements of classrooms, hostels, drinking water, sanitation, toilets and other facilities. He instructed the concerned officials to complete all the pending development works by the time the school starts.

He suggested that steps be taken to ensure that all the necessary facilities are available to the students without any inconvenience. He said that the work should be completed within the stipulated time while maintaining the quality. He said that the government will take special initiative to provide a conducive environment for the education of the students. Education Officer Bikshapati, Panchayati Raj, R&B and other department officials participated in this program.

Review Unscientific Minimum Wage Hike: P. Suresh



Wanaparthy, correspondent June 3, (INDIA Chronicle) "Telangana Medical Contract Workers Union (AITUC) State Secretary "P. Suresh" urged the Telangana government to review the recently announced minimum wage hike, stating that it is not scientific or adequate to meet the basic needs of workers. He demanded that the minimum wage be increased to ₹26,000 per month. On Wednesday, separate meetings of sanitation, security, patient care and other contract workers were held at the Government General Hospital (GGH) and MCH Hospital in Wanaparthy district headquarters. "Addressing the workers, P. Suresh welcomed the Congress government's decision to revise minimum wages after a long wait of nearly 14 years following the formation of Telangana. However, he expressed concern that the revised wages are insufficient to meet the ris-

ing cost of living and the basic economic needs of workers. He demanded that the state government make public the recommendations submitted by the "Minimum Wages Advisory Board. According to him, the board had reportedly recommended minimum wages ranging from ₹20,250 for unskilled workers to ₹28,000 for skilled categories", depending on the level of expertise. He alleged that the government's final decision deviated from these recommendations and would continue to expose workers to economic hardship and labour exploitation. "Suresh said that workers and trade unions have been demanding a minimum wage of ₹26,000 for over a decade through various protests and struggles. He stated that the latest wage revision would not provide any significant benefit to workers. "He announced that a "seminar on minimum wages" will be held in Wanaparthy on June 5. The seminar will be attended by "M.D. Yusuf, Member of the Telangana Minimum Wages Board, "M. Narasimha", State General Secretary of AITUC, along with other distinguished guests and speakers. He appealed to workers to participate in large numbers and make the seminar a success. "Union leaders and workers including "Gandham Srinu, Narasimha, Lingam Shetty, Narendra, Anil, Ravi, Shyam, Shabad, Mahesh, Anjaneyulu, Srihari, Ashok, Anand, Kishore, Kalavathi, Indira, Parvathamma, Kavitha, Bhagyamma, Santosh, Manjula, Pentamma, Nani, Lakshmi, Prameela, Ramulamma and Swetha" participated in this program

Empowering Women Through Economic Self-Reliance: MP Dr. Kavaya Kadium



---Foundation Stone Laid for District Women Federation Petrol Pump"---Hanumakonda, June 3, (Indian Chronicle) : A foundation stone was laid for the construction of a District Women Federation Petrol Pump at Madikonda in Hanumakonda district, aimed at strengthening women's self-help groups and promoting economic empowerment. The project, estimated at ₹1.50 crore, is being undertaken under the supervision of DRDA and the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP). The foundation stone was laid by Warangal Member of Parliament Dr. Kavaya Kadium, along with local MLA K.R. Nagaraju. "Addressing a public meeting organized on the occasion at the Women's Complex in Madikonda, MP Dr. Kavaya Kadium stated that women's economic empowerment forms the strong foundation for overall societal development. She emphasized that the Congress government is committed to the upliftment and welfare of women at all levels. "She highlighted that through initiatives such as Indira Mahila Shakti canteens, women are being transformed not just into beneficiaries but into entrepreneurs and job creators, enabling them to achieve self-employment and financial independence. She remarked that when women are given opportunities, they excel in every field—be it business, industry, agriculture, or service sectors. "Dr. Kavaya expressed happiness over the establishment of a petrol pump under the management of women's self-help groups in Madikonda, stating that it would

soon become a matter of pride to say that a women-run petrol bunk operates in the region. "She further noted that women self-help groups are already successfully managing paddy procurement centers, IKP programmes, and initiatives in the solar energy sector. She emphasized that the government is actively promoting women into leadership roles and strengthening their participation in governance and economic activities. "Speaking about government initiatives under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, she said multiple programmes are being implemented to ensure financial independence for women and to enhance income-generating opportunities through self-help groups. The proposed petrol pump, she said, would not only provide a steady source of income but also serve as an inspiration for other women's groups. "She added that women are the backbone of both family and society, and their health and well-being are essential for a happy and stable household. She urged women to take special care of their health and assured that she would always remain accessible for their welfare and empowerment. She concluded by expressing her desire that women should continue to scale greater heights in all fields. "The programme was attended by Chairperson Inagala Venkataramireddy, District Collector Chahat Bajpai, DEDO Srinivas, BPCL MD Sudhir, senior leaders, IKP regional coordinators, CCs, and members of Self Help Groups (SHGs).

IntrCity SmartBus Launches 10-Point SafeBus Promise to Enhance Passenger Safety



"KEESARA, JUNE 3 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): intracity.com a leading technology-enabled intercity bus travel platform, has launched its comprehensive 10-Point #SafeBus Promise aimed at strengthening passenger safety and operational preparedness across long-distance bus services. According to the company, the initiative establishes a safety-first framework designed to set minimum safety standards and improve reliability in intercity mobility.

The framework has been developed around four key pillars — prevention, preparedness, monitoring, and emergency response — combining advanced technology with onboard safety infrastructure. Speaking on the launch, Manish Rathi said passenger safety remains central to the company's travel experience. He noted that the SafeBus Promise reflects the company's commitment to making intercity travel safer, smarter, and more dependable through robust operational protocols and technology-driven monitoring systems. The 10-point safety framework includes: Emergency exits and roof hatches Fire-retardant interior materials Fire extinguishers Emergency glass-breaking hammers CCTV surveillance and GPS-based tracking First-aid kits Dual-driver policy for long-distance routes Public address systems AI-powered driver monitoring Fire Detection and Suppression Systems (FDSS) Operating on more than 670 routes across 17 states, IntrCity SmartBus said the initiative is expected to standardise safety practices and boost passenger confidence in intercity bus travel across India. The company stated that the SafeBus Promise represents a significant step toward improving safety benchmarks and ensuring a more secure travel experience for passengers nationwide.

Thrilling Action Marks Day Two of Monsoon Regatta



"Hyderabad, June 03 (Indian Chronicle): The second day of the Monsoon Regatta National Ranking Sailing Championship witnessed intense and exciting competition at Hussain Sagar on Wednesday. Amid strong gusty winds, sailors displayed remarkable skill and determination across various categories. In the International 420 Mixed Class, the pair of Chandralekha Tattari and Dhanush Jakkula emerged as the frontrunners after winning two consecutive races. Badrinath Nirudu and Rishwintha Suchanakota continued to hold second place in the standings. In the 29er class, the duo of Vinod Dandu and Aravind Maloth took the lead on the leaderboard by winning two of the three races

conducted during the day. In the ILCA 4 Under-18 Boys category, Preet Siwal secured the top position, while Katyayani Kaushik maintained her dominance in the girls division. Meanwhile, the championship suffered a setback when top-seeded sailor Dikshita Komaravelli was forced to withdraw from the tournament after sustaining a shoulder injury when her boat capsized during the competition. The championship continues to deliver high-quality racing, with several categories still wide open as sailors battle for top honors.

Aneeth Repudi hopes to make a mark in US badminton circuit

Hyderabad: Aneeth Repudi, who figured among the national top 10 players in Indian badminton, is now making a mark on the United States badminton circuit.

Aneeth has been competing in a series of American badminton tournaments, including a commendable performance in the USD 150,000 prize-money Frisco Open in Texas.

Government's Goal is to Make One Crore Women Crorepatis: MLA K.R. Nagaraju



---Another Step Towards Women's Economic Empowerment"---Foundation Stone Laid for Women-Run Petrol Pump at Madikonda"---Madikonda/Hanumakonda, June 3 (Indian Chronicle) : As part of the Praja Palana-Pragathi Plan and the ongoing Women's Week celebrations at the Women's Complex in Madikonda, Hanumakonda district, the foundation stone for a women-managed petrol pump was laid on Wednesday. The programme was jointly inaugurated by Warangal MP Dr. Kavaya Kadium, District Collector Chahat Bajpai, KUDA Chairman Inagala Venkataramireddy, and other officials, along with Warangal (Wardhannapet) MLA and retired IPS officer K.R. Nagaraju. "Addressing the gathering, MLA K.R. Nagaraju stated that the primary objective of the people's government led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is to transform one crore women into crorepatis through sustained economic empowerment initiatives. He said the government is implementing focused strategies to strengthen women's financial independence and entrepreneurial capacity. "He highlighted that immediately after assuming office, the government introduced free RTC bus travel for women and has been launching several welfare schemes exclusively in the

name of women. He further noted that compared to previous administrations, significantly higher amounts of interest-free loans are being provided to women's self-help groups. "Responding to criticism over free bus travel, the MLA remarked that the government's vision extends beyond providing travel concessions, aiming instead to integrate women as stakeholders and partners in the RTC system, thereby empowering them as co-owners in the public transport sector."

Welcoming the establishment of a women-run petrol pump in Madikonda, he said it is a matter of pride and proof that women can achieve anything they set their minds to. He encouraged women to fully utilize government schemes and opportunities to strengthen their economic standing. "He further emphasized that true progress of families and society is possible only when women are educated and financially independent. Calling upon women to support the people's government in its welfare initiatives, he reiterated that women empowerment remains a key priority of governance. "The programme was attended by public representatives, Congress party leaders, workers, local residents, women beneficiaries, and government officials.

Grand Celebrations Mark Former Minister Harish Rao's Birthday;



Free Medical Camp, Dental Camp and Mega Blood Donation Drive Organized Under the Leadership of BRS Senior Leader Pittala Naresh"---UPPAL, JUNE 3 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): On the occasion of the birthday of former minister, Telangana movement leader and Siddipet MLA T. Harish Rao, a free medical camp, dental camp and mega blood donation drive were organized at Chilkanaagar Crossroads in Uppal Constituency under the leadership of BRS senior leader and Telangana movement activist Pittala Naresh Mudiraj. A large number of residents from Chilkanaagar Division participated in the program and availed themselves of the medical services provided at the camp. As part of the celebrations, BRS youth leaders and local

youngsters actively participated in the mega blood donation drive, with around 150 donors contributing blood and demonstrating their commitment to social responsibility. "Later, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy presented blood donor identity cards to the youth who participated in the blood donation camp. As part of the birthday celebrations, a cake-cutting ceremony was held in honor of Harish Rao. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri BRS Parliament In-charge Ragidi Lakshma Reddy and other local leaders cut the cake and exchanged sweets while extending their greetings. "The event witnessed the participation of BRS leaders, Telangana movement activists, women leaders, youth leaders, party workers and supporters in large numbers.

Another milestone for industrial development in the district



Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Damodaran Rajanarsimha inaugurated Theranym Biologics unit in Borapatla suburb of Hatnura mandal"---Sangareddy, June 3: "Ministers Sridhar Babu and Damodaran Rajanarsimha stated that the inauguration of Theranym Biologics unit is another key step forward in the Telangana biopharma sector and will provide a new impetus to the industrial progress of the state. "State IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu and State Medical and Health Minister Damodaran Rajanarsimha inaugurated the Theranym Biologics manufacturing unit set up with state-of-the-art facilities in Borapatla suburb of Hatnura mandal of Sangareddy district on Wednesday. "Speaking on the occasion, Minister Sridhar Babu said that the state government is giving top priority to industrial development. He said that world-class companies are coming forward to invest in the state due to the favorable investment environment, transparent policies and availability of skilled human resources in Telangana. He said that Telangana is already a leader in the country in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sec-

tors, and with the arrival of companies like Teranim Biologics with modern technology in the pharmaceutical sector, the state will gain more recognition at the international level. He said that this company will increase employment opportunities for the local youth and will also contribute to regional economic development. "Speaking, Minister Damodara Rajanarsimha said that this unit will play a key role in the manufacture of cutting-edge biological drugs. He said that such companies will add strength to new innovations and research in the medical sector. He said that Sangareddy district is emerging as a major hub for the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors, and with the expansion of industries, the livelihood opportunities of the local people will also improve significantly. He advised the companies to effectively manage environmental protection and social responsibilities along with the development of industries. "TGIIC Chairperson Nirmala Jayaprakash Reddy, "organization representatives, industrialists, "District SP Paritosh Pankaj, Additional Collector Pandu, officials, and others participated in this program.

Former Minister Harish Rao's birthday celebrations in Sadashivpet under the auspices of MLA Chinta Prabhakar..

...Sangareddy Indian Chronicle Correspondent"---The birthday celebrations of BRS senior leader former Minister Tannir Harish Rao were held in Sadashivpet town of Sangareddy district on Wednesday. MLA Chinta Prabhakar cut a cake at the MLA's residence and wished him a happy birthday.

Former Municipal Vice Chairman Chintagopal and BRS leaders participated in the program...



Government's Goal is to Develop MGM Hospital on Corporate Lines: Inagala Venkatram Reddy



expressed grave concern over staff negligence and the practice of marking attendance in advance. She issued directives requiring all employees to strictly adhere to biometric attendance regulations and to discharge their duties with greater accountability and commitment. She instructed officials to ensure the uninterrupted availability of free medicines and laboratory services for economically disadvantaged patients. Plans were also approved for the procurement of advanced medical equipment essential for key departments, including the Emergency Ward and the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The committee reviewed measures undertaken to improve sanitation across the hospital premises. These initiatives included clearing overgrown vegetation, repairing sewage leaks, and renovating drinking water facilities on a priority basis. Discussions were also held regarding the expansion of patient assistance services—provided through the 'Helping Hand Foundation'—to support indigent patients arriving from rural and tribal regions. During this meeting, key issues were discussed, including ensuring the adequate availability of stretchers and wheelchairs, facilitating registrations under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, and strengthening backup systems to prevent recurring disruptions in oxygen supply and power outages. A special review was conducted regarding the utilization and performance of 41 advanced medical devices—valued at 65.87 lakhs—that were previously donated to MGM Hospital by the Inagala Charitable Trust. The donated equipment included portable X-ray machines, ECG units, HFNC and Airvo CPAP systems, syringe pumps, Masimo pulse oximeters, and neonatal care devices such as double-surface phototherapy units and smart CPAP devices. Warangal District Collector Dr. Satya Sarada specially commended Mr. Inagala Venkataram Reddy for providing significant support to the hospital by donating life-saving medical equipment.

She noted that such philanthropic donations play a pivotal role in strengthening government healthcare institutions and enhancing patient care. The meeting was attended by MGM Hospital Superintendent and HDS Member-Convener Dr. P. Harish Chandra Reddy, along with heads of various departments, RMOs, doctors, and senior officials.

---'Inagala' Donates Medical Equipment Worth ₹65.8 Lakhs---Warangal, June 3 (Indian Chronicle): A meeting of the Hospital Development Society (HDS) was held on Wednesday to review the development of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Hospital—one of the prominent government healthcare institutions serving North Telangana—and to discuss ways to improve healthcare services for patients and strengthen infrastructure. The meeting was attended by State Minister for Forests, Environment, and Endowments Konda Surekha; Warangal MP Kadiyam Kavaya; KUDA Chairman and Hanamkonda DCC President Inagala Venkatram Reddy; and Wardhannapet MLA K.R. Nagaraju. This review meeting took place in the presence of Warangal District Collector Dr. Satya Sarada, Hanamkonda District Collector Chahat Bajpai, and MGM Hospital Superintendent Dr. Harish Chandra Reddy. Serving as a major referral healthcare hub for North Telangana, MGM Hospital currently caters to over 3,000 outpatients and handles approximately 700 to 750 emergency cases daily. In light of recent complaints regarding infrastructural deficiencies and staff negligence, a committee undertook a comprehensive review with the objective of transforming the hospital into a healthcare institution on par with corporate standards, and discussed remedial measures. During this meeting, Minister Konda Surekha

AIPS Wins Unanimously Once Again



The elections scheduled for June 3 were rendered uncontested after Jeevan Jyothi Organization withdrew its nomination, resulting in a unanimous victory for AIPS Organization. Founder Priyanka Somanath nominated her successor, Siri Devagana, for the positions of Founder and Managing Director (M.D.), and she was elected unanimously. The following office bearers were also elected unanimously: Anke Chaitanya – Chairman, Sindhu – Secretary, Sangeetha – Joint Secretary, Parameswaran – Head of Legal Department, Parvathi – Head of Members Department, Narayana Sastry – Head of Funding Department. Members and supporters expressed their happiness and congratulated the newly elected team. Celebrations at the AIPS office reached great heights following

the organization's unanimous victory. Speaking on the occasion, Ramakrishna, Head of Jeevan Jyothi Organization, stated that they had withdrawn from the elections due to certain personal reasons and extended his congratulations to the AIPS Organization. The newly elected Founder and Managing Director, Siri Devagana, said, "On behalf of our organization, we will continue to provide outstanding services. We will follow the path laid down by my mother and work with dedication to serve society." Chairman Anke Chaitanya expressed his gratitude, stating, "We will make the best use of the opportunity given by Madam Priyanka and ensure that the organization's services reach many more people in need." The unanimous election marks a significant milestone for AIPS, reflecting the confidence and support of its members and stakeholders.

Indiramma House fulfills the dreams of the poor: Municipal Commissioner Chandra Prakash Reddy

(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... June 3): Speaking at the Municipal Corporation office, where a copy of the Indiramma House order was handed over to Tuniki Anita of Ward 24, the Commissioner said that the dreams of the poor people of the state are being fulfilled with Indiramma Houses and that every poor person who has a vacant plot of land should utilize this scheme and fulfill their dream of a house. It takes years for the poor to earn Rs. 5.00 lakhs, so he urged every poor person to utilize this scheme and fulfill their dream of a house. Indiramma Committee member Challagurugula Raghu Babu, District Congress leaders and former councillor MD Shafiq Ahmed Tuniki Srikanth participated in the program.



Resolving Public Issues is the Primary Objective: Former MLC Konda Muralidhar Rao



Receiving Petitions at Camp Office, He Assures Swift Resolution of Issues---Warangal, June 3 (Indian Chronicle): On Wednesday, at his camp office located in the OC Colony area of the Warangal East Assembly constituency, the former MLC received petitions from the public and reviewed various civic and welfare-related issues. On this occasion, several residents brought to his attention issues regarding the sanctioning of Indiramma housing, problems faced in hospitals, and other public grievances. Responding immediately, Konda Muralidhar Rao fa-

cilitated the instant resolution of some of these issues. He further assured the residents that the remaining issues would be resolved through coordination with the relevant government departments and officials. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that he remains committed to resolving public issues and considers it his duty to stand by the people of the constituency through both their joys and hardships. He emphasized that serving the public and safeguarding their interests is a duty he regards with the utmost honor. He further asserted that his primary responsibility is to work selflessly for the welfare and development of the people of the erstwhile Warangal district. He gave an assurance that he would always remain accessible to the residents of the Warangal East constituency, as well as to the leaders and grassroots-level workers of the Congress party. Konda Muralidhar Rao expressed confidence that under a Congress-led people's government, every eligible citizen would receive justice and welfare benefits. He clarified that citizens need not despair during difficult times, nor do they need to rely on intermediaries or recommendations to resolve their issues. Instead, he encouraged them to approach him directly with their grievances. Reiterating that public welfare and development remain his primary objectives, he reaffirmed his commitment to working continuously toward finding effective solutions to the people's problems and ensuring that their voices are heard at every level.

Service to the Mentally Disabled is Service to Humanity: Dr. Anita Reddy



---Free Medical Camp, Blood Tests Conducted at Mallikamba Rehabilitation Centre---Hanumakonda, June 3 (Indian Chronicle): A free medical camp and blood testing programme was organized at the Mallikamba Rehabilitation Centre in Hanumakonda with the objective of ensuring better healthcare for persons with mental disabilities. Medical personnel from the Shayampet Primary Health Centre (PHC) participated in the camp and conducted free health check-ups for nearly 70 mentally challenged individuals. The medical team provided necessary consultations, carried out blood pressure and blood sugar screenings, collected blood samples for further tests, and distributed medicines free of cost. Dr. Anita Reddy, Chairperson of Anurag Society, National Vice-Chairperson and Advisor of the World Wise Consumer Rights and Protection Organization, and Member of the Kakatiya University Governing Body, attended the programme as the chief guest and inaugurated the camp. Speaking on the occa-



sion, Dr. Anita Reddy stated that serving persons with mental disabilities is equivalent to serving humanity. She emphasized that such free medical camps play a vital role in safeguarding the health and well-being of children and individuals with special needs. She urged people not to neglect their health and advised them to undergo regular medical examinations for early detection and prevention of health issues.

Dr. Anita Reddy also appreciated the dedicated services being rendered by the medical team of the Shayampet PHC and commended their efforts in extending healthcare support to vulnerable sections of society. The programme was attended by Mallikamba Rehabilitation Centre organizers Kodam Kalyan Kumar and Vasantha, along with Shayampet PHC staff members B. Mallesham (HS-M), S. Krishnakala (HAE), K. Shivakumar (HA-M), M. Rajesh (LT), B. Sriatha (ASHA), and K. Rajashri (ASHA).

Bhongir Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar Participates in Durgamma Festival Jathara and Performs Special Prayers

Temple Committee Grandly Honors Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar for Her Participation in the Durgamma Festival Jathara (Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... June 3): The Durgamma Festival Jathara (fair) at Rayagiri, located within the Bhongir town limits, was celebrated with great pomp and grandeur on Wednesday. Bhongir Municipal Chairperson, Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, attended this grand festival celebration as the chief guest. Upon visiting the temple, the Chairperson presented silk garments to the Goddess and performed special prayers. Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar expressed her hope that, through the divine grace and blessings of Mother Durgamma, all the residents of the town would prosper with peace, happiness, longevity, and good health. She further stated that she had prayed to the Goddess for the state to be blessed with abundant rainfall—just as it was last year—resulting in lush, golden harvests. She also mentioned that, on behalf of the Municipality, all necessary basic amenities—including drinking water, sanitation services, a medical camp, and lighting—had been provided to ensure that devotees visiting the Jathara did not face any inconvenience. On this occasion, members of the Temple



Committee felicitated the Town Chairperson, Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, and PCC Delegate, Thangallapalli Ravikumar. Municipal Commissioner Chandrasekhar Reddy, 3rd Ward Councillor Pathyala Venkatesh, Co-opted Member Yadagiri, Congress leader Avishetti Pandu, the Temple Committee Chairman and members, women, and devotees participated in large numbers in this program.

Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar Hoists National Flag at Municipal Office on Telangana Formation Day



(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... June 3): On the occasion of Telangana Formation Day, Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar hoisted the national flag at the Bhuvanagiri Municipal Office. Commemorating the formation of the state

of Telangana, Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar unfurled the national flag within the premises of the local municipal office. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairperson noted that the state has completed 12 years of existence today, having been formed as a separate state to fulfill the aspirations of the people of Telangana—aspirations held for over 60 years. She urged everyone to remember and honor the sacrifices of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the realization of the state. She also called upon everyone to take the welfare and development schemes being implemented by the Telangana government to the people and to strive towards achieving a "Golden Telangana." The event was attended by District Library Chairman Awais Chishti, Vice Chairperson Pothamsetti Manjula Venkateswarlu, Municipal Commissioner K. Chandra Prakash Reddy, Councillors, Co-opted Members, municipal staff, MEPMA Resource Persons (RPs), and public representatives.

Groundbreaking Ceremony for Red Cross Blood Bank Building Construction: MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy

(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau – Indian Chronicle – June 3): Local MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy stated that a blood bank is an absolute necessity in the district headquarters, Bhuvanagiri, to serve accident victims and meet emergency medical needs. Following a request from Red Cross representatives, the government allocated 990 square yards of land for the project. Consequently, to mark the occasion of Telangana State Formation Day, a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the blood bank building—organized under the aegis of the Indian Red Cross Society—was held on Tuesday within the premises of the local Irrigation Office. The MLA, accompanied by Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, performed the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone. The MLA noted that in the absence of a blood bank within the district headquarters, patients suffering from Thalassemia and those requiring emergency medical care have been facing significant hardships. Speaking at the event, Municipal Vice-Chairperson Pothamsetti Manjula, several councillors, RDO Krishna Reddy, District Library Chairman Md. Awais-ur-Rahman Chishti, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Red Cross Society Chairman Dr. G. Lakshminarasimha Reddy, District Vice-Chairman Diddi Balaji, and Division Chairman Saddi Venkata Reddy announced that P. Sridhar Reddy—head of the software firm 'Center S'—has pledged a donation of ₹2 crores towards the construction of the Red Cross building. They further stated that the construction work would be completed within one year.

Leaders Promod Kumar, Barre Jahangir, Kukka Doogu Somayya, Pothamsetti Venkateswarlu, Koora Venkatesh, Md. Layak Ahmed, and Kurusheed Ali—along with Red Cross District Directors Jampala Anjaya, Rambayamma, SK Hameed, P. Srinivas Reddy, Varalakshmi, Christopher, and others—participated in the event.



Inside a fake Amazon call centre: How 21 scammers fooled customers from Sector 2, Panchkula

GNS News Agency, June 3

During the raid, police found several young men and women allegedly engaged in conversations with foreign nationals using laptops, headsets and internet-based software. (Image: AI generated) During the raid, police found several young men and women allegedly engaged in conversations with foreign nationals using laptops, headsets and internet-based software. Police in Panchkula claimed to have busted an alleged fake international call centre operating from Sector 2 and arrested 21 persons, including four alleged masterminds, in connection with a cyber fraud racket that purportedly targeted US citizens by impersonating customer service representatives of Amazon.

According to police, the operation was carried out late Sunday night following a tip-off. Teams from the Cyber Crime Police Station, the State Cyber Crime unit and other crime investigation units conducted a joint raid at premises operating on the first floor of a building in Sector 2. Police said the four key accused Raja Siddiqui, Akshay, alias Tikku, Navdeep Bedi, alias Raj Bedi, and Ankur Kapoor, who are from Delhi, Kolkata, Mohali and Panchkula, were produced before a court and remanded in seven days of police custody. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime and Traffic) Amarinder Singh said the call centre was allegedly being used to target foreign nationals, primarily US citizens, by posing as Amazon US customer support executives. During the raid, police found several young men and women allegedly engaged in conversations with foreign nationals using laptops, headsets and internet-based software. Preliminary investigation revealed that calls were routed through specialised software, after which the callers allegedly introduced themselves as Amazon customer service representatives and persuaded victims to share personal information. Police alleged that victims were then in-

duced to download remote-access applications such as AnyDesk, enabling the accused to gain access to their computer systems. The callers would subsequently mislead victims into purchasing gift cards, which were later redeemed through various channels for financial gain.

The police said they recovered 19 computer systems, three laptops, 16 headsets, two point-of-sale (POS) machines, three walkie-talkie sets, two Wi-Fi routers, a currency-counting machine, a seal, a hardware crypto wallet, cash amounting to Rs 11.30 lakh, counterfeit foreign currency, gold jewellery, diamond earrings, a chain, a bracelet and several documents and electronic devices. According to the DCP, preliminary findings suggest that the proceeds of the alleged fraud were routed through hawala channels and cryptocurrency transactions to different states. Of the 21 arrested, the remaining 17 — comprising 12 men and five women — were allegedly employed as computer operators at the call centre, a police official said adding that they are residents of Chandigarh, Mohali, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Bihar, Kolkata and other places. These 17 accused have been released on bail. Police suspect that the network recruited young people from different states and used them to carry out organised cyber fraud targeting foreign nationals.

Police said questioning of the accused has led to several disclosures regarding alleged hawala networks, cryptocurrency transactions, movement of funds obtained through the fraud and the role of other associates. Raids in other states are being planned and further arrests are likely. A case has been registered under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Information Technology Act and the Telecommunications Act, and further investigation is underway.

From BSF land transfer to ‘Maa Ahar’ expansion: Bengal Cabinet greenlights major decisions

GNS News Agency, June 3

Suwendu Adhikari, Suwendu Adhikari government, Adhikari government, Suwendu government hits the ground running, Bengal BJP government, Bengal Government, Kolkata news, West Bengal news, Indian express, current affairs West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari The West Bengal Cabinet Wednesday approved a series of major administrative, security, and welfare decisions. These include a significant push for international border infrastructure, the massive expansion of the state's subsidised food programme, designated state-day celebrations, and a top-tier shake-up in its legal leadership.

In a major step toward fortifying border security, the state government has officially initiated the process of handing over land to the Border Security Force (BSF) to complete pending fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border. A land deed transferring 31,905 acres has already been signed. This perpetual land transfer covers nine strategic locations spread across the critical border districts of Malda, Nadia, and Cooch Behar.

The state's flagship subsidised food program is undergoing both a major identity shift and an operational up-

grade to reach more beneficiaries. Formerly known as 'Maa Canteen', the initiative has been officially rebranded as 'Maa Ahar'. Following the Cabinet meeting, minister Agnimitra Paul announced a substantial widening of the network. "While 390 centres are currently operational, the Cabinet has approved the setup of 110 new centres. This brings the total network to 500 distribution centres across Bengal," said Paul. To ensure better nutrition, the meal plan has been revised to a weekly rotation: fish is served 2 days a week, eggs are served 2 days a week, and vegetarian options are served on the remaining days. The Cabinet has formalised the timeline for upcoming state heritage and commemorative events. "The state Cabinet has decided to observe June 20 as West Bengal Day," confirmed minister Dilip Ghosh. Following the state day celebrations, a formal bhumi puja (groundbreaking ceremony) will take place on July 6 to mark the installation of a commemorative statue of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee. The Cabinet also finalised key changes to West Bengal's legal apparatus, appointing renowned legal professional Surojit Nath Mitra as the new Advocate General (AG) for West Bengal. Mitra will step into the role immediately to lead the state's legal strategy and framework before the judiciary.

Punjab to cap private school fee hikes at 5% following Amritsar girl's death

GNS News Agency, June 3

In a bid to curb alleged exploitation by private schools, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday vowed to bring a tough new law limiting annual fee hikes to 5 per cent and cracking down on arbitrary increases, following the alleged death by suicide of a 17-year-old Class 12 student in Amritsar. The announcement came during a press conference where Mann highlighted complaints from parents about fee-related harassment, including denial of roll numbers, exam certificates, and public humiliation of students. He described the issue as a "school mafia" and directed immediate action by the education department.

Addressing the broader issue, CM Mann said he received multiple calls from distressed parents about schools withholding roll numbers before exams, denying certificates without a "no dues" clearance, and forcing students to stand in corners as punishment. The key measures announced include a cap on fee hikes. The annual increase has been limited to 5 per cent on all cumulative fees, not just tuition, covering various charges imposed on parents. "Schools that hiked fees by more than 15 per cent in the last three years must refund the excess amount immediately," said Mann. The CM said a stringent ordinance will be brought in the next one or two days, to be passed in the upcoming Vidhan Sabha session. Violations will lead to cancellation of school affiliations, audits, and penalties. The law may extend to private colleges and other private educational institutes when it takes final shape. Pending fee-related complaints will also be addressed, Mann said. Mann said that

education sector specialists will be involved in drafting the law. In a reply to a question, he clarified that schools cannot mandate the purchase of books from specific shops.

Mann criticised previous governments, noting that fee hikes were capped at 8 per cent until 2019 under the Captain Amarinder Singh regime, after which schools allegedly received a "free hand." He contrasted this with AAP's earlier efforts in Delhi and Punjab to regulate fees, which he said had been abandoned after the BJP government came to power. A death over Rs 20,000 pending fees? The development follows the death of Amjot Kaur, a 17-year-old student of a private school in Fatehgarh Churian near Amritsar. She allegedly died by suicide on or around May 22 after facing severe mental harassment over pending school fees of approximately Rs 20,000. Before succumbing to her injuries while undergoing treatment, Amjot recorded a video from the hospital detailing the pressure she endured. Her family accused the school management, including the principal and teachers, of repeatedly pressuring her, isolating her in a separate room, and subjecting her to humiliation. The bright student, who reportedly aspired to become an IAS officer, died amid these allegations. The Punjab Police have registered a case of abetment to suicide, and Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains has assured strict action. The incident sparked widespread outrage, with Opposition leaders criticising the AAP government. Mann emphasised that private schools would not be allowed to operate unchecked and reiterated the government's commitment to affordable, quality education alongside strengthening government schools.

Zirakpur Penthouse dispute: Consumer panel orders against Barnala builders

Khan also said the Commission rejected an application filed by the opposite parties challenging its pecuniary jurisdiction. The Commission observed that when the complaint was filed in 2021,

GNS News Agency, June 3

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (DCDR), Mohali, has granted significant relief to retired Army officer Colonel Romesh Ghai and his daughter, Shaheen Ghai, in a dispute against Barnala Builder and Property Consultants Developers. The dispute was over a penthouse in Maya Garden City, Zirakpur. Sharing details of the order, Advocate Muhammad Sartaj Khan on Tuesday said the Commission partly allowed the complaint, and directed the builder to refund excess charges, provide promised amenities and compensate the complainants for the delay in securing mandatory approvals and handing over complete facilities. The Commission, headed by president Kuljit Pal Singh and member Ranvir Kaur, directed the builder to obtain the required Completion and Occupation Certificates from the competent authorities and provide copies to the complainants. According to Khan, the dispute arose after the complainants alleged deficiencies in service, non-provision of promised amenities and a shortfall in the area delivered. Referring to an architect's report placed before the Commission, the advocate said the actual area handed over was found to be 4,769 sq ft against 5,110 sq ft for which payment had been collected. The Commission

held that the complainants were entitled to recover the amount charged for the excess 342 sq ft. "The Commission also ordered adjustment of Rs 5,45,890 collected as maintenance charges, observing that maintenance charges could not be levied before obtaining the mandatory completion and occupancy certificates," the advocate said. The Commission also awarded compensation for delay in possession in the form of 12 per cent annual interest on the amount deposited by the complainants from the date of filing of the complaint until the required certificates are obtained.

The builder has also been directed to pay Rs 75,000 as litigation expenses. Khan also said the Commission rejected an application filed by the opposite parties challenging its pecuniary jurisdiction. The Commission observed that when the complaint was filed in 2021, the District Commission had jurisdiction to entertain claims up to Rs 1 crore and that the complaint had already been admitted without challenge from the builder on jurisdictional grounds. The Commission directed the builder to comply with the order within 45 days of receiving the certified copy of the judgment.

After NEET leak storm, Latur's coaching capital faces closure

The Latur administration has ordered the closure of coaching classes, hostels, mess facilities, study rooms and other commercial establishments operating from plots earmarked for industrial use in the city's Udyog Bhavan area, triggering opposition from coaching operators and political leaders who have demanded that the locality be recognised as a Special Education Zone.

In a letter issued on May 22, the District Industries Centre (DIC) directed the Latur Industrial Estate Co operative Society to stop all non manufacturing activities being carried out on plots originally allotted for industrial purposes. The order through a letter followed a meeting chaired by Latur Collector Dr Bharat Bastewad and warned of legal action in case of non compliance, the letter stated. "All activities being carried out other than manufacturing, including tuition classes, coaching classes, hostels, mess facilities, residential accommodation, study rooms and other businesses, should be closed immediately," the letter issued by DIC General Manager Nikhil Patil stated. It further warned that "failure to comply with these directions will invite immediate action against the society."

Asked about the reasons behind the order, Collector Dr Bharat Bastewad said the administration wanted to examine under what provisions coaching classes and related activities were being operated from industrial plots and whether all applicable rules were being followed. "It needs to be looked into under which clause the coaching classes are being operated in the area and whether all rules are being followed. We have sought a report and details regarding it. Once everything is examined, the District Industries Centre will take further steps since the matter falls under the DIC," Bastewad said. The action affects the Udyog Bhavan locality, home to some of Latur's largest coaching institutes, including Renukai Career Centre (RCC). Over the past two decades, the area has evolved into the centre of the city's coaching economy, housing coaching classes, hostels, libraries, study rooms and mess facilities catering to students preparing for competitive examinations. Around a dozen major coaching institutes operate from the tuition area, with some running from multiple plots and others from single plots. Apart from coaching classes, the area also houses hostels, mess facilities, libraries, stationery shops and several other businesses catering to students. The move comes days after the arrest of RCC founder Shivraj Motegaonkar by the CBI in the NEET UG 2026 paper leak case. Investigators have alleged that questions circulated through RCC before the examination substantially overlapped with portions of the final NEET paper, drawing renewed attention to both the institute and the coaching hub from which it operates. The Udyog Bhavan tuition area is where Motegaonkar built RCC into one of Maharashtra's

biggest coaching networks over the past two decades.

While complaints over the use of industrial plots have been pending for years, the administration's intervention has come within days of the NEET paper leak probe and Motegaonkar's arrest. Officials, however, said the action follows long-standing complaints that industrial plots were being used for coaching institutes and related businesses. RTI activist Mallikarjun Bhaikatti, one of the complainants, has alleged that 62 of the estate's 100 plots are being used for coaching and related activities, occupying more than 16 acres of the 26.32 acre industrial estate. The order has sparked concern among coaching operators and local businesses, who argue that thousands of students and livelihoods depend on the ecosystem built around the coaching industry. People associated with the sector claim RCC teaches around 40,000 students annually across Maharashtra, including nearly 20,000 in Latur alone. They also claim the coaching network generates annual revenues of more than Rs 100 crore. At a meeting organised by the Latur Pattern Bachav Kruti Samiti on Friday, BJP state vice president Dr Archana Patil Chakurkar backed demands to grant the locality Special Education Zone status. Congress MLA Amit Deshmukh has also met coaching operators and business owners concerned about the future of the tuition area. "The use of the area has changed, but it has also created jobs and helped shape the future of thousands of students," said educational counsellor Sachin Bangad. "Educational coaching centres are a service industry. Not every industry is about manufacturing," a local coaching operator said. "If there are policy issues, the government should frame a policy and regularise these activities instead of ordering closures." Coaching operators and business owners contend that while allegations in the NEET case relate to specific individuals, the fallout is now being felt across the wider coaching ecosystem, including hostels, libraries, messes, transport operators, stationery shops and food outlets that depend on students coming to Latur every year. Ashok Loya, president of the Latur Industrial Estate Co operative Society, questioned the administration's move. "These establishments fall under the service sector and were allowed to operate by the administration a few years ago. Now suddenly they have issued a letter asking them to close. We are collecting documents and records, some dating back to 1965, and will file a writ petition in court. The authorities themselves had issued orders in the past permitting service-sector activities such as coaching classes to operate from the area," Loya said. Representatives of coaching institutes and local businesses said they would meet Collector Dr Bharat Bastewad and later approach Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with a demand to regularise the area and recognise it as a Special Education Zone.

Trinamool dissolves party units after rebels' defiance show, says will introspect

GNS News Agency, June 3

The Trinamool Congress leadership, stunned by the defiance of 60 of its 80 MLAs in the West Bengal Assembly on Wednesday, has decided to dissolve all party committees and frontal organisations. The party leadership has said that it will undertake a "comprehensive exercise of introspection, performance review and organisational assessment at every level" before reconstituting its organisational structure. The party's statement came hours after Ritabrata Banerjee, a Trinamool MLA expelled for anti-party activities, reached the Assembly along with 59 other legislators backing him for the Leader of the Opposition. This was an open challenge to Mamata Banerjee, who has endorsed Sovande Chattopadhyay as the Leader of the Opposition in the House. Shortly after, the Trinamool Congress said in a statement on X, "After careful consideration, it has been decided that all committees of the All India Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, as well as all its frontal organisations, shall stand dissolved with immediate effect."

"The party will undertake a comprehensive exercise of introspection, performance review and organisational assessment at every level. Based on the findings of this exercise, the organisational structure of the parent body and all frontal organisations will be reconstituted and announced in due course," the statement added. "The party remains committed to strengthening its organisation and preparing it to meet future challenges with renewed vigour and purpose," the statement added. After careful consideration, it has been decided that all committees of the All India Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, as well as all its frontal organisations, shall stand dissolved with immediate effect. The party will undertake a comprehensive exercise of introspection... Ritabrata Banerjee was expelled along with another MLA, Sandipan Saha, after Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari said they had complained to Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose that their signatures on a Trinamool communication that endorsed Sovande Chattopadhyay as Leader of the Opposition were forged.

Chattopadhyay is a Trinamool veteran and holds the record of being the only MLA in Bengal to win 10 consecutive Assembly elections. He has been with Mamata

Banerjee since the Trinamool Congress was founded in 1998 and was the candidate to be elected under the Trinamool banner in a 1998 by-election. He has held multiple portfolios in the Trinamool governments, including Minister for Agriculture, Minister-in-Charge of Parliamentary Affairs, and Minister of Power and Non-Conventional Energy Sources. Wednesday developments in the Assembly are playing out against what is being seen as an unravelling of the Trinamool Congress in the aftermath of its drubbing in the Bengal polls. A large chunk of the party's 80 MLAs have skipped meetings called by Mamata Banerjee of late. In fact, when Mamata Banerjee hit the streets of Kolkata to protest against post-poll violence and the attack on her nephew and Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, only eight MLAs were seen by her side.

The rebels have stated in their letter that they recognise Mamata Banerjee as their leader and want Ritabrata Banerjee as the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly. Party leaders close to Mamata Banerjee said the rebellion has shaken the leadership. "This move by more than two-thirds of our MLAs not only showed their displeasure with Abhishek Banerjee as our All India General Secretary, but is an act of defiance against Mamata Banerjee. This proves that the majority of the MLAs are not under their control," said a senior Trinamool Congress leader close to Mamata Banerjee. The BJP, meanwhile, has maintained that this is an internal crisis in the Trinamool Congress. The eight MLAs who accompanied Mamata Banerjee during the protest are Nayna Bandyopadhyay, Firhad Hakim, Kunal Ghosh, Biman Bandopadhyay, Sovande Chattopadhyay, Madan Mitra, Ashok Deb and Asima Patra. Many of them, such as Mitra, Hakim, Sovande Chattopadhyay and Ashok Deb, have been with Mamata Banerjee since the birth of Trinamool Congress in 1998 and are still with her. Madan Mitra, MLA from Kamarhati, has held crucial ministerial portfolios in Trinamool governments and stuck to the party even after he was sidelined. Firhad Hakim, the Mayor of Kolkata, was re-elected to the Assembly from the Kolkata Port constituency this time. He has previously served in the West Bengal cabinet, holding portfolios for Urban Development, Municipal Affairs, Housing, and Transport.

PM Modi likely to visit West Bengal on June 20 for Foundation Day: Kolkata yoga event on the cards

EMS News Agency, June 8 Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to attend the West Bengal Foundation Day celebrations in the state on June 20, according to sources. This will mark his first visit to Bengal after the BJP government was sworn in last month. BJP sources said PM Modi is expected to visit Tarakeswar temple, where he will offer puja, and later hold a public meeting. He is also likely to participate in the International Yoga Day celebrations in Kolkata on June 21. According to a senior BJP leader, on the occasion of Foundation Day, the party will honour West Bengal's identity and reinforce awareness of the state's historical significance. In addition, the BJP will pay respect to all the freedom fighters from the state.

"The entire state will celebrate the day. We will highlight the rich heritage and culture of our state. We will also celebrate the legacy of the state and its contribution to the entire country," the leader added. According to party leaders, the state will also commemorate the sacrifices and efforts of those who helped preserve West Bengal as a part of India in 1947. Sources said that the state BJP has also planned commemorative programmes, cultural events, and public engagements across West Bengal. Senior party leaders and workers have been asked to organise and actively participate in these events. The state BJP, sources added, will also hold programmes from June 5-21 to mark 12 years

of the BJP government at the Centre. Central schemes such as the PM Awas Yojana, PM-KISAN, Jal Jeevan Mission, and Ayushman Bharat, and their benefits will be highlighted through the programmes.

Tadoba Tiger Reserve to be closed for visitors for three months from June 30

Chandrapur: Visitors will not be allowed inside the core areas of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) from June 30 to September 30, with forest officials asserting that the annual monsoon closure is necessary for wildlife conservation and tourist safety.

Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director P N Shukla said on Tuesday that all buffer tourism gates and buffer tourism areas will remain open for visitors during this period, though it will depend on weather conditions and administrative instructions issued from time to time.

Elderly couple found murdered at Maharashtra home, killer threw ash on bodies



GNS News Agency, June 3

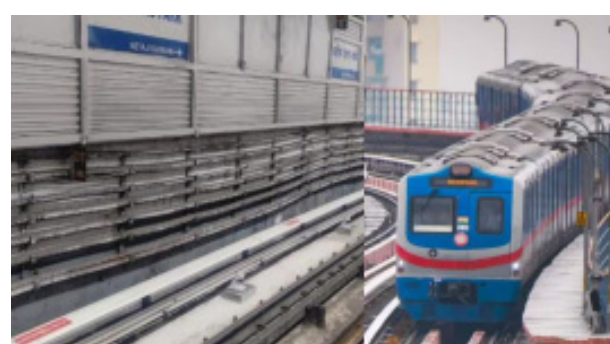
gerprints and that the double murders were meticulously planned. Raghunath Dattu Farat, 73, and Surekha Raghunath Farat, 68, lived in Nigdoli village. Their two sons live with their wives and children elsewhere.

On Tuesday, their grandson Aditya Rohidas Farat, 21, his mother, and his sister came to meet the elderly couple from Khalapur. Aditya kept knocking on the main door, but got no response. He then went to the back door and found it partially open. He went inside and found his grandfather, Raghunath, in a pool of blood. In another room, his grandmother, Surekha, was lying dead on the bed. There was blood and ash all around. Vishal Nehul, Deputy Superintendent of Police, said there were deep injury marks on the bodies, and it appeared that the killer slit their throats. An FIR has been registered following a complaint by Aditya. Police are scanning footage from a CCTV camera in the area. Manish Kumar Pathak is a dedicated journalist reporting for The Indian Express from Mumbai. His work demonstrates substantial Expertise and Authority across the complex field of crime reporting.

A 73-year-old man and his 68-year-old wife were found murdered at their home in Maharashtra's Raigad district on Tuesday. According to the police, ash was thrown on the elderly couple's bodies and inside the home. Police are questioning several people and hope to crack the case soon. Police suspect that the ash was aimed at hiding fingerprints

Kolkata Metro completes Aluminium third rail upgrade on underground Blue Line for faster train operations

GNS News Agency, June 3



acceleration of train and reducing headway of running Metros. "The underground section of Kolkata Metro Blue Line stretches from Noapara to Dum Dum and again from Belgachia to Mahanayak Uttar station. Kolkata Metro further said that the aluminium third rail system is expected to reduce carbon emissions by nearly 50,000 tonnes over its lifetime. The metro authority also stated that the new system will reduce the heat load on air-conditioning systems inside tunnels, as aluminium generates less heat due to its lower resistance compared to steel. "The initiative is expected to generate substantial environmental benefits, including an estimated reduction of nearly 50,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over its lifecycle.

The upgradation forms part of Metro Railway Kolkata's broader modernization roadmap, which includes implementation of advanced signalling systems to support higher-frequency operations, improved reliability and enhanced passenger carrying capacity on India's first metro corridor" the Kolkata Metro said.

Kolkata Metro has finished upgrading the underground Blue Line with a new aluminium third rail system to enable faster train movement. (Image: Kolkata Metro) Kolkata Metro has finished upgrading the underground Blue Line with a new aluminium third rail system to enable faster train movement. Kolkata Metro aluminium third rail upgrade: The Kolkata Metro railway has completed the Aluminium third rail upgrade across the entire underground section of its Blue Line. With this upgrade, the 40-year-old conventional Steel third rail system has been replaced with an advanced high-conductivity Aluminium third rail system. In 2012, the Ministry of Railways decided that all new Corridors of Kolkata Metro will be built with Aluminium third rail. Manufactured by Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), the Steel third rail system had been supplying power to metro rakes for more than four decades. However, with advancements in technology, the once-modern system of the 1980s had gradually become outdated and energy inefficient in today's era of green energy initiatives. How Kolkata Metro Blue Line services will improve

According to Kolkata Metro Railway, this major technological upgrade is a significant step towards modernising the traction infrastructure and achieving the faster train operations, i.e. targeted 150-second train headway in future operations. In a statement, the Metro Railway said: "Aluminium's electrical conductivity is 38 million siemens per meter whereas Steel has value of 6 million siemens per meter. This physical characteristic of Aluminium is a simple reason for lesser voltage drops and lesser energy losses compared to Steel third rail. Apart from lesser loss, nearly no voltage drop in the third rail will help to achieve faster

Pune girl rape-murder: Charges framed against 65-year-old accused, he pleads not guilty

GNS News Agency, June 3



submitted a list of 82 witnesses before the court. He submitted that the prosecution had sufficiently strong oral and documentary evidence to prove all the charges levelled against the accused. He further argued that all circumstantial evidence collected during the investigation forms a strong and complete chain, and therefore requested the court to frame charges against the accused. On behalf of the accused, legal aid defence counsel and senior advocate Himantrao Suryawanshi, chief legal aid defence counsel K A Jiwani, and deputy chief legal aid defence counsel G R Gajbhiye appeared before the court.

Suryawanshi argued that the chargesheet does not contain adequate evidence to establish serious offences such as kidnapping, molestation and murder. He further contended that the "last seen together" theory and the forensic evidence are neither proper nor reliable, and therefore charges cannot be framed against the accused. Meanwhile, the police said the accused was a habitual offender who was earlier booked in two molestation cases. The police said he allegedly sexually assaulted an elderly woman in 1998 and allegedly molested his 17-year-old niece in 2015, but was acquitted in both cases on technicalities.

A special court on Thursday framed charges against a 65-year-old man who allegedly raped and murdered a three-year-old girl in a village in Maharashtra's Pune district, observing that the evidence on record contained sufficient grounds to do so. The accused denied the charges. The Pune court directed that day-to-day hearings in the matter be conducted from Friday. Considering the seriousness and sensitive nature of the case, the court also ordered that the trial be conducted in camera, the police said.

The girl, who was at her grandmother's house at the time of the incident, was raped and murdered on May 1. She was playing near a local temple when the accused, who has a criminal record, allegedly lured her and took her to a cowshed. He allegedly dumped her body in cow dung. The incident had sparked outrage, leading to an angry mob blocking the Pune-Satara highway. The accused, currently in Yerwada jail under judicial custody, was produced before the special court around 11 am on Thursday under police security. On May 16, the police had filed a chargesheet of around 1,100 pages against the accused. CCTV footage, statements cited Special Public Prosecutor Ajay Misar submitted in court that CCTV footage collected during the investigation clearly shows the accused taking the minor girl away. "Statements of some children and villagers recorded before the police as well as before the court establish that the accused and the victim were last seen together before her death," Misar told the court.

He also referred to the identification parade conducted by witnesses, the medical reports of the accused and the victim, medical evidence regarding the accused's capability to commit such an act, reports confirming the accused's sound mental condition, DNA analysis, forensic science laboratory analysis, the inquest panchnama of the deceased, the postmortem report, and material evidence recovered on the basis of the accused's statement. Misar

Indian-origin couple charged in Canada after baby's remains found in Halifax woods

A disturbing case involving the death of a newborn has shaken the Canadian city of Halifax, with an Indian-origin couple facing multiple charges after the remains of a baby were found in a wooded area over the weekend. The incident came to light last Friday evening when emergency services responded to a 911 call regarding a 23-year-old woman found in life-threatening condition at an apartment building on Willett Street in Halifax's Clayton Park neighbourhood in Nova Scotia. Medical staff later determined that the woman had recently given birth, but no infant was found with her, prompting an urgent search operation involving Halifax Regional Police, firefighters, paramedics and Halifax Search and Rescue teams. The police said interviews conducted over the weekend with four individuals known to the woman led investigators nearly 10 km away to a wooded area off Old Coach Road near Prospect Road in Goodwood. On Sunday afternoon, the remains of a newborn were discovered there. Halifax Regional Police said an autopsy by the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service is underway to determine the cause and manner of death. Investigators have so far been unable to speak to the mother, who remains in hospital in critical condition. The

police said her life-threatening condition appears linked to a medical emergency and not violence. Sukhpreet Singh, 23, described by the police as a relative of the mother, and his wife Ramandeep Kaur, 26, have been charged with concealing the body of a child with intent to hide its delivery, offering an indignity to human remains, obstruction of justice and resisting a peace officer. The couple made brief virtual appearances before Halifax Provincial Court on Monday. Crown attorney Paul Carver sought an adjournment, saying there was potential for "additional very serious charges" as investigators review further evidence. Both accused were remanded in custody and are scheduled to appear for a bail hearing on Thursday. Kaur has expressed a preference to appear in person before the court. Two other people detained earlier for questioning were later released without charges. The case has triggered shock and grief in the diverse Clayton Park community. Local residents and business owners expressed concern for the woman and sorrow over the infant's death. Paul Service, chief director of Halifax Search and Rescue, described the operation as emotionally difficult and said counselling and debriefing support was being provided to volunteers involved in the search.

How a mobile phone snatcher in Delhi was held, tried and convicted in just 12 days



GNS News Agency, June 3

How a mobile phone snatcher in Delhi was held, tried and convicted in just 12 days According to Delhi Police officers, efforts are being made to ensure street crime cases are investigated and taken to their logical end in a time-bound manner. On the afternoon of May 14, a taxi driver from Aligarh was resting inside his vehicle near Gandhi Market Gol Chakkar on Meer Dard Road in Delhi. He had dropped off passengers and was waiting for his next booking, said police. Within moments, his Redmi Note 13 Pro mobile phone was snatched. The alleged thief, later identified as Mohammad Adil (22), tried to escape through the crowd near Gandhi Market but was caught. Adil has now been convicted, with the investigation and trial completed within 12 days of the incident, officers said on Wednesday. According to Delhi Police officers, efforts are being made to ensure street crime cases are investigated and taken to their logical end in a time-bound manner.

In this mobile snatching case, the taxi driver wasted no time in chasing Adil after his phone was snatched, said officers, adding that Constable Rahul of IP Estate police station was on routine patrol duty nearby and spotted the commotion. He intervened and after a brief pursuit, the accused was apprehended on the spot and the stolen phone was recovered from his possession. What followed was not just a routine investigation, but what police officers describe as an example of the "time-bound justice", envisioned under the criminal law framework enacted in 2024. The FIR was registered under sections 304(2) and 317(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) the same day. The investigation was handled by Head Constable Nadeem under the supervision of SHO Inspector Naresh Kumar, said officers.

Lok Sabha MP, Union Minister, Punjabi face: Meet Harsh Malhotra, Delhi BJP chief

GNS News Agency, June 3

Harsh Malhotra, Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Corporate Affairs, who has been appointed the new chief of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) Delhi state unit, succeeded Gautam Gambhir as the party MP from the East Delhi seat in 2024. Malhotra will take over charge of the party unit from the outgoing Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva around 3 pm on Thursday (May 28), party officials said.

The appointment of Malhotra, who was originally one of the faces of the BJP in Punjab, is intended to send out a positive signal to Punjabi voters in the capital, these officials said. Malhotra has been a long-time worker of the BJP, and was active in municipal politics before the party fielded him from its East Delhi stronghold in the last Lok Sabha election. Malhotra won 52.33 per cent of the total vote, defeating Kuldeep Kumar, the AAP leader who is currently the MLA from Kondli. He polled 6.64 lakh votes against Kumar's 5.71 lakh votes, a victory margin of 93,663 votes.

While Malhotra's margin of victory was the smallest in terms of vote share among the seven BJP MPs who were elected to Lok Sabha from Delhi, he became the only MP from Delhi to become a part of the Union Council of Ministers in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term. Malhotra was the general secretary of the Delhi BJP when he was picked to contest the seat represented by Gambhir, the former India cricketer and head coach of the national side, in 2024. In 2025, he was given some responsibilities in West



Bengal ahead of Assembly polls in that state. Malhotra, who studied botany and later law at Delhi University, is known as a loyal "organisation man". "He has been with the BJP from the beginning of his political career, and has loyally and silently worked for the party for decades," a party official said. Party leaders said the appointment of Malhotra would send a positive signal to Punjabis in the capital. "The BJP did not appoint a Punjabi face in a leadership role in Delhi following the Assembly elections (in 2025). A Mona Punjabi face was missing, even though the party has huge support among Punjabi voters," a senior party leader said. In Delhi, Malhotra has served as a former district president of the party in Navin Shahdara, and was elected as a councillor from East Delhi in 2017. He later rose to become Mayor of the erstwhile East Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Scrap VAT on fuel in Maharashtra to cut prices to Rs 70-80, NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil urges Fadnavis



GNS News Agency, June 3

Former Maharashtra Finance Minister and senior Nationalist Congress Party (SP) leader Jayant Patil Wednesday wrote to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, demanding that the state government scrap the value-added tax (VAT) and surcharge on petrol and diesel, keeping the interests of citizens in mind. Patil said that the state government levies VAT and a surcharge on fuel, which is applicable across Maharashtra, including Mumbai, Thane, and Navi Mumbai. "In the state, approximately 25 per cent VAT plus a surcharge of Rs 10.12 per litre is levied on petrol, while approximately 24 per cent VAT plus a surcharge of Rs 3.00 per litre is levied on diesel. The state government should abolish this VAT and surcharge on petrol and diesel. By doing so, petrol and diesel, currently priced at Rs 111, could be available directly for Rs 70-80," he said.

He said that the continuous price hikes have broken the common man's back and that urgent relief is required. In his letter, Patil stated that the West Asia conflict is putting immense pressure on India's economy, including Maharashtra's. Inflation has surged, with sharp increases in the prices of edible oils, vegetables, and other essential commodities. "This is directly impacting the common man, and the rising prices of petrol and diesel are further compounding the burden," he said. "Currently, petrol is being sold at Rs 111.12 per litre and diesel at Rs 96.86 per litre in Mumbai. Consequently, this inflation has crippled the common public," said Patil. Adding to the Opposition's voice, Congress Legislative Party leader Vijay Wadettiwar alleged that while the people of the country are suffering from inflation, unemployment, fuel price hikes, and economic instability, the BJP government is attempting to hide its failures

behind religious polarisation, events, and emotional issues.

Launching an attack on the government over fuel shortages and rising prices, Wadettiwar stated, "Diesel is being dispensed only after checking the vehicle's RC book. Farmers use diesel for agricultural work, don't they? The situation in the country could become similar to a lockdown in the coming days. In the near future, petrol is likely to reach Rs 170 and diesel Rs 150 per litre. The middle class, farmers, and common citizens will be completely crushed. Flights are already being reduced, and fuel shortages are increasing. The government has started pushing the country into an economic abyss," said Wadettiwar. "The BJP's entire politics is aimed at distracting the public from these fundamental issues. Instead of talking about serious issues like petrol-diesel price hikes and farmers' problems, those in power are spreading discord in society by creating Hindu-Muslim conflicts," said Wadettiwar.

Malkajgiri traffic police book over 1,000 cases in special road safety drive

Hyderabad: The Malkajgiri Traffic Police booked a total of 1,093 cases during a special drive against triple riding and dangerous driving conducted. On the single day, a total fine of Rs 13.09 lakh was imposed during the enforcement operation.

According to traffic officials, a total of 633 contact cases generated fines worth Rs 7.57 lakh, while 460 non-contact cases resulted in penalties of Rs 5.52 lakh. Of all the traffic police stations, Begumpet registered the highest number of cases at 144, followed by Vanasthalipuram with 129 cases and Alwal with 121 cases. Malkajgiri Police said the special drive was conducted to improve road safety across the commissionerate limits.



Israeli strikes kill 8 in Lebanon's fourth largest city ahead of Washington talks



GNS News Agency, June 3

Beirut: The Israeli military early Thursday pounded Lebanon's fourth largest city, killing at least eight people in its ongoing military escalation against the Hezbollah group ahead of crucial talks in Washington. Several others were injured in the strikes, according to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency. An Israeli soldier meanwhile in northern Israel was killed in a Hezbollah drone attack, the military said.

The intensification comes after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced an expansion in the Israeli military's use of fibre-optic exploding drones that have struck Israeli troops in Lebanon and reached some of Israel's northern border towns. Lebanese and Israeli military officials are set to hold their first security talks on Friday in the US capital. The talks have extended a nominal ceasefire that went into effect April 17, although the attacks have since intensified while sparing the Lebanese capital Beirut. Hezbollah has dismissed the talks and instead endorsed its key ally Iran, which has made ending the war in Lebanon a condition for its own talks with Washington.

Pentagon says US military personnel are reportedly being targeted using location data

WASHINGTON, GNS News Agency, June 3 U.S. forces deployed to war zones have been targeted using commercially available location data, according to reports fielded by military officials, an illustration of how the global surveillance economy is shaping the battlefield. A letter shared with Reuters by U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, opens new tab, U.S. Central Command said it had "received multiple threat reports concerning adversary exploitation of commercial location data to target or surveil U.S. personnel in theater." The message, sent on April 14, offered no further specifics, but Centcom's area of responsibility includes the Gulf, where U.S. forces are facing off against the Iranian military over the Strait of Hormuz. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. The disclosure was the first official confirmation that U.S. forces had been targeted in an active war zone, Wyden and a bipartisan group of legislators said in

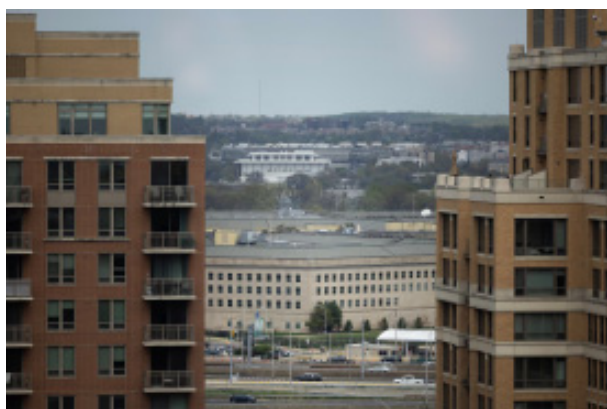
"Commercial location data can be used to identify where U.S. troops congregate and their pattern of life, which can be exploited by adversaries to target attacks such as missiles, drones, and roadside bombs, as well as for counterintelligence purposes," the letter warned. Wyden said in a statement that it "was time to start treating the adtech industry as a national security threat." The Pentagon did not return messages seeking comment. The lawmakers said in their letter that their efforts to obtain more information from military officials about the reported targeting had been unsuccessful.

LOCATION DATA TRADE FUELS PRIVACY CONCERNS Location data is widely used in digital advertising, which is a key source of revenue for many tech companies. Such data is typically collected from smartphones or other devices by apps or service providers before being sold to data brokers who collate and resell the data, sometimes via complex networks of intermediaries. Although the threat to privacy inherent in selling the details of people's day-to-day movements on the open market has long been a matter of public discussion, its potential as a national security risk has recently

brokered by Pakistan. Prior to the attacks on Thursday, Israeli military Arabic spokesperson Avichay Adraee issued warnings to eight buildings in the coastal city of Tyre along the Mediterranean and surrounding neighbourhoods. Many people have fled the area. Further north in the city of Sidon, an Israeli drone struck an apartment building where some displaced families lived. Mohammad Al-Gharbi, who lived across the street from the building in Sidon, woke to the sound of the explosion.

"I was in my room when part of the wall and shattered glass fell on me, and everything was thrown into chaos," he said. "This building that was hit had six apartments occupied by poor families who had fled from the south to escape the attacks there, only to be hit here." In the nearby coastal town of Adloun, an Israeli drone struck a car with a family that was fleeing, killing six people including children. Another drone strike that came without warning killed two people on a motorcycle near Tyre. The target of the attack was not immediately clear, NNA reported.

The Israeli military said Thursday that a soldier in northern Israel was killed in a Hezbollah drone attack and two reservists were wounded. Hezbollah has claimed dozens of drone and rocket attacks that it says targeted Israeli troops in southern Lebanon and northern Israel. Over 1 million people in Lebanon have been displaced by the war between Israel and Hezbollah, which was sparked when Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel on March 2 in solidarity with Iran, two days after the Iran war began. At least 3,269 people have been killed in Israeli strikes since the start of the war, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry, with over 9,800 wounded. According to Netanyahu's office, at least 23 Israeli soldiers and a defense contractor have been killed in or near southern Lebanon and two civilians have been killed in northern Israel, the vast majority by drones.



drawn concern as well. As far back as 2016, one U.S. defense contractor was able to leverage commercially available location data to track special operations forces from their bases in the United States to a sensitive staging post in Syria, according to an account first disclosed by the Wall Street Journal, opens new tab. More recently, journalists at Wired and two German news outlets drew on billions of coordinates collected by a data broker to two groups that represent digital advertisers, the Interactive Advertising Bureau and the Association of National Advertisers, did not return emails seeking comment. The letter from U.S. lawmakers to the Pentagon said that, given what military officials know about the trade in location data, they should have acted faster to protect their personnel, for example by disabling the unique advertising ID attached to military-issued devices, automatically turning off location sharing on smartphones in the field, and steering staff away from Google's Chrome web browser toward more privacy-focused alternatives. One of the letter's cosigners was U.S. Representative Pat Harrigan, a North Carolina Republican who was formerly a U.S. Army Special Forces officer. Harrigan said that browsers like Chrome "are built from the ground up to collect and share user data" and that every day they remain on government-issued devices "is another day we are handing our adversaries a weapon against our own troops."

Iran and US trade air strikes after Trump dismisses report of Hormuz deal

DUBAI/WASHINGTON, GNS News Agency, June 3 Iran targeted a U.S. air base on Thursday after the United States struck what Washington described as an Iranian drone operation near the Strait of Hormuz and President Donald Trump rejected a "reported compromise deal" with Tehran. The attacks, while limited, highlighted the fragility of negotiations aimed at turning the tenuous ceasefire that took effect in early April into an agreement to end the three-month-old war and reopen the vital shipping route. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

A U.S. official told Reuters the military shot down four Iranian attack drones and struck a ground control station in the port city of Bandar Abbas that was about to launch a fifth drone. "These actions were measured, purely defensive and intended to maintain the ceasefire," said the official, who requested anonymity to speak candidly about military operations. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said later that it had targeted the U.S. base responsible for a "yearly morning attack near Bandar Abbas airport, Tasnim news agency reported. The IRGC, which did not name the base, said any repeat of what it called aggression "would lead to a 'more decisive' response. Kuwait - which hosts a large U.S. base - said it was responding to missile and drone attacks without saying where the attacks were coming from. In Lebanon, which Iran says must be part of any overall agreement to end the war launched by Israel and the United States on February 28, Israel said it had begun striking infrastructure of Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Tyre. The Lebanese Army said an Israeli strike had killed one of its soldiers, while Israel, which has pushed deep into Lebanon in pursuit of Hezbollah, said hostile aircraft infiltration had triggered sirens in its north. Oil prices rebounded, with U.S. crude futures up around 2.5% after falling 5% on Wednesday, while stocks fell and the dollar rose. The average number of daily crossings has dropped by 88% since the first US-Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb 28, 2026

TRUMP SAYS NO COUNTRY TO CONTROL STRAIT The war has killed thousands and sent global energy prices sharply higher, fuelling inflation and hitting cur-

rencies in some Asian countries while boosting the dollar. Item 1 of 3 An Iranian woman walks next to an anti-Israeli mural on a street in Tehran, Iran, May 26, 2026. Majid Asgaripour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via Trump has repeatedly said the end of the war is close but told media at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday he was not yet satisfied by the talks with Iran and that the U.S. was not discussing easing sanctions on the country, one of Tehran's demands.

He dismissed an Iranian state TV report about an unofficial draft of an agreement to restore commercial shipping through the strait to prewar levels within a month, with Iran and Gulf state Oman jointly managing traffic. Trump said no single country would have control over the waterway, and appeared to threaten Oman, a country with which the U.S. has decades-long military and economic ties. "Nobody's going to control (the strait)," Trump said. "It's international waters, and Oman will behave just like everybody else or we'll have to blow them up. They understand that, they'll be fine." Oman has not said anything about the idea of joint control of the strait with Iran, with which it says it has discussed freedom of navigation. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei expressed solidarity with Oman after what it called "U.S. officials' threats." Iran was insisting on the United States releasing Iranian funds, the deputy secretary of its National Security Council Ali Bagheri Kani said, according to a Tasnim report. Ongoing sanctions, the dismantling of Iran's nuclear capacity and the blockage of Hormuz, which handled a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas traffic before the war, are the major sticking points in talks to end the conflict. The waterway is covered by international law that guarantees foreign vessels the right to pass through. The U.S. Treasury Department added the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, the Iranian body set up to manage passage through the strait, to a list of sanctioned people and entities seen as posing threats to U.S. national security. Iranian state TV said the draft deal would also have the U.S. withdraw military forces from the immediate vicinity, though it said the issue of U.S. troops in the region needed further discussion. The White House dismissed the report as a "complete fabrication."

Why Tesla's AI trainers don't trust its self-driving tech – or its safety stats



GNS News Agency, June 3

Tesla says its Full Self-Driving software is up to 10 times safer than human drivers. But the figures the company uses to support its claims don't withstand scrutiny – and staffers who trained the technology say it isn't close to safely delivering autonomous vehicles at scale.

In a Utah office, hundreds of Tesla workers scrutinize video collected by vehicles using the automaker's Full Self-Driving (FSD) feature. Some clips show the cars hitting cats, dogs or deer, along with more-routine accidents. Sometimes, they don't brake before impact. Often, they speed. Occasionally, the workers see near-misses of children playing in the street. Known as "data labelers," these staffers train Tesla's AI-powered driver-assistance software. They annotate incidents of good and bad driving and escalate problems to engineers working to improve the system. Tesla CEO Elon Musk says FSD will soon make all Teslas fully autonomous. But interviews with nine former labelers and a former Tesla self-driving engineer show that the technology continued to struggle in recent months to execute basic maneuvers – such as avoiding emergency vehicles or stopping for school buses loading or unloading students.

Despite such dangerous shortcomings, Musk and other executives have increasingly touted FSD's safety as they pushed Tesla to stage public displays of the fully autonomous capability the CEO has promised investors every year for a decade. The displays include a robotaxi pilot in Austin, Texas – launched last June with some human safety monitors in the cars and others working remotely. A Tesla robotaxi in Austin, Texas. Before Tesla launched the service in the city in June 2025, the company spent months filming features to map the robotaxi zone – undercutting CEO Elon Musk's assertion that the software is designed to work anywhere in real time. REUTERS/Joel Angel Juarez

Inside Tesla, as these events approached, staffers worked long hours mapping routes and training the software on specific hazards to make the company's self-driving technology appear more capable than it really is, four of the former Tesla employees told Reuters. The staffers said these labor-intensive safeguards are impossible to deploy on a broad scale. Those efforts, which haven't been previously reported, undermine Musk's long-stated claim that Tesla's self-driving technology will soon work anywhere globally and doesn't require the same laborious local mapping of roads and hazards employed by rivals. Musk has said Tesla takes a simpler approach, relying solely on cameras and AI, that will allow it to scale up its robotaxi service at "hyperexponential" speed and offer current Tesla owners full autonomy through software updates.

Musk and other Tesla leaders have bolstered the impression of robo-competence by citing company safety statistics that they say prove FSD is already up to 10 times safer than human drivers. A Reuters examination of Tesla's statistical methodology and interviews with company insiders show Tesla isn't close to safely delivering self-driving vehicles at scale – a central promise underpinning the automaker's \$1.6 trillion stock-market value. Elon Musk and other Tesla leaders have touted FSD's safety, citing company statistics that they say prove the technology is already up to 10 times safer than human drivers.

The examination included a Reuters analysis of how Tesla compares its own crash data to federal crash data; a review of the comparatively rigorous methodology employed by robotaxi competitor Waymo; and interviews with 11 traffic-safety researchers who reviewed Tesla's methodology for Reuters. The review found several invalid data comparisons underlying the statistics in Tesla's FSD safety report, which 10 researchers said amounted to misleading marketing rather than a serious investigation into a critical safety issue.

Tesla, for instance, exaggerates the technology's safety by comparing a rate of crashes in FSD-piloted Teslas that triggered airbag deployments to a federal crash rate for all vehicles that includes far less-severe accidents. The company also compares its cars to the average U.S. vehicle – which is much older than the average Tesla. That distorts the results because all automakers have recently launched new safety features that reduce crashes, the researchers said. "Any new car is dramatically safer than a 12-year-old car," said Phil Koopman, a Carnegie Mellon University engineering professor and autonomous-vehicle safety expert. "It's like saying: 'My jet airplane is faster than your World War II bomber.' Yeah, so, what's your point?" Tesla didn't respond to detailed questions from Reuters for this report. "It's like saying: 'My jet airplane is faster than your World War II bomber.' Yeah, so, what's your point?" Phil Koopman, a Carnegie Mellon University engineering professor, on Tesla's safety methodology. Tesla's CFO, Vaibhav Taneja, first made the 10-times-safer claim last July, after Tesla's Austin robotaxi launch. Tesla Board Chair Robyn Denholm repeated it at a November meeting where shareholders approved a pay package granting Musk up to \$1 trillion in Tesla stock. Musk, at the same meeting, displayed a chart with the slightly more modest claim of "85% less crashes," based on recently revised Tesla methodology. "We almost feel comfortable allowing people to text and drive, which is kind of the killer app," Musk told shareholders. "In the next month or two – we're going to look closely at the safety statistics – but we will allow you to text and drive, essentially."

Six months later, Tesla hasn't greenlit texting and driving with FSD. The fine print on its FSD website continues to warn: "Currently enabled features require active driver supervision and do not make the vehicle autonomous." Tesla has often cited such disclaimers when sued over serious accidents. FSD is widely regarded as capable of navigating many driving situations, sometimes for long periods. But full autonomy has proven elusive for Tesla and other companies, as it demands flawless execution by the technology – including in the most complex driving scenarios. Seven of the former data labelers told Reuters they wouldn't trust FSD to drive them. "We have all seen it fail," one said. Another said he wouldn't ride in a Tesla robotaxi "if you fucking paid me." One veteran self-driving engineer, who reviewed Tesla crash data for years, called its safety claims "bullshit." "Definitely," the engineer said, "don't trust Elon on this." A Tesla robotaxi drives through traffic in Austin. After the service launched in the city last June, Musk predicted it would expand to serve half the U.S. population by the end

of 2025. REUTERS/Evan Garcia

"TRAUMA TEAM" REVIEWS NEAR MISSES Tesla's data labelers get a close-up view of FSD's capabilities as they review footage from vehicles equipped with eight exterior cameras. The former employees reported regularly seeing FSD fail at basic tasks, including pulling over for emergency vehicles and giving motorcyclists enough space. Sometimes, they saw FSD-piloted vehicles fail to brake on freeway off-ramps, including a case where a Tesla hit a concrete wall. (The footage, they said, didn't show whether anyone was hurt.) Two employees said clips showed FSD failing to avoid construction zones. In one such incident, a Tesla drove into the zone, nearly striking workers, one of the people said. Reuters did not review the videos; this account is drawn from the former staffers' descriptions of footage they viewed. Inside Tesla, managers carefully controlled access to the videos. Because employees only see clips they're assigned, they may or may not see FSD's worst failures.

One data-labeling team focused on near-misses of pedestrians, three employees said. Known informally as the "trauma team," one source said, these employees worked in Palo Alto, California, with special permissions to view the footage. Engineers closely guarded the trauma-team clips, but some footage would occasionally "slip through" to other teams, the person said. The person and another employee said they saw clips showing drivers manually taking over at the last second when FSD failed to recognize pedestrians in crosswalks. Two other former employees recalled seeing videos last year of FSD-piloted Teslas nearly hitting children. Screenshots from a Full Self-Driving demonstration video on Tesla's website show the technology navigating a range of driving situations. The software continued to struggle in recent months to execute basic maneuvers, according to former Tesla employees. Tesla has for years faced federal investigations and lawsuits involving crashes, including fatalities, that drivers or regulators blamed on failures of FSD or its older Autopilot advanced driver-assistance system. The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) opened an investigation into Autopilot in 2021 after a series of collisions involving Teslas striking emergency vehicles. The investigation led to a 2023 recall in which Tesla installed software upgrades to better detect when drivers stop paying attention and alert them.

NHTSA has four active investigations into FSD and Autopilot, including one involving dozens of cases where vehicles using FSD failed to stop for red lights or turned into oncoming traffic. Another one probes whether Tesla's 2023 upgrades to Autopilot were sufficient to address the safety problems. The agency is also investigating at least nine FSD-involved incidents, including a fatal crash, where the system failed because of reduced visibility in conditions such as fog or sun glare. Tesla last year was hit with a \$243 million verdict after an Autopiloted Tesla crashed in Florida, killing a 22-year-old woman and severely injuring her boyfriend. Tesla has appealed. The company has settled several similar cases involving serious crashes without disclosing terms. When asked by Reuters, NHTSA didn't address the findings in this story about FSD safety and Tesla's methodology. The agency referred questions about Tesla's safety claims to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC declined to comment on Tesla's safety statistics. Some consumer advocacy groups and U.S. senators have called on the FTC to investigate Tesla's marketing of Autopilot and FSD. The FTC has brought no enforcement actions against Tesla. A Full-Self Driving demonstration in Amsterdam in April. The automaker continues to warn: "Currently enabled features require active driver supervision and do not make the vehicle autonomous." REUTERS/INFLATED STATS ON TESLA FSD SAFETY

As Tesla employees watched videos of FSD's missteps, the company's board and CEO ramped up their claims about the technology's safety and readiness for full autonomy. For much of last year, leaders at Tesla promoted the 10-times-safer claim. "A car on FSD being 10x safer" will drive sales, Tesla CFO Taneja said in a July earnings call. "Even at \$99 a month, it's like you're getting a personal chauffeur for almost \$3.33 a day." A key problem with Tesla's methodology stems from one comparison error that inflated Tesla's claimed level of safety by a factor of three. The automaker counted Tesla crashes with airbag deployments and compared them with federal data on all crashes in which a tow-truck removed a vehicle – a far less restrictive criterion. Crashes requiring tow trucks often aren't severe enough to trigger airbags.

Tesla took this apples-and-oranges approach even though apples were readily available for comparison: The federal data it used included crashes where airbags deployed. This flawed methodology produced the finding that Teslas using FSD or Autopilot travel 10 times farther between crashes than the average human driver. The more valid comparison – using airbag-involved crashes for Teslas and all other cars – finds Teslas using the driver-assistance systems travel about three times farther between crashes where airbags deployed, according to an analysis performed for Reuters by Marco Benedetti, an assistant research scientist at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute and a former NHTSA statistician. Two other traffic-safety researchers vetted Benedetti's calculations and agreed with the findings.

But that doesn't mean FSD is actually three times safer than the average driver, Benedetti said, because of several other flaws in Tesla's methodology. A Tesla Model 3 uses Full Self-Driving software in Los Angeles. A Reuters examination of Tesla's methodology for its FSD statistics and interviews with company insiders show the automaker isn't close to safely delivering self-driving vehicles at scale. REUTERS/Mike Blake Tesla tweaked its approach in November to include only data for vehicles using FSD and exclude those with Autopilot. Including Autopilot had increased Tesla's claimed miles between crashes because it's a less sophisticated system intended only for highways – where cars rack up miles and crash far less frequently than on urban streets. The company, however, continues to use the flawed airbag-crash comparison on its website to claim FSD is seven times safer than the average human driver, or about 85% safer expressed as a percentage change. Several other flawed measurements employed by Tesla cast doubt on whether FSD is any safer at all, Reuters found. The automaker, for instance, doesn't consider vehicle age when comparing the crash rate for its cars to the national rate. Tesla compares its vehicles – which are just 4.1 years old on average, according to S&P Global Mobility data – against all U.S. vehicles, which have an average age of 12.8 years. That skews the results, 10 safety researchers told Reuters, because almost all automakers have more recently started offering groundbreaking safety features, including blind-spot monitoring and automatic emergency braking, across their lineups. Tesla also reduces its crash tally by only counting wrecks that happen either with FSD switched on or within five seconds of the feature being turned off. The U.S. government, by contrast, requires automakers to report crashes occurring within 30 seconds of an advanced driver-assistance system being deactivated.

Meet the Anands: How chess icon Viswanathan Anand's son has taken to art



Art has taken over a bulk of the space at his luxurious residence in Chennai's Kotturpuram. If a painting of lord Hayagriva is located next to a fancy chess board that was gifted to him abroad, a sketch of a tiger is perched right near a chess board made of paper. Anand does not mind at all... because the brain behind these works is his son, Sai Akhil Anand, who is gearing up for his solo exhibition, Morphogenesis. "My house is now 50% art, 50% chess," beams Indian chess legend Viswanathan Anand, "Traditionally, it has always been full of my trophies and newspaper clippings about my achievements. Recently, it has started to fill up with Akhil's budding art journey. I'm happy to share what art means to the family." The Anands will do more of that in the first week of August when Morphogenesis opens in Chennai. "I do a lot of Indian art like Gond, madhubani, worli and cherial and connect it with math patterns," says 14-year-old Akhil about the elements of his show, which has been curated by his teacher, Diana Satish. Akhil, currently studying in Class IX at Chennai's Beyond 8, might be the son of a champion synonymous with chess, but it was art that appealed to him from a young age. "I once observed the stripes of a zebra and tiger and noticed its patterns. Ever since, I have been fascinated with patterns. His early works were about people — of popular personalities like Newton, Einstein and Gandhi. This fascination grew into a passion during the COVID lockdown a few years ago. Explains Anand, "With more time in his hands, he (Akhil) got deeper into art. He was deeply inspired by the programmes of David Attenborough that spoke about about patterns and colour in Nature." Morphogenesis will fea-

ture all that. If the series called the Bindu Bovine involves Akhil's artistic interpretation of a cow using elements of fractal geometry, the UnBinary series — inspired by the geometric works of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian — features subjects in binary colours. So, what's his personal favourite? Akhil states, "The series on animal superheroes, which talks about a few animals that are endangered and close to extinction." In that series, close to Akhil's heart, are sketches on animals like Moo Deng, the hippopotamus from Thailand Zoo that went on to become an Internet sensation, and Tajiri, the giraffe at New York's Animal Adventure Park, which has become a symbol for giraffe conservation. The Anands — both Viswanathan Anand and his wife, Aruna — are cheerleaders for their son's pursuit of art. Anand recalls, "When I was growing up, my father — who worked in the Railways — had a more conventional job, which meant strict working hours. He tried to keep up with my passion for chess, and was very supportive. I think it's the same for me; I try to keep up with Akhil's artistic pursuits." He points out that there are many similarities between chess and art. "In chess, you are forced to sit in front of a board and focus on the job at hand. It's quite similar in art; you have your tools in front of you, and you need to focus. While technology can help with research, you still need to get back to the job at hand and focus," he explains. When they are not discussing chess or art, the Anands dig a lot into music; English musician Sting and Irish rock band U2 are among their favourites. Anand explains, "For me, it was quite surprising that Akhil ended up liking a lot of music from my teenage days. He is well informed of that time. I have the habit of listening to my favourite song from an album and moving on, but he listens to all of them. But, he is also my gateway into modern music and singers." Even as Anand keeps up his duties as a mentor to the current crop of rising Indian chess talents, he still plays doting dad at home. Akhil and Anand bond over not just art and music, but also enjoy playing a game of table tennis whenever they find time. And of course, they also play chess. Akhil is yet to win against Anand — but he is currently mastering the hyper accelerated dragon and London System to get one up against the Indian chess legend. He says, "I play a lot of chess, but my dream is to become an environmental lawyer and bring upon awareness about issues like climate change and global warming. I want to fight against plastic and air pollution. My role model is BR Ambedkar, the father of the Constitution of India."

Is Labubu mania still going strong or has India moved on? And how do you snag one?

They are small, mischievous, and impossible to ignore. With their fang-toothed grins and pointy ears, Labubus — once just quirky vinyl toys — have unexpectedly become 2025's "it" accessory. No longer the preserve of toy collectors, these blind-box figurines are now dangling from luxury bags, trading hands across continents, and powering a global consumer craze. Labubu first sprang to life in 2015 as a character from The Monsters, a children's book series by Hong Kong-born, Belgium-based illustrator Kasing Lung, whose work draws heavily from Nordic mythology. Initially produced in Taiwan, it was not until Pop Mart — the Beijing-based toy giant founded by Wang Ning in 2010 — licensed the character in 2019 that things really took off. Using a signature blind-box model, where each sealed box contains a mystery figure, Pop Mart turned Labubu into a must-have collectible.

But the tipping point came in November 2024, when Lisa of South Korean girl group Blackpink clipped one to her Louis Vuitton bag and later revealed her "Labubu obsession" in a Vanity Fair interview. The Internet lost it. And just like that, labubu became a viral hit across Asia and beyond. It did not stop there. International stars like Dua Lipa, Rihanna, Kim Kardashian and even David Beckham have been spotted with Labubus — often attached to their bags, backpacks or keychains — catapulting the character into global fashion consciousness. By mid-2025, Pop Mart had released over 300 variants, with a mint green, 131 centimetre (4.3 feet) tall Labubu figure being sold at Yongle International Auction in Beijing in June 2025 for 1.08 million yuan (approximately ₹1.3 crore). As Labubu mania went global, Pop Mart CEO Wang Ning's personal stake in the company skyrocketed, placing him among China's 10 richest individuals. With an estimated net worth of ₹1.734 trillion, Wang is now one of the youngest billionaires in the country. In India, Labubu's rise has been just as wild. The Pop Mart outlet at Bangkok's Siam Centre has become a kind of pilgrimage site, as Mumbai-based filmmaker Faraz Arif Ansari discovered earlier this year. "So, I got my first one (labubu) end April, early May, from Bangkok's Pop Mart. It is the best stocked and priced," Faraz recalls. "Then I started hunting for limited editions. Got a few from resellers in Bangkok and others through friends travelling around Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore." While blind boxes cost around 550 THB (almost ₹1,500) in Thailand, resellers in India list the same figurines for ₹6,000–7,000. "It's mad," they (Faraz identifies as non-binary, their pronouns are they/ them) laugh. "Even the Thai resellers are way cheaper — and they bargain too. I picked up a few limiteds for about 1,500 THB (₹4,035) each." Their collection now sits at around 20 figures — placing them somewhere between casual collector and hardcore enthusiast. Anchit Kapil, co-founder of CrepDog Crew (CDC), was quick to spot the trend brewing on Instagram. "Honestly, it was both demand and instinct," he says. "Collectors in India were already hooked, but there wasn't a reliable source to buy from — at least not without months of waiting or risking fakes. We've always curated what's culturally relevant, so bringing Labubu into the CDC world just made sense."

The reaction was instant. "We teased a drop in May, and it went off," he says. "It validated itself before we even launched." Unlike traditional retailers working off projections and data, CDC taps directly into the pulse of youth culture. "Sometimes the community tells you what's hot before the numbers do," he says with a shrug. What has been surprising, even to Anchit, is the diversity of Labubu fans. "You had sneakerheads who were like, 'Why would I buy a toy?' And now, some of them are our most die-hard collectors," he laughs. "It's not just lads in their 20s either. Labubu's gone beyond 'toys'. It's gender-neutral, age-neutral, everything-neutral. We've seen uni students and working professionals alike building collections." While CDC took the organic route, another player moved fast and commercial. Abbas Ali Zaveri, founder and CEO of HypeFly India (an online retailer of sneakers and streetwear), approached Labubu like he does all things viral — with a sharp eye and even sharper instincts. "We're always scanning global trends. If it's hot internationally, we want to be the first to



bring it here," he says. "It's about aspiration. People see something trending in the US or Korea and don't realise they can get it locally." Abbas's team first clocked Labubu in May. "We did a test run. My team wasn't convinced, they were like, 'Who's paying ₹5,000 for a toy?' So I posted a few videos myself. First day, we sold 10. I knew we were onto something." A bold 'buy one, get one' launch followed just as the buzz reached fever pitch. "In that first week of pre-orders. It wasn't just a toy anymore; it was a flex." Abbas believes Labubu's success is about access. "It's a gateway to the culture. Before, being part of the hype scene meant dropping 45,000 on Off-White or Jordans. Now with 5,000, you're in." Of course, success breeds counterfeits. "Fakes are everywhere," Abbas says bluntly. "We've got a zero-tolerance policy. If it doesn't come with a Pop Mart invoice, we won't stock it." He recalls spotting a fake barcode (the only way to tell if the Labubu is fake) that said "Top Marie" instead of Pop Mart. "The bootleggers are getting smarter. It's a full-time job keeping ahead." Labubu figures and dolls are seen on display at a Pop Mart store in Shanghai, China

That is where trusted platforms like HypeFly and CDC stand apart, offering guarantees in a sea of fakes. "Anyone can buy a ₹2,000 labubu online," he says. "But they've no idea what they're getting. There is no regulation." Interestingly, while demand in Mumbai and Delhi is beginning to plateau, interest is spreading elsewhere. "Now it's Dehradun, Sikkim, the Northeast," Abbas says. "Tier-2s and 3s are waking up to it. It's going national." From toy to trophy in the world of luxury resale, Labubu has taken on a new identity, that of an accessory enhancer. "Bag charms are very 'in' right now," says Anvita Mehra, founder and CEO of Confidential Couture. "We've always seen that desire to personalise classics like Birkin and Kellys. Now, Labubu fills that space." Hermès has long capitalised on this with its Rodeo charms, and Anvita believes Labubu works on the same principle. "It's about adding personality. We once gave out free Labubus to some of our customers from stock we picked up in Thailand. But in the resale market in India, they can fetch up to ₹20,000 because most people want Labubus almost immediately. But like all trends, it eventually cools." She believes Labubu landed at just the right moment. "It's access, availability, and the thrill of the hunt. People were asking friends to pick them up from Dubai or Singapore. Now they're everywhere. That might cool the hype slightly but the desire to personalise luxury is here to stay." A collector's tale

Still, few stories capture Labubu's magic quite like Ensito's (@ensito_20). Based in Charlotte, North Carolina, he has a collection of over 500 Labubus — figurines, pendants and plushies. "It all started when a friend asked me to pick some up during a trip to London," he says. "I queued for three hours. Sold out two people ahead of me. But I was instantly hooked." He was drawn in by the designs, the blind-box surprise, and the narrative behind each release. "At first, they were just fun accessories to go with my designer bags. Then it became about the stories. The thrill of the hunt is real." Ensito has shopped Labubus across the US and Europe, visiting over 15 Pop Mart stores. "London used to be the best, but now it's all lottery-based. In the US, you've got to be fast online. I've found Seattle and parts of Texas are easier — less competition. But for him, the real game-changer has been TikTok Lives. "Pop Mart has live shopping channels in the US, UK, and now Canada's gearing up too.

Wagamama is here. What other new Mumbai restaurants should you try this weekend



Mumbai's dining scene never sits still. Just when you think you have found your favourite pasta joint or sushi bar, along comes a fresh opening, promising slow-fermented breads, house-cured meats, or cocktails made with foraged botanicals. From sleek chef-driven menus to playful pop-ups turned permanent, here is a guide to Mumbai's buzziest new restaurants. The arrival of Wagamama in Mumbai's Churchgate is, at the very least, a confident flex. Housed inside the restored Cambata Building — neighbours with Eros Cinema and Churchgate station — the global ramen chain has made its India debut with a splash of polished minimalism and fast-casual fun. The interiors play to type: neutral tones, soft industrial textures, communal benches, and open kitchens designed for flow. It is slick, unfussy, and designed to look great on your feed without being overtly curated. You can see the London blueprint in every inch and that is both its strength and limitation.

The menu is a calibrated "greatest hits" — katsu curry, bang bang cauliflower, kare burusu, gyozas and donburi bowls all present and accounted for. The ramen is warm and filling, though the broths do not quite achieve the layered complexity of other pan-Asian spots in the city. The chicken tantanmen hits the right spice notes, but the noodles can feel just a touch overcooked if you wait too long. That said, it is comforting in the way airport ramen rarely is. The star, surprisingly, might be the banana katsu — a golden-fried dessert that balances sweetness and crunch with more finesse than expected. Drinks include refreshing cold-pressed juices and zingy mocktails, although cocktails lean a bit too saccharine for their own good. Over 50% of the menu is vegetarian or vegan, which is admirable, but expect a very pan-global interpretation of Asia, not necessarily regionally accurate, nor pretending to be. Set across two levels in the West Zone of Phoenix Palladium, the newly launched Gourmet Village is less a food court and more a curated lifestyle destination for the city's discerning diners. Reimagining the traditional mall dining experience, this upscale zone brings together over 50 restaurants and cafés under one roof. Designed to feel like an eclectic village, the space is laced with greenery, warm lighting, and airy al fresco sections that invite you to linger a little longer than you had planned. There is much to explore: Burma Burma brings its vegetarian Asian fare. Their new dessert menu, called The Sweet Life, fuse timeless classics with Burmese flavours and modern textures. Created in collaboration with award-winning pastry chef Vinesh Johny, the seven-part menu is a punctuation mark to the meal, whether it's jaggery-and-coconut-laced reinterpretations or delicate international patisserie with a twist. Kuuraku offers an authentic izakaya experience (skewers, sake and all), and Delhi's cult favourite Andrea's makes its Mumbai debut with a menu of polished global comfort food. The presence of local staples like Kitchen Garden by Suzette, Foo, Le Pain Quotidien, and Cream Centre adds familiarity, while spots like Fountain Sizzlers and The Silver Train dial up the nostalgia. Sweet finishes come courtesy Harley's Fine Baking and Gold by Ice Cream Works, while the plush Game Palacio lounge throws in some leisure. Fireback is what happens when high-concept Thai cuisine meets good execution. With Chef David Thompson, the revered interpreter of Thai culinary history, at the helm as culinary director, the Fireback outpost in Mumbai gets a number of things right. The space inside Nilaya Anthology is predictably striking, but never sterile. Earthy tones, a glowing Jospier grill at centre-stage, and atmospheric lighting all give it a refined warmth. It feels upscale, but not intimidating. Food-wise, it is not all pad thai and green curry. Expect jungle curries that bite, salads that crunch with toasted rice and lime, and flame-grilled proteins rubbed with pastes made from scratch. Highlights include the smoky lamb chop grolae with crispy shallots, a well-balanced scallop salad brightened with coconut and lemongrass, and the soft-shell crab red curry, which manages to be indulgent without overwhelming. The crab fried rice is unfussy but elevated. The vegetarian options are more than just filler, especially the grilled pumpkin and sweet potato in grolae sauce, but meat and seafood still lead the narrative. The cocktail menu, created by Varun Sharma, who also leads Comorin downstairs, is layered playful. The Tom Yum Highball has its flaws but it does have bite, while the Galangal — with whisky and pickled galangal brine — is all depth and intrigue. Not every drink hits the mark (some teeter toward over-invention), but the overall bar experience

feels well-matched to the food. Prices lean high, and it is not for the unadventurous. But if you are looking for one of the city's most assured openings this year, Fireback is your place. A meal for two, including drinks, will cost ₹4000; Entrance through Comorin at Nilaya Anthology, Peninsula Corporate Park, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400013 Not new, but newly reimagined, Sahib Room & Kipling Bar at The St. Regis Mumbai returns after a renovation, and it will charm those with a taste for the slow and subtly theatrical. The relaunch brings a revitalised elegance to this jungle-retreat-meets-regal-dining-room, without abandoning its old-world soul. Think tented ceilings, dark wood flooring, antique mirrors, and carved wooden accents. The updated space pays homage to Rudyard Kipling and the princely shikar camps of yore, with richer textures, sleeker lighting, and a new Spectacle Kitchen that lets guests witness the finesse behind the flames.

The kitchen continues to serve its unapologetically traditional Indian menu, dialled up with refinement. The murgh rezala is well balanced, while the panch phoron ki sabzi and dahi ke gullar highlight how vegetarian dishes can be treated with as much reverence. The Rampur ki gosht dum biryani and sahib ki yakhti remain rich and comforting. The new drinks programme is an ambitious trail through Kipling's India. From The Bay (Mumbai) to A Sip from the Mahal (Bundi), each cocktail carries layers of local memory, finished with aromatic flourishes and sleek storytelling. The beverage list, featuring Indian spirits, heritage liqueurs, and reinvented classics, is quietly sophisticated and contextual. A meal for two, including drinks, will cost ₹4000 plus taxes; 462, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400013 What began as a cheeky, sugar-dusted pop-culture café in Delhi has now evolved into a full-blown Japanese restaurant in Mumbai. At its newest address in Jio World Drive, Harajuku Tokyo Café & Bakehouse opens its most ambitious outpost yet with a multi-sensory restaurant-bar and a bright, pastel-soaked bakehouse.

Split across two zones, the 72-seater restaurant comes with a sushi conveyor belt by day and sake bombs and karaoke by night. Expect sushi boats, robot DJs, manga murals, and retro signage, all orchestrated around a menu co-curated with Japanese chefs Asami Indo and Higuchi Nariaki. The food is comfort-led but layered: from the spicy, buttery seafood shio ramen and coal-fired miso salmon off the robata to zany street-style plates like corn dogs, bubbling UFO chicken platters and the umami bomb Naruto's Rush cocktail (yes, vodka, gochujang, and ramen broth in a drink). The sushi section is no afterthought either — the rainbow roll and spicy avocado cream cheese roll are fast favourites.

The cocktail menu, curated by Fay Antoine Barretto, comes with Japan-meets-nightlife references, where every drink tells a manga-worthy story. Think Cali Me Kimchi, spiked with tequila and house-fermented heat, or the delicate Whisper of the Peach, a Kyoto-inspired blend of Japanese whisky and chamomile. Next door, the 12-seater Harajuku Bakehouse is all soft pinks and Japanese patisserie glow. With soufflé pancakes, cottony cheese-cakes, and a new pet-friendly dessert menu. After years of whispers, Nando's has finally fired up its grills in Mumbai with a flagship casa now open in Kamala Mills, Lower Parel. Known for its cult-favourite flame-grilled peri peri chicken, the brand's arrival is less of a soft launch and more of a full-blown entry for fans of their spicy, saucy poultry. The space itself is bright and expansive, blending Nando's signature Afro-Portuguese design cues with India-specific warmth. Think rustic textures, woven pendant lights, and enough red to match the sauce. The chicken is dependably good. The skin is crisp, the insides juicy, and the basting options range from the gentle lemon and herb to the masochistically fiery extra hot. It is the kind of food that does not pretend to be complex; it is about craveability, not craft. That said, if you're expecting gourmet, slow-cooked nuance, this is not your spot. It is loud, quick, and a bit brash but that is also its charm. Sides like peri-peri fries and spicy rice still hit the spot, but the vegetarian options feel like an afterthought compared to the protein-rich offerings. Service is fast but not fussy, and there is enough room to host a group without elbowing for space. A meal for two will cost ₹1000 inclusive of taxes; Unit 2, Ground Floor, Trade Garden Building, Kamala Mill's Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel

PCOS is now PMOS, but women remain sceptical: 'A name alone doesn't change struggle'

Polycystic ovary syndrome aka PCOS has a new name now. She goes by Polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome (PMOS). Quite a mouthful, huh? According to a recent article published in The Lancet journal, the term PCOS is inaccurate, "implying pathological ovarian cysts, obscuring diverse endocrine and metabolic features", and contributing to "delayed diagnosis, fragmented care, and stigma", while curtailing research and policy framing.

Building on an international mandate for change, the researchers outlined a rigorous, multistep global consensus process for the name change, wherein accuracy was improved by omitting cysts and by capturing endocrine, metabolic, and ovarian dysfunction. PCOS has long remained under-recognised in India, affecting one in eight and about 170 million women worldwide, as per Lancet. Many normalise symptoms like irregular periods, fatigue, or weight fluctuations until they become severe. As the global shift toward PMOS gains attention, the conversation is slowly

beginning to move beyond fertility and ovarian health, toward larger concerns around metabolism, lifestyle, stress, and preventive healthcare. For India, not only does this open up newer discussions around social media-led self-diagnosis, the growing "hormone wellness" economy, and urban lifestyles worsening hormonal conditions among young women — it also raises an important question: will PMOS help people perceive the condition as a long-term health issue rather than only a reproductive concern? Soumyashree Mishra, a PCOS ovarian cyst survivor, says that the term Polycystic Ovary Syndrome never fully explained what the condition truly does to the body. Now, with conversations around its renaming to a broader terminology related to metabolic and reproductive dysfunction, people are asking whether changing the name will actually change the lived reality of those suffering from it. PCOS to PMOS: The reality of PCOS is not just a diagnosis written on paper, it is waking up not knowing when your periods will come, or whether they will stop at all. (Magnific)

Malaria's new frontlines: vaccines, innovation, and the Indian endgame



India's malaria story is no longer one of uniform burden—it's a fight against hidden reservoirs, remote geographies, and a parasite that won't quit. Elimination by 2030 is not just a goal—it's a test of whether science, policy, and public health can unite to defeat an ancient foe

In 2023, malaria infected nearly 294 million people and killed close to 6,00,000. Despite early victories in the fight against malaria, global progress has stalled in recent years. The parasites are adapting, becoming resistant to treatments, while mosquitoes are surviving insecticides. It's a shape-shifting enemy—and the old tools are slipping. India has reduced its malaria burden by over 80% between 2015 and 2023—but last year, tribal districts such as Lawngtlai (Mizoram) and Narayanpur (Chhattisgarh) still recorded malaria rates of over 56 and 22 cases per 1,000 people, respectively as per the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control—reminders that the parasite continues to thrive in several pockets long after national averages have improved.

While Africa faces mostly *Plasmodium falciparum*, India also battles the relapse-prone *Plasmodium vivax* which can lie dormant in the liver and reawaken weeks or, even months later. In Jharkhand, mixed infections account for nearly 20% of cases (NCVBD), complicating elimination. Even where incidence has dropped, the parasite can persist—lurking in asymptomatic carriers (people with no symptoms) or returning months after infection. After decades of setbacks, the first approved malaria vaccine—RTS,S—arrived in 2021. It offered about 55% protection in the first year, but efficacy waned by 18 months, requiring a fourth booster dose. The R21/Matrix-M vaccine, developed by Oxford and the Serum Institute, showed up to 77% efficacy in Phase 3 trials winning World Health Organization (WHO) approval in 2023. Fewer doses, low cost, and Indian production make it especially promising. Still, both vaccines target only one stage of the parasite, leaving reinfection and transmission a lingering threat. Whole-parasite vaccines: a stronger shot on the horizon. Instead of targeting a single protein, like in RTS,S and R21, whole-parasite vaccines expose the immune system to the entire malaria parasite—alive, but weakened. The experimental PfSPZ vaccine mimics natural infection using radiation-weakened *P. falciparum* sporozoite (the parasite's early-stage form) delivered directly into the bloodstream. Early studies showed that 96% of participants developed strong antibodies, with up to 79% protection after the third dose. Building on that foundation, a modified version called PfSPZ-LARC2, developed by Sanaria, may push efficacy even further. The simplicity of a one-dose regimen, despite the intravenous requirement, could make it a strong candidate for targeted use in outbreak zones or among hard-to-reach migrant populations in India. Unlike vaccines that target the parasite's earlier stage, PfRH5 acts during the blood stage, when symptoms appear and the risk of severe illness increases. Since RH5 is a vital protein for red blood cell invasion that the parasite can't easily alter, it offers cross-strain protection—a rare asset in malaria vaccine design. Phase 1a/b and Phase 2b trials in the UK, The Gambia, and Burkina Faso have shown promising outcomes. These vaccines could complement earlier-stage ones and may help boost natural immunity in people who've previously had malaria. Photomicrographs of *Plasmodium vivax* in Giemsa-stained thin blood films. Photo Credit: By Chavatte JM, Tan SB, Snounou G, Lin RT - Chavatte JM, Tan SB, Snounou G, Lin RT (2015). "Molecular characterization of misidentified *Plasmodium ovale* imported cases in Singapore." *Malar J* 14: 454. DOI:10.1186/s12936-015-0985-8. PMID 26577930. PMC: 4650842. "This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=122024897> Transmission-blocking vaccines

While the above vaccines aim to protect individuals, transmission-blocking vaccines (TBVs) target the parasite in the mosquito—halting its spread at the population level. Pfs230D1 induces antibodies that prevent parasite fertilization within the mosquito gut. In Mali, it reduced transmission by 78% in a Phase 2 trial. This strategy is especially relevant to India with a far higher proportion of asymptomatic carriers. "Our group and others in India are actively working on TBVs to address this reservoir," said Agam P. Singh, scientist at the National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi. India, too, is entering the TBV space with its own candidates. In July 2025, AdFalcivax was announced by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the country's first indigenous dual-stage malaria vaccine. Unlike single-phase vaccines, it combines pre-erythrocytic (PfCSP) and transmission-blocking (Pfs230 and Pfs48/45) antigens to both prevent infection and block mosquito transmission. "AdFalcivax has completed preclinical testing," said Subhash Singh, who leads the programme at ICMR-RMRC Bhubaneswar. In mice, it triggered strong immune responses lasting over four months—roughly equivalent to a decade in humans—and remained stable at room temperature for nine months, potentially aiding rural deployment. Progress is also visible beyond *P. falciparum*. A first-in-human trial in Thailand showed that the *P. vivax* TBV Pvs230D1M reduced mosquito transmission by up to 96%, another ray of light for India's mixed-species numbers. India, too, is not far behind. "A similar research program for *P. vivax* is underway, in collaboration with AdFalcivax co-inventors Sanghamitra Pati and Sushil Singh," said Dr. Singh.

Strengthening the immune response itself is another active front. A recent protein-based vaccine combined a ferritin nanoparticle with CpG—a type of adjuvant, or immune booster already used in hepatitis B vaccines—and cut liver-stage parasite burden by 95% in mice. AdFalcivax showed over 90% protection in mice even with alum, a mild and widely used adjuvant. "We saw protection on a par with more inflammatory adjuvants such as MPLA (a stronger adjuvant)," said Dr. Singh. "Whether this holds in humans remains to be seen." Scientists are also testing newer vaccine platforms such as mRNA, which allow vaccines to be made faster and tweaked more easily than protein-based ones. In 2025, researchers at CureVac and the U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH) encoded the Pfs25 antigen—targeting

the parasite's sexual stage—into an mRNA-lipid nanoparticle. They observed complete transmission blockage in mice, with antibodies lasting over six months from just two doses.

However, not all mRNA-based vaccine efforts are moving ahead smoothly. In early 2025, BioNTech's Phase I/IIa trial for its blood-stage mRNA vaccine candidate BNT165e was placed on clinical hold by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). While the company did not disclose the reason, it noted that discussions with regulators are ongoing. The pause highlights the hurdles of translating mRNA platforms into malaria vaccines. "mRNA and nanoparticle platforms can certainly be explored—alone or in combination," said Pawan Malhotra, emeritus scientist at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi. "But it's hard to predict what will work. *Plasmodium* is complex, unlike bacteria or viruses." A nurse administers a malaria vaccine to an infant at the health center in Datcheka, Cameroon January 22, 2024. File photograph | Photo Credit: REUTERS. A nurse administers a malaria vaccine to an infant at the health center in Datcheka, Cameroon January 22, 2024. File photograph | Photo Credit: REUTERS. Augmenting existing vaccines, blocking immune evasions. Beyond boosting the strength of the immune response, scientists are also exploring how to improve its aim—modifying malaria antigens to help the body recognise the parasite more efficiently. A new experimental vaccine links PfCSP—a surface protein from the malaria parasite—to MIP3a, a molecule that acts like a flare to draw in immune cells. In mice, it triggered stronger antibody and T cell responses than standard mRNA vaccines, reducing liver-stage infection by up to 88%. It hasn't yet been tested in humans, but it shows how tweaking the immune response could push malaria vaccines past current limits. Beyond vaccines, researchers are exploring how malaria hides from our immune system. *P. falciparum* uses RIFIN proteins to bind to immune 'off switches' like the LILRB1 receptor, shutting down immune cells. A new study describes an experimental, engineered antibody, D1D2.v-IgG, designed to block this interaction. Built from a segment of the LILRB1 receptor, the antibody binds to RIFIN 110 times more strongly than the natural version—outcompeting the parasite at its own game. By blocking this interference, it freed the body's LILRB1 to function normally, restoring immune attack in lab tests. Though still untested in animals, the approach could one day support new malaria therapies or enhance vaccine responses.

Gene drives and vector suppression. While engineered antibodies attack the parasite, CRISPR-based gene drives go after its vector. These tools insert fertility-disrupting genes into mosquitoes. In a landmark study, this approach wiped out entire *Anopheles gambiae* colonies within a year—with no resistance detected. But evolution rarely plays along. In the wild, mosquitoes might adapt, ecosystems could shift, and once released, gene drives can't be recalled. The idea of eradicating a species raises thorny ethical and ecological questions. So, researchers are exploring subtler strategies. One 2025 study edited a single letter in the FREP1 gene, blocking the malaria parasite from developing inside the mosquito. With a gene drive, this parasite-blocking trait spread to over 90% of lab mosquitoes in ten generations—without harming their fertility or survival. But the parasite remains under pressure to evolve around the block, and infected mosquitoes still live long enough to potentially transmit malaria if the trait doesn't saturate the population. Another team took a different route—engineering mosquitoes to die sooner only when infected. By disabling an immune gene, they created a self-limiting feedback loop: the more malaria spreads, the more it kills its own carriers. Because this strategy doesn't attack the parasite directly, it reduces the pressure for resistance. It's an elegant inversion—using the parasite's success against itself to shrink transmission, without eradicating the vector or requiring perfect coverage.

The Indian lens: challenges and the path ahead. The nation aims malaria elimination by 2030. It's an ambitious plan—but one that hinges on precision and persistence. Tribal and forested districts in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and parts of the Northeast are the last strongholds of malaria—often remote areas with limited healthcare access. Even in places where infections seem to be minimal, adults and older children often act as asymptomatic reservoirs, quietly sustaining transmission. A municipal worker sweeps the road in front of a wall painting that depicts Sir Ronald Ross, known for demonstrating that the Anopheles mosquitoes transmit the Plasmodium parasite, providing the first evidence-based explanation of malaria transmission. A municipal worker sweeps the road in front of a wall painting that depicts Sir Ronald Ross, known for demonstrating that the Anopheles mosquitoes transmit the Plasmodium parasite, providing the first evidence-based explanation of malaria transmission | Photo Credit: KVS GIRI. The dual-species landscape in India further complicates elimination efforts. "*P. cynomolgi*—a monkey malaria species—is the best model for *P. vivax* research," said Dr. Malhotra. "We were developing it 20 years ago with the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI), but strict monkey access laws and lack of scientific foresight stalled it." Despite these challenges in vivax research, efforts to develop a vaccine are gaining ground. Both Dr. Subhash Singh at ICMR and Dr. Agam P. Singh at NII confirm that *P. vivax* vaccine candidates are under active development. But even the most innovative science needs systems to carry it forward.

"We need a COVID-style push," said Dr. Malhotra. "Industry and academia must collaborate with proper funding. We've developed potent therapeutic antibodies against liver-stage parasites and now need partnerships to move them forward. A lone scientist in a lab can't do it all." The science is advancing—but it needs infrastructure and political will to match. Dr. Singh echoes the sentiment. "We are now concentrating on translating AdFalcivax's promising preclinical results into trials. Successful deployment however, will require good results over multiple stages of trials as well as regulatory approvals, likely taking at least 7–8 years." In addition, strong coordination between regulators, industry, and researchers is needed. ICMR has already floated an Expression of Interest seeking industrial partners to co-develop the vaccine. "Challenges that need to be addressed include producing GMP-grade components, developing immune biomarkers, and benchmarking efficacy against RTS,S and R21," added Dr. Singh.

"We definitely need vaccines, antibodies, new drugs—for both *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*," said Dr. Malhotra. "But that's not enough. Doctors need training, resistance must be tracked, and vector control has to keep pace." It must be a full-spectrum battle—from the molecular level to the community clinic. India's malaria story is no longer one of uniform burden—it's a fight against hidden reservoirs, remote geographies, and a parasite that won't quit. With next-gen vaccines, homegrown innovation, and growing scientific momentum, the country stands at a critical juncture. Elimination by 2030 is not just a goal—it's a test of whether science, policy, and public health can unite to defeat an ancient foe. The tools are here. Now, we must use them—decisively and everywhere the parasite still survives.

Structural cracks emerge in the India-U.S. strategic partnership



What is going wrong with India-U.S. ties, often celebrated by both sides as a definitive partnership of the 21st century? Is this just a glitch caused by a strident strain of American nationalism and its volatile champion, President Donald Trump, or is the current turmoil a sign of structural tensions that had been simmering beneath the rhetoric? Last week, only days ahead of the meltdown, this is how a State Department official described the prospects of ties with India to *The Hindu*: "The U.S.-India relationship is both strong and a high priority for the administration. The U.S. has long-term, strategic interests in partnering with India, including cooperating on space, defence, energy, trade, and technology. In the first six months of this administration, President Trump and Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi announced the COMPACT Initiative, and we've seen numerous high-level touch points between our leaders from the White House to cabinet officials. This shows the dedication the Trump administration has to the U.S.-India relationship."

And then the cracks came out in the open, and how. While the above statement reflects an optimistic strand—Secretary of State Marco Rubio shares this view, going by his past statements—a more sceptical approach towards India is gaining currency among the influencers of American strategy in Washington DC. They point to structural factors that could derail the gains made after a nasty showdown between the two countries after Pokhran 2 in 1998. A recent article by Ashley J Tellis titled 'India's Great-Power Delusions' is an example. Mr. Tellis used to be a strong votary for American 'strategic altruism' towards India. Strategy in both India and the U.S. is now hostage to the fickle sentiments of respective national audiences. In this game, the U.S. and India are not equal. There is a fundamental conflict between India's need to constantly advertise itself on the world stage and American scepticism of such power projections by anyone else, friend or foe. India used to maintain a benign strategic demeanour, articulating its ambitions in terms of human development, and carefully calibrating its claims for a larger global role. There was a bipartisan view that India's rise would be a global good. The rise of America First splintered American strategic outlook, and now only one part of it continues to be optimistic about India, while a strong strand is of concern.

These sceptics range from those who see an illiberal

turn in India's trajectory to someone like Senator Lindsay Graham, a Trump acolyte. The India First foreign policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to be more assertive internationally and also adhere to—not abandon—India's traditional path of strategic autonomy. India's new normal, which predicts military strikes in response to terrorism, is difficult for the U.S. to encourage. The American fear of a nuclear flashpoint undermines India's status as a stabilising power. Mr. Trump is especially concerned about nuclear instability. As a superpower, the U.S. is proud of its capacity to have parallel partnerships with rival pairs—Qatar and Saudi Arabia-UAE, South Korea and Japan, India and Pakistan, for instance. It would argue that each relationship stands on its own individual context and merits. The U.S. would not appreciate the same logic thrown back at it by its partners, however, and India's relations with Iran and Russia have been of particular concern for it. While the U.S. does not like India questioning its ties with Pakistan, it questions India on its ties with Russia and Iran.

India has interests in an increasing geographical spectrum of the planet, and its super power ambitions under Mr. Modi only heightens this desire of multiple alliances. According to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, it is 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'—'with all, development of all'—in foreign policy. "India is among the few that can simultaneously engage with Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Iran, the democratic West and the Global South, and the BRICS and QUAD," he said on March 23. This advantage of India could have been a currency in its relations with the U.S., and the world. But as it turns out, each one's relations with other countries is creating more rift in India-U.S. ties. A strategic lock-in within the U.S. does not sit well with Indian nationalism, and certainly not with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which views the West with scepticism. India's neighbourhood, which is of critical interest for the U.S., is now again a source of tension between the two countries. Mr. Trump did not care much about India's ties with Russia, as he himself wanted to reset the U.S.-Russia relationship. With his hopes of mediating an end of the Ukraine war dimming, the one point of convergence between America First and India First lost traction. What is left is U.S. concerns about India's involvement with BRICS, Russia and Iran and India's resentment with the new thaw in U.S.-Pakistan relations. The Trump administration is, on the one hand, exploring a detente with China; and on the other, scaling up cooperation with Pakistan, partly to wear it off from Beijing. Pakistan is also back in American calculus as a counter terrorism partner—just at the moment India is trying to expose its support for terrorism. India has always leveraged its market in ties with the U.S. But protectionist measures increased in the recent years as India sought to build up its manufacturing sector. Indian market has remained an unrealisable dream for the U.S. By insisting on a complete opening up of the market, Mr. Trump has brought it to a head. These are all structural factors that take the shine off India-U.S. ties, a trade deal or not.

PM mentions fort with 'world's longest cannon' in Mann Ki Baat



Mohammed Ismail said that the 14th century Bahmani fort is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which has failed in the upkeep of the monument.

However, they said, simply praising the fort on a national platform will not serve any purpose. Both the Bahmani fort and the Jama Masjid, located within the fort, have been in a state of 'utter neglect for decades'. The fort houses the second largest mosque in Asia, renowned for its unique architectural features. Despite their historical and cultural significance, the Bahmani fort and the Jama Masjid have been largely ignored by the Archaeology Department for years. The architecture of the 14th century Jama Masjid is believed to resemble that of the Cordoba mosque in Spain.

The grandiose arches in the Jama Masjid in the fort. It is said to be the second largest mosque in Asia, and is renowned for its unique architectural features. The Jama Masjid located inside the Bahmani fort in Kalaburagi witnesses water leakages during the rainy season. During the rainy season, water leaks from the ceiling of Jama Masjid, which is a matter of concern as it will damage the structure and its artwork. If authorities fail to take up repair and maintenance work immediately, the structural integrity of this architectural marvel may deteriorate further, they stated. The fort houses the world's longest cannon (Bara Gazi Toph) that measures 29 feet in length and has a circumference of 7.6 feet. This cannon can be a big draw for history buffs and tourists in general, but is not highlighted, they claimed.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for mentioning the Bahmani fort in Kalaburagi in the July 27 episode of Mann Ki Baat, archaeologists and researchers in north Karnataka have urged the PM to take steps for the restoration and conservation of the 600-year-old monument. Fortifications at the fort in Kalaburagi include a double-layer wall surrounded by a moat. Fortifications at the fort in Kalaburagi include a double-layer wall surrounded by a moat. | Photo Credit: ARUN KULKARNI. Archaeologist Rehman Patel, who has worked extensively on Bahmani monuments, said, "Instead of mere acknowledgement, concrete steps to restore and preserve the fort will truly honour the Prime Minister's words and help showcase these remarkable monuments to the world." Researchers Mohammed Ayazuddin Patel and

Cherlapalli Railway terminal: All aboard the hype, but mind the gaps

Raju, a portly man in his 50s, lugs two heavy bags as he scans the platforms at the sprawling Cherlapalli railway station. "Can you tell me on which platform the train to Nanded is arriving," he asks, beads of sweat forming on his brow despite the gathering clouds. He and his wife had set off from their home in Malkajigiri, a suburb in Hyderabad, two and a half hours early and paid ₹350 for an autorickshaw just to reach this new terminal, about 11 kilometres away. Moments later, as the skies open up, the couple scramble for cover near a police outpost on platform 1, dodging not just rain but scattered construction material too.

Seven months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the ₹430-crore Cherlapalli terminal—billed as South Central Railway's (SCR) swanky new passenger hub—the shine is starting to wear thin for many travellers. Daily footfall has jumped from 5,000 to nearly 30,000, with as many as 88 trains now using the station, including 57 on a daily average. Some originating trains from Secunderabad station, almost 11 km away, have been gradually shifted here, as redevelopment work picks up pace at the older terminal. The idea behind developing Cherlapalli into a full-fledged terminal was to decongest the overcrowded Secunderabad station. With long-distance trains increasingly running out of slots at the centrally located junction, SCR began moving select services to Cherlapalli while simultaneously ramping up renovation works at Secunderabad. Despite the majestic front elevation, spacious parking and two wide foot overbridges opening into each of the nine platforms, the station remains under construction. The platforms are yet to get full roofing, and given the inadequate seating, passengers either huddle at the entrance/exit buildings, wait on staircases, or loiter near stalls until their train arrives. Digital display boards that are few and far between add to the confusion, forcing passen-

gers to rush with luggage in tow the moment an announcement is made. A long ride before train journey. For many passengers, however, the biggest deterrent isn't what is missing inside the station but what lies outside: no direct buses, few autorickshaws and a near-total absence of wayfinding signage. "Public transport connectivity to and from various parts of the city is poor, while auto/cab fares are exorbitant. Ironically, in many cases, the fare to reach the station is higher than the train ticket itself," says P. Swaminatha Krishna, an elderly commuter from Gachibowli, nearly 36 km away. Passengers often pay anywhere between ₹250 and ₹1,500 for an auto or cab to reach the terminal, depending on distance and time of day. "Reaching the station costs way more than the train fare—₹125 to Visakhapatnam, ₹211 to Chennai or even ₹450 for a sleeper coach. It's absurd," says Shankar, a financial analyst and regular traveller from Gautamnagar, a little over 10 km away. The construction of rooftop is still in progress at Cherlapalli terminal in Hyderabad though the modernised station was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually in January 2025. The construction of rooftop is still in progress at Cherlapalli terminal in Hyderabad though the modernised station was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually in January 2025. | Photo Credit: NAGARA GOPAL. While SCR was said to be focussing on improved suburban connectivity, only two MMTS services currently stop here: train no. 47253/54 from Ghatkesar to R.C. Puram via Cherlapalli, Neredmet and Suchitra Junction and 47235/36 from Ghatkesar to Sanatnagar. "SCR should have linked MMTS services to major stations like Secunderabad, Kacheguda and Nampally. It takes 1 to 1.5 hours to reach Cherlapalli by road," says P. Bharadwaj, a member of the railway users committee. "Surely, railway officials can think of innovative solutions for improving available MMTS services."

Liquor major Pernod accused of withholding Scotch composition, age to avoid paying higher tariffs



French liquor major Pernod Ricard withheld the age and composition of its Scotch whisky imports to hide their true value and pay lower tariffs, news agency Reuters reported citing an investigation by India. The revelation has sparked a legal tussle after the company was asked to pay \$314 million in back taxes, the documents showed.

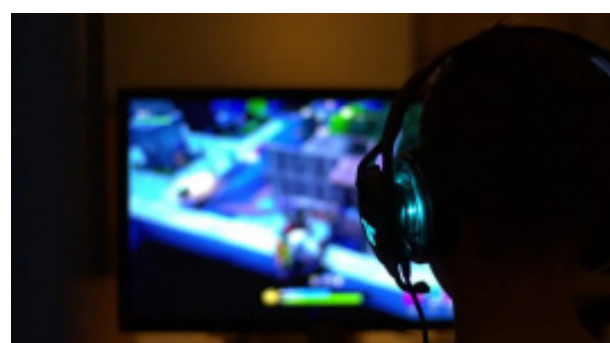
Pernod, with India being its largest global market by volume, is now seeking to quash the decision by arguing that it did not have access to key pricing data during the investigation, Reuters reported. Hundreds of fresh documents, including investigation reports and submissions made to the Delhi High Court over the past few months, have revealed unreported details of the high-stakes battle, the news agency reported in its exclusive. In September, the probe concluded that Pernod "intentionally complicated" its disclosures with new internal malt codenames to make the situation further difficult for customs authorities when comparing its imports with those of its rivals, Reuters noted, citing the documents. Pernod also did not declare "the true description of their imported malts (i.e. its exact composition and age) with the intention to hide the actual value of the imported goods and to avoid comparison," the report in a government filing stated. India has asserted that Pernod undervalued its bulk Scotch concentrate imports by 67.49 per cent, sharply reducing the 150 per cent tariff imposed by the Centre. According to court documents, Pernod's tax liability currently stands at nearly 30 billion rupees (\$314 million). With penalties in India, the total payout could be over \$600 million, which is a fifth of its Indian revenue of \$2.9 billion — and three times its profit in 2025. Pernod India rejects claims. However, Pernod India firmly rejected any wrongdoings and said it was following the legal route to handle the matter. Over a statement, the company said it "rejects any suggestion of wrongdoing", maintaining that it has been fully compliant and it is "addressing this matter through the appropriate legal channels and remains confident in its position". Pernod told the Delhi court that officials

in India wrongly excluded dozens of other companies that imported Scotch concentrates at lower prices while selectively comparing it to India's Allied Blenders and Distillers (ABD), Reuters quoted. The comparison needs to be scrutinised, with the quantity of Scotch concentrates imported by Pernod being on an average 15 times higher than ABD's, Pernod stated in its challenge. It also did not get access to complete import data used by investigators and so the findings are "grossly violative of the doctrine of natural justice," Pernod argued, according to the exclusive report. The Indian government, however, called for dismissing Pernod's challenge as "it was provided all relevant data and only ABD was found importing similar goods at the comparable level." Tax disputes, codenames row The tax dispute related to Pernod started in 2014, however, the final tax demand order was made in September last year. In 2024, Pernod expressed in front of authorities via a letter that the "inordinate delay" had "already caused grave prejudice to our business interests," the news agency quoted. A few allegations in the ongoing tax case revolves around the contentious "codename" system used by Pernod for its malts. Investigators have alleged that Pernod in 2011 started using new, India-specific internal codenames for its imported Scotch concentrates, even as the "ultimate product" made in India remained the same. "Simple products of Scotland, i.e., Scotch Whisky manufactured using common and prescribed methods by Scotch Whisky Regulations in the UK were complicated just to avoid comparison with similar goods imported," the Indian authorities stated. Pernod did not disclose composition details of such codes, which it described as RFM (Rich Fruity Malt) and HMW (Heavy Malt Whisky). It also argued the new codenames were for a "bouquet of reconstituted Scotch malts," Reuters reported. Pernod's growth and challenges in India India contributes roughly 10 per cent of Pernod's global sales, according to Reuters. An antitrust case and a separate ban in New Delhi has now led Pernod to fight against the allegations of liquor policy violations. Even as Pernod has denied the allegations, it has continued to expand across India, where it owns 24 production sites, reported Reuters. Moreover, in 2024, it unveiled plans to open its largest malt distillery in Asia in the Indian state of Maharashtra, Reuters noted. According to investigators, the imports involved in the tax dispute were sent from Pernod subsidiary Chivas Brothers UK and the profits earned by undervaluing the whisky were transferred to the "ultimate holding company" in France, the report revealed. "Utmost attempts were made by the Pernod Ricard Group subsidiaries to keep their expenses towards customs duty disbursements to the minimum and generate maximum profits" for Pernod India, they alleged.

Supreme Court upholds 28 per cent retrospective tax on online gaming

Supreme Court, retrospective tax, retrospective tax on online gaming, tax on online gaming, online gaming, Indian express business, business news, current affairs The proceedings before the High Court dealt with whether online games under the platform would be considered games of skill which attracts 19% GST or one of chance in which case 28% GST would apply. In a major ruling, the Supreme Court Wednesday upheld the decision of Goods and Services Tax (GST) authorities to demand 28% retrospective tax on online gaming. A bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan said "online gaming activities, including fantasy sports and other games played on digital platforms, involving staking upon uncertain outcomes, constitute betting and gambling for the purpose of GST framework".

The court held that GST levy on online gaming is constitutionally valid. "GST of the supply of actionable claims arising from betting and gambling is constitutionally valid and does not transgress Articles 366(12) (which defines goods) and 366(12A) (which defines GST) of the Constitution," the bench said. The top court was hearing an appeal by the Directorate General of Goods and Services Tax Intelligence (Headquarters) challenging a Karnataka High



Court judgement which quashed the GST department's show cause notice issued under the CGST Act to online gaming company GamesKraft Technologies Pvt Ltd seeking payment of Rs 21,000 crores dues. The Supreme Court had stayed the High Court decision in May 2023. The proceedings before the High Court dealt with whether online games under the platform would be considered games of skill which attracts 19% GST or one of chance in which case 28% GST would apply.

Air India cuts June-July domestic flights by a fourth amid jet fuel price surge due to Iran war



After curtailing its international flight schedule amid headwinds due to the West Asia crisis, Air India has decided to reduce its domestic flights as well at least for a couple of months. According to the latest available flight schedule data from aviation analytics company Cirium, the Tata group airline's scheduled domestic flights for the June-July period are down by over a fourth on a sequential basis. As per the data, the airline is scheduled to operate 22,868 domestic flights in June-July, down 26.7% from 31,184 flights in April-May. While Air India confirmed that it is temporarily rationalising domestic flight operations, it didn't comment on the extent of the curtailment. Airline schedule data is updated regularly, which means that the current schedule could change further.

"In continuation of our previously announced adjustments to select international services between June and August 2026, we have temporarily rationalised operations on certain domestic routes during the same period, with a reduction in frequencies on select routes. These adjustments are driven by the sustained impact of high fuel prices on overall operations," an Air India spokesperson said. "Air India will continue to monitor demand and operating conditions closely, with a view to restoring frequencies as conditions stabilise. Passengers impacted by these changes will be proactively assisted with re-accommodation on alternative flights, complimentary date changes, or full refunds, as applicable," the airline spokesperson added. On May 13, the loss-making carrier had announced substantial cuts to its international network, which had come under severe stress due to the surge in international crude oil and jet fuel prices amid the West Asia crisis. Even before the West Asia war broke out in late February, Air India's international opera-

tions were already under stress due to the continued closure of Pakistan's airspace since late April of last year, when tensions between India and Pakistan rose in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. Even before the West Asia war, jet fuel accounted for about 40% of Indian airlines' operating costs. The conflict and its impact on fuel prices has led to a jump in the fuel's share in the carriers' cost structure. Notably, while only a fraction of the international jet fuel price hike has been passed on for domestic flights, Indian carriers have to cough up the full international prices—which have more than doubled since late February—for their international operations. That is a key reason why Air India significantly curtailed its international operations. But the cuts to its international schedule have not been able to fully offset the impact of high jet fuel prices on the airline's overall operations, which is a major reason why Air India has now decided to reduce domestic flying as well, according to sources in the know. According to information provided by the airline and flight schedules filed by it, about 250 weekly international flights—outbound and inbound—have been cut for the June-August period. This reduction is on top of flights that have been cut in recent weeks amid the West Asia war. As per Cirium data, Air India will be operating about 27% fewer international flights in June-August than it did in the corresponding period of last year. The airline's international schedule for June-August this year lists 10,427 international flights—inbound plus outbound—down from 14,195 in June-August 2025. "The adjustments have been made in response to a combination of factors, including continued airspace restrictions over certain regions and record high jet fuel prices for international operations, which significantly impact the commercial viability of certain planned services," Air India had said on May 13, adding that despite the schedule curtailment, it will still be operating over 1,200 international flights a month. "Despite the challenges and beyond these adjustments, Air India will continue to operate more than 1200 international flights every month, retaining a robust international network that spans five continents, including 33 flights per week to North America, 47 flights per week to Europe, 57 flights per week to the UK, 08 flights per week to Australia, 158 flights per week to the Far East, Southeast Asia and SAARC regions, and 07 flights per week to Mauritius (Africa)," the airline had said. While the carrier had said that it continues to work closely with the regulators, airport authorities, and industry partners to restore full capacity as soon as conditions permit,

Wegovy and eye stroke risk: What experts say about vision concerns



There has been increasing discussion worldwide about a potential link between some weight loss and diabetes medications, including semaglutide-based drugs like Wegovy, and a rare optic nerve condition called Non-Arteritic Anterior Ischemic Optic Neuropathy (NAION), sometimes informally known as an eye stroke. The British Journal of Ophthalmology study published in March 2026 notes that Ischaemic optic neuropathy (ION) is a rare but vision-threatening complication recently linked to GLP-1 receptor agonists, particularly semaglutide. Using over "30 million reports from the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (2017–2024)", the team noted that among 31,774 semaglutide cases, Wegovy demonstrated the strongest signal for ION compared with Ozempic. In fact, the analyses showed higher odds in men, "and confirmed greater risk with Wegovy versus Ozempic". "These findings highlight a potential dose-dependent safety concern that warrants urgent prospective evaluation to guide prescribing and regulatory policy," it stated.

Should people on the medications be worried?

Commonly described as an eye stroke, NAION occurs when the blood supply to the optic nerve is suddenly disrupted, causing rapid, serious damage that is, in most cases, irreversible. Patients frequently wake up to find their vision has deteriorated overnight. There is no surgery to reverse it, said Dr Vineet Sehgal, senior consultant, Sharp Sight Eye Hospitals. The optic nerve is among the most blood-dependent structures in the human body. Even a brief interruption in its supply can cause lasting damage, he said. Dr Chaitanya Vemu, senior consultant, ophthalmology,

KIMS Hospitals, Thane, said Ischaemic optic neuropathy usually occurs in one eye. "However, it's important to note that current evidence only suggests a possible link, not a confirmed cause-and-effect relationship," said Dr Vemu.

What's Wegovy's link with the optic nerve?

Dr Vemu noted that researchers are examining whether rapid metabolic changes, blood sugar fluctuations, dehydration, or vascular effects associated with GLP-1 receptor agonist drugs might contribute to circulatory problems in the optic nerve among those who are vulnerable. "However, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, and heart disease, which are common in patients taking these medications, are known risk factors for NAION. This makes it hard to determine if the drug alone is responsible," Dr Vemu stressed.

Should patients stop taking Wegovy?

Dr Vemu noted that patients should not panic or suddenly stop their medication without talking to their doctor. "The overall risk seems to be very low, and these medicines still provide significant benefits in managing obesity and diabetes for many people. However, anyone who notices sudden blurred vision, changes in their visual field, dimming of vision, or eye discomfort while taking these medications should seek immediate eye care," said Dr Vemu.

What to note?

Anyone currently on semaglutide-based treatment who notices sudden blurring of vision, an unexplained dark patch in their visual field, or any abrupt change in eyesight should see an ophthalmologist the same day. "Not a scheduled appointment. That day. Before starting the treatment, clearance should be sought from an ophthalmologist," stressed Dr Sehgal. Patients with existing risk factors for optic nerve disease should have an open, honest conversation with both their prescribing physician and an eye specialist before beginning treatment, he added. "In ophthalmology, early action is often the only action available. Vision lost to an eye stroke rarely returns. The window to protect it is smaller than most people ever expect," said Dr Sehgal. Moreover, regular eye check-ups are especially important for people with diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, or existing optic nerve issues. "Staying hydrated, controlling blood pressure and blood sugar, and promptly reporting any visual symptoms can help lower complications and support early intervention," said Dr Vemu.

Why Rajeev Khandelwal drinks tea in 56-year-old cups every morning

Actor and host Rajeev Khandelwal recently shared an emotional memory related to his daily ritual of drinking tea in 56-year-old tea cups every morning. "When mom and dad passed away, I decided to use only the cups that my mom bought in the 70s. I asked her where she got them, and she said that at the time of her marriage in 1970... they went to the Bangladesh border in the northeast, where he was posted. When she passed away in 2019, and then dad in 2022, we were discussing what all we would take... I said, I want these cups with me. So, I have five of these cups and saucers from our mom. I have tea in this every morning," he told Curly Tales in a candid conversation. Intrigued by this daily ritual, we asked an expert about how personal objects often carry nostalgic value over time. On the surface, they are simply old cups and saucers. Psychologically, they are much more than that, reflected Delnna Rrajesh, psychotherapist, energy healer and life coach.

From a mental health and grief perspective, Delnna shared that human beings do not form attachments only with people. We form attachments with rituals, smells, places, routines, objects, textures, and ordinary moments connected to the people we love. "A cup used every morning, a handwritten recipe, an old chair, a perfume bottle, a watch, a shawl, a diary, a familiar plate at the dining table. To the outside world, these may look like objects. To the person carrying the memory, they often become emotional anchors," said Delnna.

One of the most misunderstood aspects of grief is the assumption that healing means "moving on" or emotionally detaching from reminders of loved ones. "In reality, healing is often not about letting go completely. It is about finding healthy ways to maintain connection while continuing to live life. From my work as a psychotherapist, I often see people quietly holding onto deeply personal rituals after losing someone they love. A father who still waters his late wife's plants exactly the way she did. A daughter who sleeps with her mother's shawl folded beside her pillow. A son who continues making tea in his parents' favourite mug every morning. These rituals are rarely about the object itself. They are about continuity of connection," Delnna continued. And there is something profoundly regulating about that. Grief can create an emotional rupture in the nervous system. "Familiar objects and rituals often help restore a sense of



continuity, grounding, and emotional safety. The morning cup is no longer just about tea. It becomes a moment of remembrance. A quiet conversation. A feeling of closeness to someone physically absent but emotionally deeply present."

At the same time, grief also needs gentle balance. One of the healthiest ways to navigate grief is to create small bridges between memory and everyday life. "Speak about the person you lost. Allow yourself meaningful rituals if they comfort you. Share stories. Look at old photographs. Write down memories when emotions feel heavy. But also slowly return to life through routines, nourishing food, sleep, movement, work, prayer, community, therapy, or emotional support when the burden feels too heavy to carry alone. Healing grief does not mean the relationship disappears. It means the relationship changes form. You learn to continue loving the person while also giving yourself permission to keep living," described Delnna. At the same time, there is an important distinction to make from a psychological perspective. Holding onto meaningful objects can be healthy, comforting, and healing. Delnna noted that when possessions become the only way someone feels able to function, or when grief becomes completely frozen around preserving objects, emotional support may become important. "Healthy remembrance allows connection while still allowing life to move forward," expressed Delnna. Grief is not always loud. "Sometimes grief sits silently at the breakfast table, wrapped around an old cup and saucer, carrying memories that still feel warm decades later," said Delnna, highlighting that it is "not weakness, attachment, or inability to move on".

'Something this rare': Assam CM spotlights albino hog deer sighting in Kaziranga

India is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. Different pockets of the country's vegetation are home to a range of species, both common ones and those unique to this country. Recently, Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma brought to light a rare albino hog deer sighting in Kaziranga National Park on X.

Not every day does one witness something this rare

The sighting of an albino hog deer in stands as a symbol of the richness of our wildlife. It highlights our resolve to conserve and ensure that even the rarest species continue to thrive in the forests of Assam. "Not every day does one witness something this rare. The sighting of an albino hog deer in Kaziranga @kaziranga stands as a symbol of the richness of our wildlife. It highlights our resolve to conserve and ensure that even the rarest species continue to thrive in the forests of Assam," he mentioned in the caption of the video post. The albino hog deer is a small cervid native to the region of the Indian subcontinent and Indo-Gangetic Plain. It is characterised by white fur, pink eyes and pale hooves.

What leads to albinism?

Tejashree Joshi, Head of Environmental Sustainability, Godrej Enterprises Group, says that spotting albino animals in the wild is extremely rare, and getting to see one in a mangrove ecosystem is even more unusual. "Albinism, caused by the absence of melanin pigment, can make survival difficult in nature as these animals often struggle with camouflage, visibility to predators, and sensitivity to sun-



light," she tells indianexpress.com. According to her, mangroves are among the most biodiverse ecosystems, supporting a wide range of birds, reptiles, insects, and marine species, and rare sightings such as these reflect the ecological richness and health of these habitats. Joshi believes protecting mangrove ecosystems is extremely essential, not only for safeguarding biodiversity, but also for ensuring vulnerable and rare species continue to survive in the wild.

Other albino animals in India Beyond hog deers, India is also home to a variety of albino species, such as the Gaur, Indian cobra and primates like rhesus macaque. While the macaque was spotted at Ramkrishna Nagar town in Sribhumi district of Assam last year, an albino wild boar was found roaming in the mountain areas of the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu. The white Gaur can be occasionally seen in the Manjampatti Valley.

It can wait. He is only 15: Aakash Chopra on Sooryavanshi's India call-up



GNS News Agency, June 3

With most fans and experts clamoring for the prodigal Vaibhav Sooryavanshi to be fast-tracked to the Indian senior team after his latest heroics where he slammed a 29-ball 97 on Wednesday against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL Eliminator, former India player Aakash Chopra wants to be more patient with the youngster. "We are still two years away from the next World Cup. There is plenty of time. Yes, picking Vaibhav Suryavanshi for India based on his IPL form is an exciting thought. You can't ignore it because the IPL is

India's top T20 tournament. He is breaking records left and right. You have to take him seriously. He is special, no doubt. But you don't make changes just for the sake of it," Chopra said on Star Sports. "It's simple. For someone to be dropped, they need to fail. If someone is already a topper in the team, why would you replace them just because someone else scored big runs? Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson are those toppers right now. You don't replace them. If you do, then in two or three years when Vaibhav has a lean patch, the same thing will happen. The next young batter will be pushed in. So, the selectors, Ajit Agarkar, RP Singh, Pragyan Ojha, will face pressure. But they must do what is best for Indian cricket. They will make the right call. His India debut doesn't have to happen tomorrow. It can wait. He is only 15. There is no rush," he added. Earlier this month, the national selectors set the ball rolling for Sooryavanshi's inclusion in India's white-ball setup, with the 15-year-old included in the A squad for the tri-series to be played in Sri Lanka starting June 9. As previously reported by The Indian Express, the selectors are keen on fast-tracking the young batting sensation in the white-ball team with the upcoming T20 series in the UK against Ireland and England or the series in Zimbabwe in July being a definite possibility.

Sooryavanshi's mantra is 'I don't give a damn about any bowler': Jurel

GNS News Agency, June 3

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi may have caught the imagination of the cricketing world with his exploits this season in the 2026 IPL but the secret to his success lies in the simplicity of his approach, according to his Rajasthan Royals teammate Dhruv Jurel. Jurel had himself played an impressive knock against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Eliminator on Wednesday – a 21-ball 50, but he and almost every player who took the field was overshadowed by Sooryavanshi's record-breaking knock. The 15-year-old smashed 97 in 29 balls and over the course of the innings, he broke Chris Gayle's record for most sixes in an IPL season. He also fell just three runs short of Gayle's record for fastest IPL century. "The best thing about Vaibhav that I have noticed is that he doesn't plan anything," Dhruv Jurel said at the post-match press conference. "Because he practices a lot and he always backs himself. That's what he does every time he goes out and plays. The best thing about him is that he backs himself. He doesn't even have a shadow of doubt that 'I am not able to do it,'" he added. "When we go to an academy, (we are told) 'Don't watch the bowler, watch the ball,'" said Jurel. "As 17-year-olds, we always watch the bowler (and think) he's a big name. But really, he just watches the ball. That's all." "His mantra is 'I don't want



give a damn about any bowler." Having already scored 175 in the Under-19 World Cup final, Sooryavanshi showed no signs of pressure in the Eliminator. Put to bat first by Sunrisers Hyderabad, he raced to his fifty off 16 deliveries and maintained the tempo throughout his whirlwind knock. Sooryavanshi blasted a barrage of sixes with every SRH bowler, including captain Pat Cummins, bearing the brunt. Overall, the teenager hit as many as 12 sixes and five fours on the night. This took his tally of sixes for the season to a whopping 65. Gayle held the previous record of 59 which he had set in the 2012 season of the IPL.

Why Roland Garros groundskeepers are turning to salt to save clay from heatwave



For decades, clay courts have been associated with long rallies, high bounces and physically draining tennis. But at this year's French Open, players have repeatedly said Roland Garros is playing faster than usual. The reason is not a change in balls or court construction alone — it is the weather. Paris is currently experiencing an unusually intense early-summer heatwave, with temperatures crossing 35°C during the opening week of the tournament. Groundskeepers say the conditions are unlike anything they have dealt with in late May. "What we're experiencing is unprecedented," Philippe Vaillant, head of court maintenance at Roland Garros, told the Associated Press. "Even the weather services say it themselves: it's unprecedented to have temperatures this high for such a long period at this time of year." The heat is fundamentally altering how clay behaves. Why hot weather changes clay courts

Clay courts are moisture-dependent surfaces. Unlike hard courts, their playing characteristics are directly tied to how much water is retained beneath the top layer of crushed brick. When temperatures rise sharply, moisture evaporates faster. The surface becomes drier and harder, which changes the speed and bounce of the ball. Players at Roland Garros have already noticed the difference. World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka said the conditions were "boiling hot" and that "balls are flying, everything is much faster." Traditionally, clay slows the ball down because moisture creates more friction between the surface and the ball. But dry clay reduces that resistance. The bounce becomes quicker and lower, favouring aggressive baseline hitting over attritional rallying. The shift is significant because Roland Garros has historically been the slowest Grand Slam surface. This year, players are increasingly comparing conditions to hard courts during afternoon sessions. The science beneath the red clay: What appears to spectators as a simple layer of red dirt is actually a complex five-layer structure nearly 80

centimetres deep. At Roland Garros, the courts are built using large foundation stones, gravel, volcanic rock residue, compacted limestone, and finally a thin layer of crushed red brick. According to Vaillant, the limestone layer is the most critical component because it retains moisture and provides structural stability. The red brick layer is mainly cosmetic and helps players slide. If the limestone dries out excessively, the court can crack. More importantly, the surface becomes dangerously slippery. Vaillant compared overly dry courts to an ice rink, warning that players could lose footing while sliding into shots. "The crushed brick layer is 3 to 5 millimetres thick," Vaillant explained. "The most important part is the limestone layer underneath. That's the actual playing foundation. This limestone layer must remain moist at all times. It's compacted crushed stone maintained through water supply. If we let it dry out too much, the courts could crack."

"The crushed brick is mainly there for colour and as a material that provides some sliding ability and an important visual contrast, since the limestone is almost white," Vaillant said. How Roland Garros is keeping the courts alive To combat the heat, tournament staff have dramatically altered maintenance routines. "We're forced to water the courts a little more, of course," Vaillant said. Normally, clay courts are watered at fixed intervals. This year, groundskeepers are soaking the courts every evening to replenish moisture deep beneath the surface. During matches, courts are also being lightly watered between sets — something rarely required under standard French Open conditions. Another key tool is calcium chloride, a salt compound spread across the courts in flake form each morning. "Which is basically just salt," Vaillant said. "We spread it over the courts in flake form in the morning. It melts on contact with water and helps retain surface moisture." The compound slows evaporation and helps the courts retain consistency through long matches played in direct sun. Groundskeepers say the substance effectively "reactivates" moisture in the crushed brick layer during the day. The maintenance operation is massive. Around 200 groundskeepers are working across 18 competition courts and 15 practice courts during the tournament. Why the courts have not deteriorated further Ironically, heavy rainfall earlier in May may have prevented a larger problem. "We were able to let the rain do its job," Vaillant said. "It recharged all our water-retaining layers." That reserve has helped the surface survive several consecutive days of extreme temperatures without severe cracking. Without those earlier rains, the courts may have dried out far more aggressively.

Over 80 surfers from six states set for Indian Open of Surfing 2026 in Mangalore

Mangalore: Indian surfing reaches a historic milestone this week with the upcoming seventh edition of the Indian Open of Surfing 2026. As a major event on the national surfing circuit, it will showcase many of the country's top surfers at Blue Bay Tannirbhavi Eco Beach in Mangalore from May 29 to 31. As surfing prepares for its debut at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games later this year, the championship takes on greater importance beyond just winning domestic titles.

It includes competitions across categories such as Men's Open, Women's Open, Under-18 Boys, Under-18 Girls, Under-14 Boys, and Under-14 Girls. The event is expected to draw over 80 athletes from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Goa, making it a potentially landmark week for many of India's leading surfers.

The Indian Open, organised by the Mantra Surf Club and Surfing Swami Foundation under the Surfing Federation of India (SFI), has gradually become a key event on the national sports calendar. The Karnataka Government has maintained its support for the event for the seventh year in a row. This year's championship is likely to be the last major domestic evaluation before India chooses its squad for the Asian Games, making performances over the three-day event especially important. With limited spots in the national team, the competition has become much fiercer in recent months. This has turned the Indian Open into one of the country's most significant domestic surfing events to date.

Each heat in Mangalore is expected to have wider implications as selectors keep assessing athletes in preparation for India's debut in continental surfing. The event will also serve as the second stop in the National Championship Series, following the inaugural Little Andaman Pro 2026 held earlier this season, enhancing its significance in the domestic rankings. Much of the focus in Mangalore is expected to be on a group of surfers who have consistently led Indian competitions for the past few seasons. Ramesh Budihal is among the top contenders, renowned for achieving a major milestone in Indian surfing. He made history at the Asian Surfing Championships in Mahabalipuram by becoming the first Indian to reach the Open Men's final, ultimately winning a bronze medal.

This accomplishment was a significant breakthrough for Indian surfing on the international stage and established him as one of the nation's leading competitive surfers. His skill in handling pressure and his consistent performance in critical heats make him a formidable competitor in the Indian Open. Shivaraj Babu enters the championship with strong momentum after winning the Men's Open at the inaugural Little Andaman Pro earlier this year. Hailing from Tamil Nadu's competitive surfing scene, Shivaraj is known for smart wave selection, consistent performance in different conditions, and strategic discipline during contests. As the race for Asian Games qualification reaches its crucial stage, another impressive showing could greatly improve his standing.

Kishore Kumar remains one of India's most promising young surfers. In recent national competitions, he has gained recognition for his technical skill, calmness, and consistency in high-pressure situations. His previous performances at the Indian Open and several impressive results domestically in recent seasons have solidified his status as one of the country's top surfers, setting the stage for what could be a career-defining year. Srikanth D remains a strong competitor, increasingly recognized on India's surfing scene for his technically refined style. Instead of just aggressive maneuvers, he excels in rhythm, precise execution, and tactical awareness in close heats. His consistent performance at national championships has significantly boosted his reputation, especially as debates about Asian Games selection grow more intense. The women's competition is also anticipated to draw considerable attention, as several of India's top surfers are scheduled to compete in Mangalore. Kamali P enters the championship as a key figure in Indian women's surfing. Hailing from the Mahabalipuram surfing scene in Tamil Nadu, she has represented India on international stages while consistently



being among the top performers domestically. Her accomplishments have significantly contributed to boosting the visibility and profile of women's surfing across the country. With fluid wave riding and sharp tactical skills, she continues to be a strong contender for the event. Goa's Sugar Shanti Banarse has built a reputation as one of the country's top female surfers through her remarkable performances at national championships. Known for her fearless style and ability to adapt to varying surf conditions, Sugar has enhanced her standing both locally and internationally in recent years. Her participation adds to the anticipation of a highly competitive women's field at Tannirbhavi. Beyond the water contests, the Indian Open of Surfing has become a key showcase of the sport's quick growth along India's coastlines. Recently, Tamil Nadu surfers have excelled in various national events, while surfers from Karnataka aim to leverage their local knowledge and the conditions at Tannirbhavi for this year's competition. The championship has played a key role in establishing Dakshina Kannada and Blue Bay Tannirbhavi Eco Beach as emerging hubs for surfing and ocean sports in India, greatly enhancing the region's sporting reputation and coastal tourism appeal. As Indian surfing approaches a historic debut at the Asian Games, the significance of this year's Indian Open goes well beyond medals, rankings, or national titles. Over three days on Karnataka's coast, top surfers from the country will compete not just for national bragging rights, but possibly for the chance to represent India at one of Asia's premier sporting events.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi powers Rajasthan Royals into Qualifier 2

Mullanpur: The cricketing world once again bowed down to the generational talent of Vaibhav Sooryavanshi following his six-laden 97 off 29 balls before Jofra Archer broke the backbone of Sunrisers Hyderabad's muscular batting to set up a 47-run win for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL Eliminator here on Wednesday. The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi smashed as many as 12 sixes in his breath-taking knock and missed the IPL's fastest hundred by just a few runs. Rajasthan Royals slipped to 243 for eight after an ordinary last five overs, but the runs proved more than enough against a power-packed Sunrisers side that was all out for 196 in 19.2 overs. Archer removed the destructive trio of Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head and Ishan Kishan in the powerplay to effectively seal the Royals will face Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 2 here on Friday, with the winner meeting Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the final. The night belonged to two X-factor players — first Sooryavanshi, who toyed with the likes of Pat Cummins, and Archer, who ran through the Sunrisers' top order with his extra pace. Put in to bat, Sooryavanshi tore into Cummins and Co. with absolute disdain, similar to the treatment he had earlier given to bowlers like Jasprit Bumrah and Kagiso Rabada in the competition. Someone who keeps pushing his boundaries at such a young age, the left-hander went on a six-hitting spree (12 in total) as if the fans were watching a highlights package.

Tanisha-Dhruv get the serve to sing, beat Watanabe-Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16



On Thursday, at the Super 750, Tanisha and Dhruv lost the opening set, before sensationally bouncing back to beat Watanabe and Maya Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 and reach the quarterfinals. (Badminton Photo) On Thursday, at the Super 750, Tanisha and Dhruv lost the opening set, before sensationally bouncing back to beat Watanabe and Maya Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 and reach the quarterfinals. Jwala Gutta had once said she picked Ashwini Ponappa as a partner — not because of her smashes, which were excellent of course. But due to her serves. Now, Tanisha Crasto hoping to reach Jwala's heights in mixed doubles (she reached World No 6 with V Diju), is proving why a swell serving game can literally win you matches.

To get to match point at the Singapore Open, Tanisha sent forth a bambaoozer that confounded none less than Yuta Watanabe — a seemingly benign backhand wobble serve that left the Japanese skill-master confounded. Watanabe is a twice Olympic medallist and four-time World Championships podium finisher, including two silvers at mixed doubles. The Japanese 28-year-old isn't easily frazzled. The two hooting serves at the end, were just the finishing touches of a firecracker game. Her lari (garland) style of explosive bursts, as she strikes a whisk-like rotating pattern with Dhruv Kapila and goes about creating chances while never giving up, has been one of Indian badminton's most underrated progressions.

On Thursday, at the Super 750, Tanisha and Dhruv lost the opening set, before sensationally bouncing back to beat Watanabe and Maya Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 and reach the quarterfinals. Tanisha is very different from India's OG mixed doubles star Gutta whose game relied on her game smarts and big leftie attack with V Diju. Tanisha's game is more like popping up at different parts of her own court with swift movements, and finding gaps on the opponent's court before lasering in her ping shots with great energy and useful unpredictability which makes her re-

semble the Diwali mala cracker that travels and explodes. The decibel levels carry value of their own, like they used to for Carolina Marin.

Already an Olympian in women's doubles and of versatile utility in team events, she's not had the easiest times, given her reactive-reflexive high-risk game, which can cop a fair amount of errors. But she thrives in the chaos that mixed doubles tends to be, doesn't get afraid of front court confrontations, and can surprise opponents when she actually gets into textbook patterns. Dhruv is more methodical, the muscle from the back, who creates openings for Tanisha, but has a good understanding of forecourt exchanges too. His accuracy varies and injury concerns bog him down, but together they have the potential to pierce the thoroughly difficult top tier of mixed doubles someday. Losing the opener 21-8 to Watanabe-Taguchi, the Indians ensured an early lead in the second. Tanisha would send one over the Japanese heads to reach 11-8, but it was in breaking the 14-14 deadlock that Tanisha showed first signs of her audacity. She went after Watanabe with her angled smashes smacking one into his ribcage. She would pop up the shuttle at the net making a Watanabe kill difficult, because it was an arch, not a tumble at scything height to go up 18-14. A Taguchi service error gave Indians the set point to level. But it was Tanisha who once again made the shuttle pop up like a champagne cork, using her racquet frame, that gave them the 21-17 second set.

It is a testament to Tanisha's ability to play clutch, because even the highlights package had more of the Japanese winners through the game. The Indians, not technically the most refined, were merely staying afloat till 9-11 in the decider. In some rallies — like the one to get to 12-11 — Tanisha's only job was to scream panicked prods to Dhruv to take the shuttle, as he did all the work. There is no unspoken understanding or some poetic connection between these two that makes them a good pairing — just clear (and loud) communication where a 'Dhruv' or 'Me!' is yelled out by Tanisha, when going for the shuttle. But the ruckus brings decisiveness. At 16-12 to pull away for a crucial lead in the decider, the perfect game came together. Dhruv managed to use his power to push both Watanabe and Taguchi to the back court, and Tanisha smartly turned her racquethead for a cross drop to the forecourt empty space. Still the Japanese came to within one points at 17-16. It's when Tanisha attacked Taguchi's serve savagely with an upright backhand return to create a melee. To get to 20-16, Tanisha sent her trick serve that saw Watanabe fumble. And on the third shot of the next points, it was once more her awkwardly exchanged return that drew out her error. The piercing warcry followed.

AFI condoles the demise of former shooter and veteran sports administrator Randhir Singh

New Delhi: The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Thursday extended its condolences on the passing of legendary shooter and veteran sports administrator Raja Randhir Singh, who passed away at 79 on Wednesday at his residence following prolonged illness. Randhir Singh competed in as many as five Olympic Games and was the first Indian shooter to win gold at the Asian Games when he won the men's Trap gold at the 1978 Bangkok Asiad. In 1979, Randhir Singh was conferred with the prestigious Arjuna Award, and also with the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Award for a historic sporting career. "The AFI is deeply saddened by the passing of former AFI Vice President, Raja Randhir Singh ji. AFI extends its heartfelt condolences to his family & friends during this difficult time.

"He served as Secretary General of the IOA and the OCA and was also a member of the IOC. He was elected president of the Olympic Council of Asia, leaving behind a lasting legacy in the Olympic movement and Asian sports administration. May his soul rest in peace," AFI post on X. His foray into sports administration began during his sporting career when he was appointed as the honorary secretary general of the Indian Olympic Association in 1987, a position he held till 2012. He also became a member of the governing board of Sports Authority of India in 1987 and held the role till 2010. He also held the position of the vice-chairman of the organising committee of the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games. Randhir Singh was appointed as the secretary-general of OCA in 1991.

The Testaments review: Chase Infiniti struggles with limited material in Handmaid's Tale sequel



their plum uniforms, these girls have nothing in common. They are privileged in the world of Gilead, for there are many others who have it much worse than them (We already met them in the prequel). Agnes is asked to guide the new 'pearl girl' Daisy (Lucy Halliday), a teenager who has been brought in from the 'sinful world' of Canada, and this is when the plot triggers. Their dynamics are straight out of a teen drama but unlike any teen show set in the regular world, the basic rules of engagement for these girls are Gilead-approved.

Despite the limited material that Chase Infiniti has here (after her brilliant outing in *One Battle After Another*), she plays Agnes like a doe who has the potential to be a cheetah. She is the 'it girl' who has (mostly) everything going for her. Her adoptive father (Nate Corddry) actually cares for her, but her vamp-ish stepmother Paula (Amy Seimetz) wants to get rid of her as soon as Gilead allows. The grooming she has had under Aunt Lydia is her biggest baggage, but she is yet to learn that this is weighing her down. She is vulnerable enough that you want to protect her, but she strongly carries the rebellious spark of her on-screen birth mother. Girls like Agnes are taught to prepare for their Prince Charming and are groomed to believe that even if he is a man in his 50s, it's 'God's will'. Daisy, who has come in as a spy from Mayday, pushes Agnes enough to look beyond her cocoon, and you see a sliver of hope as the season comes to an end. By then, it's too little too late, especially since the audience already knows what Gilead is all about.

Daisy is the very definition of that young soldier who has nothing to lose, and as she screams, "it's my choice" to June and follows it up with her willingness to die for the cause, you realise why it's only the young ones who are brainwashed into actually fighting the battles their previous generation started. She acts poised in public but it's only a matter of time before Aunt Lydia catches up to her. The testaments review *The Testaments* is a teen drama set in the dystopian world of Gilead. The grown-ups get to do very little here. We finally get to see the pre-Gilead life of Aunt Lydia, and how she grabbed a seemingly authoritative spot in a world run by men. The rest of the Aunts here are like the guards at gas chambers who have their blinders on. With all the talk about God that happens on this show, you are often reminded that even as a concept, 'God's will' is a tool to fool those who don't know any better.

It would be impossible to get into the world of *The Testaments* without knowing anything about the world of *The Handmaid's Tale*, so you wonder why creator Bruce Miller (who was also the creator of the prequel) treats many plot points as revelations. The horrors of Gilead aren't unknown to the viewers. It is, of course, macabre to watch teenage girls killing a man, but if you have witnessed Gilead in all its gory glory, it isn't shocking. You also wonder why Agnes' identity is treated like some sort of a secret when you already know who she is from the very start. It is quite odd that the show does not recognise Agnes' race while they keep bringing up her "lineage". A world as whitewashed as this cannot be blind to one's race. You also can't help but think that even though the show is supposed to be a 'dystopian' USA, girls and women in Afghanistan are actually living horrors much worse than this in the present day.

Months after controversy, Samay Raina shares glimpse from India's Got Latent sets



in the audience. However, whenever she is called next, we will all go," Yogita shared. Earlier this year, Samay had already hinted that he planned to return with the second season of *India's Got Latent* despite the controversy surrounding it.

What was the controversy around *India's Got Latent*?

Samay Raina's *India's Got Latent* had landed in major trouble after remarks made by guest podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia during one of the episodes sparked widespread outrage online. Ranveer had asked a contestant an explicit question involving their parents, leading to severe backlash against the creators and panelists. The controversy triggered multiple FIRs, police investigations, and intense public criticism, eventually forcing Samay to delete all episodes of the subscriber-only show. The incident also reignited national debates around freedom of speech, obscenity in comedy, and creator accountability on digital platforms. Following the backlash, Samay took a break from public appearances before making a comeback in 2026 with his stand-up special *Still Alive*. In the show, he candidly spoke about the emotional trauma and mental struggles he and his family endured during the controversy. He then appeared on *The Great Indian Kapil Show*.

Samay Raina has hinted at the return of his controversial show *India's Got Latent* by sharing a picture from its shoot on Thursday — nearly a year after the show landed in massive controversy over alleged vulgar remarks made during one of its episodes. The comedian first took to Instagram Stories to announce the revival of his COB chess tournament for longtime fans. Sharing the update, he wrote, "Organising my favourite chess tournament for old times' sake! I still love you chat." He also revealed the players' list, featuring names including Anirban Dasgupta, Vaibhav Sethia, Joel Dsouza, Tracy Alison, Prakhari Gupta, Vivek Desai, and Balraj Ghai.

Samay announces the return of *India's Got Latent* in another story, Samay Raina cheekily referenced his fanbase by posting a clip from his stand-up special *Samay Raina: Still Alive*. Sharing the video, he wrote, "Latent fans in my dms," while the clip played his comic line, "Yeh chess khel raha hai yaha pe?" However, it was his next story that truly grabbed attention. Samay Raina's *Samay Raina's Instagram Story* screenshot.

Samay surprised fans by sharing a behind-the-scenes picture from the shoot of *India's Got Latent*. Though he blurred the faces of the guests to keep their identities a secret, he captioned the image, "Uski bhi shooting chahi hai dostoo." The photo featured Samay holding a microphone while comedian Balraj Ghai stood behind him, seemingly confirming that the show is back in production. The update comes nearly a month after an alleged picture from the sets of *India's Got Latent* Season 2 surfaced online. The viral image reportedly featured actors Alia Bhatt and Sharvari on the panel. However, neither the makers nor the celebrities commented on the speculation. Coincidentally, YouTuber AARY's latest vlog also added fuel to the buzz around the show's return. In the vlog, his fiancée Yogita revealed that his mother had once been invited to appear on *India's Got Latent* but couldn't attend because the family was travelling to Goa.

"Did you know Auntie had received a call to appear on *Samay Raina's India's Got Latent*, but she couldn't go because we were in Goa? If she had gone, we would have sat

Sai Pallavi shares heartwarming family moments, calls spring 'beautiful'

: Southern star Sai Pallavi shared a heartwarming glimpse into her springtime family moments and calling the season "beautiful" because of their presence in her life. Pallavi shared a reel video featuring all the fun time she spent with her parents, grandparents, and her sister. For the caption, she wrote: "My Delilah! Spring is when you're here. Thank you for making our lives beautiful." Pallavi also added the song *Plain White T's* iconic 2005 track *Hey There Delilah*, which was nominated at the 50th Grammy Awards in 2008 for Song of the Year, as the background score for her video montage. Pallavi started her acting journey with uncredited roles and dance show appearances. However, she gained the spotlight with the 2015 Malayalam film *Premam*. Pallavi

has starred in the films *Kali*, *Middle Class Abbayi*, *Maari 2*, *Paava Kadhaigal*, *Love Story*, *Shyam Singha Roy*, *Gargi*, *Amaran* and *Thandel*. Her song "Rowdy Baby" is the first South Indian video song to reach one billion views on YouTube. She was last seen in the Hindi film *Ek Din*, a romantic drama film directed by Sunil Pandey. It also stars Junaid Khan in the lead roles. It is a remake of the 2016 Thai film *One Day*. As per the synopsis, a wish-granting bell gives the reserved and lovestruck Rohan a single precious day to be with his beloved Meera. She will next be seen in the upcoming magnum opus "Ramayana: Part 1" starring Ranbir Kapoor and Yash. The run-time of the asset is heavily dominated by CGI

Kartavya 'child star' Harpal is actually 33; more popular than Aishwarya, Shah Rukh Khan



Yuvhvir Ahlawat, who played the role of Harpal in Netflix's *Kartavya*, is actually 33 years old. Yuvhvir Ahlawat, who played the role of Harpal in Netflix's *Kartavya*, is actually 33 years old. Netflix's latest film *Kartavya* has been in the headlines since its release recently. The movie's leading star Saif Ali Khan impressed fans once again, with his cop portrayal. However, there's one question that has gotten everyone thinking — who is the Haryana boy Harpal, for whom Saif takes on the entire system? The actor's name is Yuvhvir Ahlawat and unlike what people have been assuming, he isn't a child artist but a 33-year-old man. He is currently trending and has already beat Vijay, Aishwarya Rai, Jr NTR, and Shah Rukh Khan, to emerge as the most popular star on IMDb right now.

Who is Yuvhvir Ahlawat?

In *Kartavya*, Yuvhvir Ahlawat plays Harpal, a child who is being mentally and physically abused and is pushed to commit murder. Many may believe he is a new face but the actor has been doing theater for nearly a decade. He has

also been associated with director Feroz Abbas Khan's grand play *Mughal-e-Azam: The Musical*. He has performed on both national and international stages. He marked his big screen debut with Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar's *Saand Ki Aankh*, where he played Chandro Tomar's son. He also featured in Ranbir Kapoor's *Shamshera*. He has appeared in Bobby Deol and Vikrant Massey-starrer *Love Hostel*. The actor belongs to Sheriara, a village in Hajarjar, Haryana. His father, Gyan Singh Ahlawat, served in the Border Security Force. While discipline was ingrained in the family, Yuvhvir was shorter than his six-foot-something elder brothers and had innocent face of a child. This also led to his casting in *Kartavya*. However, the actor is in his 30s. In 2019, when his first film *Saand Ki Aankh* hit the theatres, he had revealed in an interview that people thought he was a child, even when he was 28 years old at the time. Because of his childish look, audiences assumed he was a child artist, and hence, he is able to essay roles of very young boys on screen. Every week, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) compiles a list of the most popular Indian celebrities, based on the number of visits on their profiles. While actors who have theatrical releases are mostly on top of the list, but this week, Yuvhvir Ahlawat aka Harpal was at the top of IMDb India's top 30 list. He beat many superstars like Aishwarya Rai, Vijay, and Mohanlal. The number of visits on his IMDb profile increased a lot since *Kartavya's* release on Netflix on May 15. Yuvhvir defeated Aishwarya Rai (at rank 3 after her Cannes visit), Vijay (at number 4 after becoming Tamil Nadu CM), Jr NTR (at number 24) and Shah Rukh Khan (out of the top 30) in the list. As per IMDb, the list features Indian stars trending worldwide: actors, directors, cinematographers, and writers.

MasterChef India winner Pankaj Bhadouria shares breast cancer diagnosis: 'Need prayers'



Celebrity chef and MasterChef India winner Pankaj Bhadouria has revealed being diagnosed with breast cancer. On May 28, she shared the news with her loved ones

on social media. She requested everyone to keep her in their prayers and gave a glimpse of her ongoing treatment. Taking to her Instagram handle, Pankaj posted a Story of herself talking about the diagnosis and her condition. In the video, she shared, "I just wanted to share with you all that I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Since all of you are like an extended family to me, I wanted to share this with you personally. Right now, I truly need your prayers and support. As they say, prayers work miracles. So please keep me in your prayers." The celebrity chef also shared a photo of herself from the hospital bed. Along with the post, she wrote in the caption, "I have been diagnosed with Breast Cancer. Need your prayers and support." In another story on Instagram, Pankaj shared a video of herself from the hospital while undergoing various medical tests. In the clip, she was seen in a hospital robe with a cannula on her hand. The text read, "Going for tests and more tests.....not a happy place to be."

About Pankaj Bhadouria Pankaj Bhadouria gained a lot of popularity after winning the debut season of *MasterChef India* in 2010, becoming the nation's first-ever *MasterChef* winner. Earlier, she had worked as an English teacher and reportedly quit her 16-year-long teaching career to participate in the cooking reality show. After winning the show, she also became a television host of many cooking shows, such as *Chef Pankaj Ka Zayka*, *Kifayati Kitchen*, *3 Course* with Pankaj, and *Rasoi Se* — Pankaj Bhadouria Ke Saath. She is also widely known on social media, through her YouTube channel and short videos of cooking tips and food recipes.

Kattalan review: Antony Varghese's actioner feels like a series of reels disguised as a film

Kattalan Movie Review & Rating: About 10-15 minutes into *Kattalan*, a feeling of puzzlement began to creep in. Suddenly, it felt like I had accidentally fast-forwarded through much of the movie and landed significantly ahead in the runtime, missing key points in the story. But then it hit me: I was in a movie theatre, and our technology hasn't advanced enough for each person to control the projection in a cinema hall without affecting others' experiences. After questioning my senses for a few more minutes, I slowly realised the issue lay with *Kattalan* itself, as the makers seemingly forgot to cover the massive pits they had carved out to trap the wild elephants in the story, rendering the whole movie incoherent.

Don't Miss | *Drishyam 3* movie review: A close shave for Mohanlal, Jeethu Joseph as Georgekutty battles himself Aanakolli, a hamlet located in the woods adjoining the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, is known for its wild elephant population. As the tuskers start posing a threat to the villagers' lives, they seek the help of notorious hunter, Maari (Sunil). Pretending to offer a helping hand, he enters the territory and slowly takes control of Aanakolli, and eventually becomes the head of a cartel involved in ivory trafficking. Years later, Maari faces a new challenge in his business after the cartel's fallout with Eddy (Kabir Singh Duhane). In his effort to fight back, he ropes in Antony Varghese (Antony Varghese Pepe), a smart, courageous, and strong ruffian. However, as time passes, it becomes evident that Antony has his own agenda for joining Maari's gang.

Watch *Kattalan* trailer here: While there are scores of movies with poor, shoddy writing, *Kattalan* might be the first Malayalam film that gives the feeling that no writing went into it. My point is not that its script is bad or that the setup, conflict, and payoff are underwhelming, but rather that there's hardly any writing in it. Instead of adding action sequences at regular intervals in the narrative, director Paul George and his team have essentially added some story as filler between the numerous action sequences. Even before establishing the world or the characters, *Kattalan* quickly jumps into the conflicts. Although we see Maari's flashback (played here with sharp menace by Raj Tirandasu) and how he took over Aanakolli and the cartel, even his character remains on the surface. Pretty much every time we see Maari, he is engaged in some massive illegal activity or planning one, with the focus solely on the crime and never on him. The only time we see him otherwise is in a lamely choreographed item song. In no time, we are picked up and dropped off in the middle of the battle between Maari and Eddy, where pretty much nothing happens other than fights and shooting. Although Action Sandhosh and Kecha Khamphakdee's stunt choreography is sleek and the action set pieces are stylish overall, they just aren't enough to uplift the movie beyond a certain point.

Even after Antony's entry, there's essentially no change in the way the story progresses. While one could argue that omitting his backstory and not sharing more details about him are a means to keep his character a mystery, this is pretty much the case with everyone else, and none of the characters possesses any real substance. Hence, one can only dub this lack of depth a major shortcoming in the script by Paul, Joby Varghese, and Jero Jacob. Either the writers thought a skeleton of a story was enough to make a feature film, believing the rest would be handled by action choreographers, or the movie has been invidiously butchered at the editing table, resulting in key portions of the narrative being lost. Whatever the reason, it has only ravaged *Kattalan*. Belonging to a shared film universe that includes director Haneef Adeni's *Nivin Pauly*-starrer *Mikhael* (2019) and the *Unni Mukundan*-led *Marco* (2024), *Kattalan* had the potential to be what its predecessors weren't: a decent movie. While *Mikhael* was plagued by silly writing, *Marco* was hollow to its very core, making it seem as if it was created solely for the title of "most violent Indian film ever." Both films centred around the feud between a few characters and offered little space or scope for further exploration.

In contrast, *Kattalan* revolves around a populace, their oppression, and the exploitation of forest resources. However, the makers never delve into any of this and focus solely on the stunt sequences, which, unfortunately, don't provide an adrenaline rush. *Kattalan* serves as definitive proof that no amount of electrifying background score and slow motion can create mass appeal that isn't already present in the script. Worse still, most moments in the movie feel as though they were designed solely with the intention of being cut into short reels for social media after *Kattalan's* OTT release. What further detracts from the experience is author-screenwriter Unni R's dialogues, which sound better suited for a literary work than a movie. Also, the film's blatant normalisation of the radicalisation and weaponisation of children is disturbing.

Although *Kattalan* features many characters, not even Antony's role is meaty. When unveiling character posters earlier, the movie's makers had revealed that *Kattalan* would feature two characters, Malik (Hanan Shaah) and Mano (Shon Joy). While they both make frequent appearances as Antony's henchmen, we don't even hear their names properly in the movie, let alone see them having any identity. Similarly disappointing is Dushara Vijayan's Lucy and Hipzster's (from *Avesham* fame) Aloka, who get nothing more than initial buildup. While Antony exudes swagger and executes the action sequences with panache, his acting comes across as artificial in every other scene. Most often, we see a smile on his face, which appears to be placed there to imply that he's composed and confident. However, this smile seems rather awkward, undermining the character's strength. *Kattalan* movie review: