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Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Launches Development Works in Kamepalli Mandal

“Khammam/Kamepalli, July 19 (Indian Chronicle):”“Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday inaugurated several infrastructure development projects during his visit to Kamepalli Mandal in Khammam district.”“He laid the foundation stone for a 33/11 KV electricity sub-station to be constructed at Adavi Maddulapalli village at an estimated cost of ₹2.85 crore. The new substation is expected to ensure a more reliable and uninterrupted power supply to the surrounding areas.”“Later, the Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated the construction of a BT road from Tallagudem to Narsayyakunta, passing through the MPPS School, at an estimated cost of ₹3.95 crore.”“He also launched another BT road project worth ₹5 crore, which will connect the Yellandu R&B Road to the

Kamepalli cremation ground via the Kamepalli Pedda Cheruvu.”“Speaking on the occasion, Bhatti Vikramarka said these projects would strengthen the region's power and road infrastructure, improve transportation, and provide better civic amenities to the public.”“The programme was attended by District Collector Divakara T.S., TGNPDCL Managing Director Varun Reddy, Yellandu MLA Koram Kanakaiah, Wyra MLA Ramdas Naik, SUDA Chairman Puvvalla Durgaprasad, TGNPDCL Director V. Mohan Rao, Chief Engineer Raju Chauhan, Superintending Engineer Inugurthi Srinivasa Chari, PR SE G. Venkat Reddy, Executive Engineer Mahesh Babu, Kamepalli Tahsildar Srinivasa Rao, and officials from various government departments.



Centre To Make Insult To Vande Mataram Offence

NEW DELHI, July19

Union home minister Amit Shah is set to introduce the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, seeking to extend legal protection to the national song “Vande Mataram”.

The proposed amendment aims to accord the national song the same statutory safeguards as the National Anthem, “Jana Gana Mana”. The Bill has been cleared by the Union Cabinet and has been listed in the Rajya Sabha for consideration and passage.

Once enacted, the legislation will amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, to make insulting “Vande Mataram” a punishable offence, placing it on par with the National Anthem.

Under the provisions, a person found guilty of intentionally insulting or obstructing the singing of the national song could face imprisonment of up to three years, a fine, or both.

The 1971 Act currently provides protection to the National Flag, the Constitution of India and the National Anthem against acts of intentional disrespect. The amend-

ment expands its scope to include “Vande Mataram”.

On July 9, the Union home ministry directed all states and Union Territories to play “Vande Mataram” before the National Anthem at official functions.

Earlier this year, the government announced a nationwide campaign to mark 150 years of “Vande Mataram”, recognising its role in the freedom movement.

Government ministries, educational institutions and public bodies have been encouraged to organise cultural programmes, discussions and events highlighting the song’s contribution to the independence struggle.

Revanth Links SIR Work To Nominated Posts

HYDERABAD, July 19

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday warned party leaders that a lack of participation in the ongoing SIR exercise would affect their prospects for nominated posts and party positions.

During a virtual meeting attended by deputy chief minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, PCC president B. Mahesh Goud, AICC state in-charge Meenakshi

individuals. Leaders should not visit Gandhi Bhavan until August 3,” he said.

The Chief Minister said 489 SIR-related meetings had been held across 119 constituencies and called for immediate attention to segments lagging behind. He directed district in-charge ministers to conduct reviews and said they would be held accountable for progress.

“In-charge ministers must focus on supervising the SIR process. They bear the ultimate responsibility. MPs must conduct regular reviews, even while attending Parliament sessions. Strict action will be taken against MPs who fail to perform their assigned tasks. Those designated as SIR in-charges for the party must ensure complete coordination,” he said.

He cautioned against relying solely on Booth Level Officer (BLO) reports and stressed on the role of Booth Level Agents (BLAs). He said the top 100 BLAs would get an opportunity to meet Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

“Leaders must effectively utilise the BLAs working on behalf of the party. MLAs, constituency in-charges, and chairpersons must examine the reports submitted by BLAs (Booth Level Agents) rather than just those from BLOs,” he said.

The Chief Minister directed ministers, MLAs, constituency in-charges and party functionaries to undertake intensive constituency tours over the next 10 days, comparable to an election campaign, and remain available in the field.

He said the Gandhi Bhavan team would monitor BLA and BLO reports continuously, and a comprehensive review meeting would be held on July 30 with constituency-wise reports. He also asked the PCC president and deputy chief minister to strengthen coordination among ministers, MLAs and party in-charges.



Spain Dethrone Argentina to Become FIFA World Cup 2026 Champions

Lionel Messi's battle-hardened Argentina take on silky Spain in the World Cup final on Monday as the first 48-team tournament in history reaches a climax in New Jersey.

The South Americans are striving to become the first team since Brazil in 1962 to win back-to-back World Cups, while Spain are eyeing a second title after their maiden victory in 2010.

The showpiece at the MetLife Stadium, the culmination of the 104-match tournament, is likely to be the final World Cup appearance for Messi, widely considered the greatest player of all time.

The three-time champions have shown an astonishing never-say-die attitude during the 2026 tournament.

They recovered from 2-0 down in the closing stages against Egypt in the last 16 and mounted another dramatic comeback in the final minutes of their semi-final against England.

Spain, on the other hand, have been almost flawless, conceding just a single goal in their seven matches so far and sweeping past France in the semi-finals, building momentum with each match.

Cultural Spelndour Marks Sri Jagannatha Ratha Yatra

Thousands join the Hare Krishna Movement's Sri Jagannatha Ratha Yatra with great fervor and devotion



Narsingi-Kokapet, Hyderabad | July 19th, 2026 (Sunday):The Hare Krishna Movement, Hyderabad, joyously celebrated the Grand Sri JagannathaRatha Yatra in Kokapet on July 19th, drawing thousands of devotees into a vibrant displayof devotion, tradition, and communal harmony. The magnificently decorated chariotcarrying the divine Deities of Sri Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra was pulled withgreat enthusiasm by devotees from all walks of life, accompanied by resounding Sankirtansand the generous distribution of prasadam throughout the procession.The Ratha Yatra commenced at the Trilight, Golden Mile Layout Road, Kokapet, with theceremonial first pull of the Ratha by ISKCON Founder Acharya Srila Prabhupada, andproceeded through the streets of Kokapet, passing through Rajapushpa Atria and GoldenMile Road, culminating at the Hare Krishna Heritage Tower, Narsingi. Residents along theroute joyfully offered prayers and received darshan as the majestic chariot passed throughtheir neighborhoods.The procession offered



participants a deeply spiritual experience, with devotees performi ngPuja and Archana at designated spiritual pit stops. Many offered coconuts, flowers, fruits,and other sacred items as tokens of devotion. The chariot, adorned with vibrant lights,flowers, and modern safety features—including air brakes, steering mechanisms, andcanopy adjustment systems—represented a harmonious blend of traditionalcraftsmanship and contemporary engineering. Over 500 devotees pulled the chariot inunison, symbolizing collective dedication and community solidarity, supported byvolunteers, announcement systems, and dedicated safety teams.The celebrations began with an inaugural Puja, Prathama Arati, and the customarybrooming ceremony performed by dignitaries. The event was graced by the presence of;Honorable Justice Sri Suddala Chalapathi Rao, Telangana High Court (Chief Guest);Sri Prakash Goud, MLA, Rajendra Nagar; Sri Sudarshan Reddy, Advocate General;and Sri Mungi Jaipal Reddy, TPCC Spokesperson , Rajendranagar; as distinguishedguests, and presided over by His Grace



Sriman Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa Prabhuji(MTech, IIT-Madras), President of the Hare Krishna Movement, Hyderabad, andRegional President of The Akshaya Patra Foundation (Telangana & Andhra Pradesh).Thousands participated in devotional singing, prayers, and the distribution of Vedic literature.Cultural performances—including skits by Basil Woods School children, colorfulrangoli presentations, and lively kolatam dances—enriched the festivities, and more than20,000 devotees were served Donna Prasadam. A grand fireworks display illuminated theevening sky, adding to the celebratory atmosphere.The program concluded at the Hare Krishna Heritage Tower, Narsingi, with Mega Kirtansand a Special Pravachan by Sriman Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa Prabhuji, followed by theFinal Arati to Sri Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra and dinner prasadam.In his address, Prabhuji highlighted the historical and spiritual significance of the RathaYatra, connecting it to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Sankirtana movement andVishwaguru Srila Prabhupada's global mission to spread Krishna consciousness.Vishwaguru



Srila Prabhupada explains that participating in the Ratha Yatra meansassociating directly with Lord Krishna. Anyone who takes darshan of the Lord seatedon the chariot, offers even a little service by pulling the ropes, or joins the kirtanreceives immense spiritual benefit. Such participation opens the doors to liberation. RathaYatra is a divine festival where the Lord Himself comes out to bless everyone, entering ourhomes and hearts to relieve us of anxieties and uplift our consciousness.Prabhuji also expressed heartfelt gratitude to all dignitaries, devotees, volunteers, police personnel, media, and government authorities for their support in making the event a grand success. The Hare Krishna Movement reaffirms that festivals like the Ratha Yatra play a pivotal role in nurturing spiritual awareness, unity, and peace, while offering devotees a memorable and sacred experience. Elaborate arrangements for prasadam distribution and visitor convenience ensured a seamless and spiritually uplifting celebration.

Thanks & Regards,
Public Relations Officer (PRO),
Hare Krishna Heritage Tower,
Hare Krishna Movement, Hyderabad,
Phone: 96400 86664 / 93964 16341 .

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

India-UK FTA opens new opportunities

As the historic free trade agreement with the United Kingdom comes into effect, culminating years of tough negotiations, a slew of opportunities beckons Indian exporters across key sectors. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a win-win proposition for both countries and would go a long way in deepening economic engagement and creating new opportunities for businesses, workers and investors. The most significant outcome is that the agreement will provide zero-duty market access for nearly 99% of India's exports, covering sectors like textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, marine products, chemicals and processed foods. Additionally, the social security agreement will provide support to Indian professionals working temporarily in the UK and strengthen the competitiveness of Indian enterprises. Indian professionals on temporary assignments will be exempt from double social security contributions for up to five years, enhancing the global competitiveness of our workforce. This provision is projected to benefit over 75,000 professionals and 900 companies across IT, financial, healthcare, education, telecommunication, and consultancy sectors. This is truly a significant moment for India, as its farmers, entrepreneurs and MSMEs will stand to gain.

The free trade agreement was signed in London last year in the presence of visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Keir Starmer. It is expected to boost bilateral trade between the two economies by \$34 billion annually and open new avenues for India's IT, financial, education, professional and business services sectors.

For the agricultural sector, the agreement provides zero-duty access to all products, with specific exclusions for chicken, pork, eggs, rice, and sugar. It also grants duty-free access to 97.1% of tariff lines for processed food products, offering Indian exporters an immediate edge in the UK's agricultural import market, which exceeds \$90 billion. Gems and jewellery exporters expect shipments to the UK to grow by 230% to \$2.5 billion within the next three years, while exporters of engineering goods expect sales to almost double to \$7.5 billion over the next four to five years. At the same time, the agreement safeguards sensitive farm products such as dairy, vegetables, apples, edible oils, oats, millets, cooking oils and others by placing them on the sensitive list, and no duty concessions have been granted to the UK on these items. Enhanced market access and regulatory certainty will support Indian service providers in IT and IT-enabled services, financial and professional services, healthcare, education, engineering, telecom and consultancy services.

FORMER CHILUKA NAGAR DIVISION Congress PRESIDENT MULAKALAPALLI RAJESH MUDIRAJ Leads Door-to-Door SIR Awareness Campaign

“UPPAL, JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): As per the directions of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, a door-to-door awareness campaign on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls was conducted under the leadership of former Chilkanaagar Division Congress President Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj. During the campaign,



residents were educated about filling out the SIR enumeration forms and submitting them to their respective Booth Level Officers (BLOs). Volunteers also explained the importance of completing the forms accurately to ensure that eligible voters' names remain on the electoral rolls. Speaking on the occasion, Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj said that the right to vote is a cornerstone of democracy and urged every eligible voter to fill out the enumeration forms and submit them to the concerned BLOs. He also advised citizens to approach the Congress Party's help desks if they have any doubts or require assistance in completing the forms. The programme was attended by A-Block President Amareshwari, Division President Mahender Mudiraj, senior Congress leaders Kondra Ramulu, Palnati David, Marapaka Sailu, Kurelli Yadagiri, Pagadam Ram Narsaiah, R. Balaram, Sudarshan, Anjaneyulu, Jaripothula Chandrayya, Bhanu, Mahender Reddy, Rambabu, Sandhya, and several Congress Party members and local residents.

RAJITHA PARAMESWAR REDDY Visits Free Mega Medical Camp at Sri Sri Nagar Community Hall

“UPPAL, JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Former Uppal Division Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy visited the Free Mega Medical Camp organized at the Sri Sri Nagar Community Hall on Sunday. Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the inauguration of the free medical camp as the Chief Guest. The camp was organized by Pratima Sai Charitable Society in association with the Sri Sri Nagar Welfare Association. Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy appreciated the organizers for conducting the free mega medical camp with the objective of promoting public health and social welfare. She commended the Sri Sri Nagar Welfare Association for taking up such a meaningful initiative for the benefit of local residents. She said that experienced medical specialists were providing general health check-ups, blood tests, blood pressure (BP) screening, diabetes, thyroid and joint pain examinations, along with free medical consultations and medicines for those in need. Among those present were Y. Arun Kumar, L. Srivani, Lalitha Devi, Krishna Veni, Soujanya, Uma, Anjamma, Adi Lakshmi, D. Vani, Rama Lakshmi, Ratna Kumari, A. Vani, Aruna, Sunitha, Uma Rani, Mounika, S. Nagaraju, Bharat Raj Goud, Y. Sudhakar Rao, Giri Babu, Appana Srinivas, Nanda Kishore, YSN



Murthy, Mallikarjuna Rao, P. Satyanarayana, Alle Krishna, M.S.V. Prasad, Satti Reddy, Ranga Reddy, Gajjala Venkata Reddy, Pandla Kishan Goud, Galayya, Phillips, Vidyabhushan Rao, Srinivas, Srinivas Reddy, Durga Prasad, Obul Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Bhaskar Reddy, Hanumanthu, Thokata Raju, Bakaram Arun, Bazar Naveen, Rangula Shekhar, and several other local residents and volunteers.

Every Congress Worker Must Strive to Make Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister: Siliveru Anil



“Warangal, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Youth Congress Konda Yuva Sena State Leader Siliveru Anil called upon every Congress leader and worker to take the party's ideology to the people from the grassroots to the national level, with the goal of seeing Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, become the Prime Minister of India in the coming years. He said that party workers should stand by the people by understanding their problems and ensure that the welfare schemes implemented by the Congress government reach every household. He added that the Congress Party would become stronger if its workers remained united and worked to uphold democratic values. Anil stated that Rahul Gandhi gives priority to creating employment opportunities for youth, extending greater support to farmers, promoting agriculture, increasing government investment in education and healthcare, ensuring social justice, and protecting the Constitution. He praised Rahul Gandhi as a leader who has consistently fought for the rights of farmers, employment for youth, women's empowerment, social justice, and the protection of the Constitution. He said Rahul Gandhi is moving forward with the vision of providing equal opportunities to every section of society. Expressing confidence, Siliveru Anil said that with the blessings of the people, Rahul Gandhi would become the Prime Minister of India in the coming years. He added that Congress leaders and party workers firmly believe that under Rahul Gandhi's leadership, the country will move towards greater development, equality, and stronger democratic values.

Congress Government Stands by Unemployed Youth; MLA Nayini Inaugurates Mega Job Fair



“Hanumakonda, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal West MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy said that the State Government is committed to providing employment opportunities for unemployed youth and is taking several initiatives to expand job prospects in both the government and private sectors. On Sunday, the MLA inaugurated the Mega Job Fair held at the Government Degree College (KDC) in Hanumakonda as the chief guest. Addressing the job seekers, he said that the State Government is giving top priority to skill development, employment generation, industrial growth, and attracting investments. He stated that the government is creating thousands of employment opportunities by encouraging the establishment of new industries. He urged every qualified and talented young person to make the best use of such job fairs and build a bright future. The MLA appreciated the participa-

tion of leading private companies in the job fair for offering employment opportunities across various sectors. He interacted directly with the job seekers to understand their educational qualifications, interests, and career aspirations. He also met representatives of various private companies and requested them to give preference to local youth in recruitment. Later, the MLA held a meeting with the Principal and faculty members of the Government Degree College to review the institution's infrastructure and the facilities available to students. He instructed the officials to prepare comprehensive proposals for the college's development and assured them that he would take the proposals to the concerned Minister and the State Government to secure the required funds. MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy said that strengthening educational institutions and providing quality education along with better employment opportunities for youth are among the Congress Government's top priorities. He added that ensuring employment for young people is a strong foundation for the State's overall development. The programme was attended by Youth Leader Vishnu Reddy, RTA Member Pallakonda Satish, College Principal Srinivas, public representatives, Congress Party leaders and workers, faculty members, representatives of various companies, and unemployed youth.

SIR Help Desk Set Up in Habsiguda on Parameshwar Reddy's Instructions; Inaugurated by Division President Kandi Shravan Reddy



Nayak, Suman Nayak, Lakshmi Narayana, Shiva, Anil Mamidala, Mahaboo, and several other Congress leaders and party workers.

Mamnoor Mandal Agitation Ends as MLA KR Nagaraju Calls Off Relay Hunger Strike

“Warangal, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): The relay hunger strike demanding the declaration of Mamnoor as a new Mandal Revenue Centre was called off on Sunday after Wardhannapet MLA and retired IPS officer KR Nagaraju offered lemon juice to the protesters. The MLA visited the hunger strike camp organised by the Mamnoor Mandal Sadhana Committee and extended his support to the protesters. Earlier, local residents and committee mem-



bers had submitted a memorandum to the MLA seeking the formation of Mamnoor as a separate Mandal. Responding positively, he made continuous efforts to resolve the issue. As part of these efforts, the MLA, along with committee members, met Revenue, Housing, Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy and explained the demand. Following the Minister's positive assurance, the relay hunger strike was officially withdrawn. Since Mamnoor is the MLA's native village, local residents and committee members felicitated him with shawls in recognition of his efforts towards achieving Mandal status for the village. The MLA also honoured the participants who observed the 48-hour relay hunger strike by presenting them with shawls and congratulating them for their determination. The programme was attended by Warangal District DCC President Ayub, Convener Erra Vijay, Co-Conveners Macharla Yadagiri, Bandi Sambaiah Yadav, Nallatheegala Koteswar, Nomula Mutha Reddy, Manne Odelu, Social Media Convener Kishore Kumar, Gudoori Papaiah, Medipalli Nagender, and other committee members.

Gandikota Kumar Extends Financial Aid to Bereaved Family in Manikeshwari Nagar

“OU JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Demonstrating compassion and prompt support, Secunderabad District DCC General Secretary Gandikota Kumar extended financial assistance to the family of Varikuppala Ramulamma, a resident of Manikeshwari Nagar, who recently passed away. Following Ramulamma's demise, her family approached Gandikota Kumar seeking financial help to perform the last rites. Responding immediately to their request, he provided ₹5,000 towards the funeral expenses. On the occasion, Gandikota Kumar conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and encouraged them to remain strong during this difficult time. The family members of the deceased, along with local residents, expressed their sincere gratitude to Gandikota Kumar for his timely assistance and humanitarian gesture. Gandikota Kumar currently serves as the Secunderabad District DCC General Secretary and is also a member of the Vadde Obanna Utsav Committee.



Help Desks Must Ensure Smooth SIR Process: Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Calls on Congress Cadre

“Uppal, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Former Uppal Division Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy urged Congress party workers to actively support the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process and ensure that it is carried out smoothly and efficiently. On Sunday, she inspected the SIR Help Desk set up at Vijayapuri Colony under the leadership of Congress Division President Eega Anjaneyulu Mudiraj. Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said that genuine voters should not face any inconvenience or lose their voting rights during the SIR process. She advised party workers to coordinate closely with the Booth Level Officers (BLOs)



and extend all necessary assistance to eligible voters. The programme was attended by Division President Eega Anjaneyulu Mudiraj, Telakala Mohan Reddy, Bazaru Jagannath Goud, Tummaladevi Reddy, Lingampalli Ramakrishna, Linga Reddy (Vijayapuri Colony President), Rajender Reddy, Kanchamida Srinivas, Anwar Pasha, Mahender Reddy, Khaja Moulana, Bommaji Ratnam, Venkatesh, Narasimha Reddy, Budiga Mallesh, Mohan Naik, Kachintha Kindi Srinivas, Anil Kumar, Suresh Yadav, Upender Yadav, Moulana, Khader Basha, Nagoor Basha, Mallikarjun, Bazaar Naveen Goud, Jilakapalli Peddi Reddy, Buccchi Reddy, Janga Reddy, Rama Rao, Srikanth Goud, Mamatha, Vijayalakshmi, Shanthi, Swaroopa, Bhavani Tirumala, Mahima, Anuradha, Sunitha, Renuka K, Renuka D, Venkatesh, Santosh, Ellamma, Anitha, Basavamma, Pramila, Manjula, Shankaramma, and several other Congress leaders and party workers.

Distribution of CMRF Relief Fund Cheques Sanctioned on the Recommendation of Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka



“Khammam/Chinthakani, July 19 (Indian Chronicle):“Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) cheques, sanctioned on the recommendation of Telangana Deputy

Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, were distributed to beneficiaries from Nerada village in Chinthakani mandal.“Five beneficiaries who incurred medical expenses at various hospitals received financial assistance under the CMRF. The beneficiaries were S.K. Babu (?23,500), S.K. Meerabi (?32,500), Gangula Indira (?22,500), Challa Lakshmi Narayana (?16,500), and S.K. Meerabi Maul Saheb (?19,000).“The cheques were distributed by Nerada Gram Panchayat Sarpanch Dusari Netaji.“The programme was attended by Village Congress President Mankena Nageswara Rao, Vice-Sarpanch Kota Balayesu, village leaders Chevula Tirupati Rao, Ponnamm Ramesh, Vanam Pulla Rao, S.K. Babu, Kota Tirupati, Venkulu, Sompugu Balakrishna, Kanakapudi Shankar Rao, and the beneficiaries.“On the occasion, the beneficiaries expressed their sincere gratitude to Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka for recommending the financial assistance under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Local Youth Should Get Priority in Kazipet Railway Coach Factory Jobs: MLA Nayini



“Hanumakonda/Kazipet, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal West MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy demanded that priority in employment opportunities at the proposed Kazipet Railway Coach Factory be given to local youth.“Expressing solidarity with the cause, the MLA participated in a padayatra (foot march) organised by the Railway Joint Action Committee (JAC) and various public organisations from Madikonda to Kazipet Railway Junction on Sunday.“Addressing the gathering, the MLA said the establishment of the Kazipet Railway Coach

Factory should fulfil the long-awaited aspirations of the youth of the Warangal region for employment. He stressed that local candidates must be given first preference in all recruitment at the factory.“He called upon all political parties to support the decisions taken by the Railway JAC and urged that the movement continue united under the JAC's leadership. He demanded that around 3,000 jobs in the coach factory be reserved for local youth.“The MLA further stated that the government and the concerned authorities should provide skill training to unemployed youth who lack the qualifications required for these jobs. He assured that they would also extend support for conducting skill development programmes. He said the region's development would be possible only by providing employment opportunities to local youth based on their qualifications and skills.“He also demanded that

families who lost their land for the establishment of the coach factory be given special priority in employment, while adequate opportunities should also be provided to unemployed youth from the region. MLA Nayini Rajender Reddy urged the Central Government to ensure justice for local people so that the Kazipet Railway Coach Factory becomes a milestone for regional development and the future of local youth.“The programme was attended by Railway JAC leaders, representatives of various public organisations, Congress Party leaders, and party workers.

Strict Action Against Those Who Felled Toddy Tappers' Palm Trees: Ananthula Ramesh Goud

“Warangal, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Ananthula Ramesh Goud, State Executive President of the Gouda Rights Protection Committee (Mokudebba), has demanded that criminal cases be registered and strict legal action taken against those who cut down palm trees belonging to toddy tappers in Budhravupet village, Khanapuram Mandal, Warangal district.“It is reported that approximately 30 palm trees were felled along the Dharmaraupet road on the outskirts of Budhravupet village. On Sunday, members of the 'Mokudebba' state committee and representatives of the village Gouda association visited and inspected the site.“Speaking on the occasion, Ramesh Goud expressed concern over the indiscriminate felling and burning of palm trees in the name of road widening, tank bund expansion, and real estate development. He stated that such actions deprive toddy tapper families—who have relied on this profession for generations—of their livelihood.“He alleged that landowners, contractors, and real estate developers are cutting down palm trees in several villages across the district, including Dasharipalli, Mugdapuram, Ponakallu, Mallampalli, and Lingagiri. He criticized the authorities for registering only nominal cases against the accused, noting that such measures fail to curb the illegal felling of trees. Ramesh Goud urged the Excise and Police de-



partments to take immediate, stringent action against those who cut down the trees and to ensure that the affected toddy tappers receive adequate compensation.“Mokudebba' District President Gopagani Venkat Goud, Budhravupeta Goud Sangham President Naragani Paramesh Goud, Vice-President Chirra Kranthi Kumar Goud, Karobar Mammuri Mahesh Goud, and Secretary Vallapudasu Thirupathi Goud participated in this inspection program. Also present were directors Bandi Raju Goud, Sudhagani Murali Goud, Bathini Keshavulu Goud, Bathini Krishna Goud, Pulasa Ramesh Goud, Bathini Srinivas Goud, Naragani Sammayya Goud, Naragani Pedda Ramesh Goud, Naragani Chinna Ramesh Goud, Bhandari Venkanna Goud, Bommagani Shyam Goud, and Bommagani Shyam, among others.

SIR Awareness and Assistance Centre Successfully Conducted in Beerappagadda Muslim Colony Organised under the leadership of Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan)

““UPPAL, JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Following the directions of Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) Awareness and Assistance Centre was successfully organised on Sunday in the Muslim Colony of Beerappagadda Division under the leadership of senior Congress leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan).Speaking on the occasion, Irshad Khan urged every eligible voter to verify whether their names were correctly included in the electoral rolls and to rectify any discrepancies without delay. He explained the procedures for new voter registration, corrections to names, addresses and age, filling out SIR application forms, guidance for those who had already submitted applications, and the documents required for people who had received notices.“Ramantapur Congress Party Coordinator Bazar Jagannath Goud, TPCC SC Cell General Secretary Sandeep Bhushan, senior Congress leaders Dr. A. Anjaiah and Gavvala Santosh also participated in the programme. They highlighted the importance of the right to vote in a democracy and appealed to every family to verify their voter details and complete any necessary corrections.“The programme was coordinated by Altaf, Rajashekar, Ameer, Mohsin, Junaid, and Afroz, along with Congress leaders and party workers. A large number of residents from the Muslim Colony attended the camp, availed themselves of the SIR services, and received assistance and guidance regarding voter registration and corrections. The programme concluded successfully with an overwhelming response from the public.



Kummari Community Offers First Bonam to Pochamma in Uppal Uppal Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest

“UPPAL, JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): As the Bonalu festivities gather momentum across Hyderabad, the celebrations began with great devotion in Uppal on Sunday. On the occasion, members of the Kummari (potter) community traditionally offered the first Bonam to Goddess Pochamma. Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest.“Parameshwar Reddy was accorded a warm welcome by Kummari community leaders and local residents upon his arrival at the temple. He later joined the community elders in offering the Bonam and performing special prayers to Goddess Pochamma. He prayed for the health, prosperity, and happiness of the people and sought the blessings of the Goddess for peace and prosperity across the state.“Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that Bonalu is a unique festival symbolizing Telangana's rich culture and traditions. He noted that the festival reflects the deep faith and devotion of people towards village deities. He expressed happiness that people from all communities celebrate the festival together, transcending caste and religious differences, and urged the younger generation to actively participate in preserving such cultural traditions.“Leaders of the Kummari community said that offering the first Bonam to Goddess Pochamma every year is a long-standing tradition. They thanked Parameshwar Reddy for accepting their invitation and participating in the celebrations.“Among those present were Gumidelli Narayana, Gumidelli Yadaiah, Gumidelli Mallesh, Bhaskar, Bullet Krishna, Gumidelli Raju, Gumidelli Mahesh, Potturi Venkatesh, Potturi Srinivas, Mahesh, Sadasai Bhikshapathi, Gumidelli Srinivas, Gumidelli Ashok, Prashanth Reddy, Naresh Mudiraj, and others. A large number of devotees also attended the event, offered prayers, and sought the blessings of Goddess Pochamma. [5:02 PM, 7/19/2026] +91 93911 09207: End



Orphan Girl's Success in NEET is Heartening Telangana State Orphans' Association President B.Venkatayya

“Hyderabad, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Telangana State Orphans' Association President B.Venkatayya has welcomed the outstanding performance of orphan student Tokala Muthava in the NEET examination, describing her achievement as a matter of great pride and happiness. Speaking at his office on Sunday, Venkatayya said that he has been fighting continuously for the educational rights of orphan children for nearly 29 years, and that such achievements reflect the positive outcomes of these sustained efforts. He expressed particular happiness that Muthava, who studied at the BC Residential College, Saroornagar, had excelled in NEET and hoped that many more orphan students across Telangana would achieve similar success in the future. Venkatayya recalled that in 2010, he had met the then united Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Dr.Y.S.Rajasekhara Reddy several times, demanding a 3% reservation for orphan children in residential educational institutions. Following a six-month-long struggle, the government issued G.O. Ms. No.47 dated August 31, 2010, under which a 3% reservation for orphans has since been implemented in residential educational institutions, now continuing in Telangana. He further stated that in 2017, to address the hardships faced

by orphan children in obtaining orphan certificates, he undertook a four-day hunger strike in front of the CCLA office at Nampally. After discussions with government officials, G.O. Rt. No.124 dated April 15, 2017, was issued, enabling orphan certificates to be made available online through MeeSeva centres across the state. According to Venkatayya, the revised certificate now includes income, caste, residence, and orphan status in a single document, eliminating the need for orphan students to visit multiple government offices for admissions and other official purposes. He also said that despite completing M.A. and B.Ed., he chose to dedicate his life to the welfare of orphan children instead of pursuing government employment, and reaffirmed his commitment to working for their education and overall development.



Man Dies After Being Set Ablaze; Attempt to Murder Case Likely to Be Altered

“Geesugonda, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): A shocking incident in which a man was allegedly doused with petrol and set on fire over personal disputes has taken a tragic turn in the Geesugonda Police Station limits. The victim, who had sustained severe burn injuries, succumbed while being shifted for advanced treatment. Police had earlier registered an attempt to murder case against two accused and several others and are investigating the incident.“According to Circle Inspector Vishweshwar, the victim, Adup Mahesh (45), a resident of NTR Nagar in Enumamula, received a phone call from his friend Jannu Madhu on the night of July 18 at around 9 p.m. Madhu allegedly asked him to come to the Kotilingala Temple at Gorrekunta on the pretext of discussing an important matter. Although Mahesh initially refused, he was persuaded after being assured that there would be no problem.“Police said that after Mahesh reached the spot, he was allegedly made to consume alcohol. Later, Patti Kumar arrived and confronted him, asking, "Why are you speaking negatively about me to the Wardhannapet MLA? Aren't you afraid of me?" Following the argument, the accused allegedly poured petrol on Mahesh and set him on fire in a premeditated attempt



to kill him.“Mahesh, who suffered critical burn injuries, was initially admitted to MGM Hospital in Warangal. Based on a complaint lodged by his wife, Adup Nagalakshmi, Geesugonda Police registered an attempt to murder case under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) against Patti Kumar (A1), Jannu Madhu (A2), and several others.“However, while Mahesh was being shifted to NIMS Hospital, Hyderabad, for advanced treatment on Sunday, he succumbed to his injuries before reaching Bhuvanagiri. His body is being shifted back to MGM Hospital, Warangal, for post-mortem examination.“According to police, the prime accused, Patti Kumar, has a criminal history, including a murder case and several other criminal cases. A rowdy sheet is also reportedly maintained against him at Enumamula Police Station. The accused are currently absconding, and special police teams have been formed to trace and arrest them.“Inspector Vishweshwar warned that strict legal action would be taken against those who intimidate the public by projecting themselves as rowdy sheeters. He also assured citizens that they need not fear under any circumstances.

Party Cadre Must Actively Participate in Voter Registration and List Revision: Inagala Venkatram Reddy

“Hanumakonda, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): A constituency-level review meeting regarding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list was held on Sunday at the Station Ghanpur MLA's camp office, presided over by MLA Kadiyam Srihari. Warangal MP Dr. Kadiyam Kavya, MLC Shankar Naik, AICC and TPCC observers, and Hanumakonda DCC President Inagala Venkatram Reddy attended the meeting.“Addressing the gathering, Inagala Venkatram Reddy stated that the right to vote is one of the most valuable pillars of democracy. He urged party cadres to prioritize the voter list revision process in the Station Ghanpur Assembly constituency. He called upon cluster in-charges, mandal party presidents, sarpanches, and party leaders to tour their respective areas extensively and ensure that every eligible citizen is registered as a voter.“He emphasized the urgent need to systematically rectify errors in the voter list, remove the names of deceased voters, and register newly eligible voters. He noted that an accurate and error-free voter list is essential not only for strengthening the party but also for achieving victory in future elections. Inagala Venkatram Reddy urged public representatives, senior leaders, and party cadres in the constituency to work in coordination to successfully complete the voter list revision process.



Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj Participates in Sri Nallapochamma Devi Idol Consecration Ceremony

“UPPAL, JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj participated in the grand idol consecration ceremony of the newly constructed Sri Sri Sri Nallapochamma Devi Temple at Budiga Jangam Colony under Beerappagadda Division in Uppal on Sunday. Residents of the colony had earlier approached the former corporator, stating that the existing temple was too small to conduct daily rituals, special poojas, and religious activities. Responding to their request, Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj fulfilled her promise by constructing a spacious new temple with her own funds. Speaking on the occasion, she said that getting the opportunity to contribute to the construction of the temple was a blessing and the result of good deeds from a previous birth. She prayed that the blessings of Goddess Sri Nallapochamma would always remain with the people of the division. She also expressed her gratitude to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of the temple construction and the idol consecration celebrations. The three-day consecration ceremony was conducted with great religious fervour under the guidance of Kannayya Pantulu and Vedic scholars, amidst the chanting of Vedic hymns and the performance of traditional rituals. The programme was attended by Medchal-Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etala Rajender, former Uppal MLA NVSS Prabhakar, former



Uppal Municipal Chairman Shiva Reddy, Budiga Jangam Sangham President Nidanakavi Sriramulu, leaders of various political parties, and a large number of colony residents and devotees, who offered special prayers to the Goddess.

Intensive Voter Registration Verification in Shivnagar; Clean Electoral Roll is the Goal: Ganta Ravi Kumar

“Warangal, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls is being carried out vigorously in Shivnagar under the Warangal East Assembly constituency. As part of the exercise, BJP District President Ganta Ravi Kumar visited households in Booth No. 170 of the 34th Division and personally reviewed the voter registration process at the grassroots level. “The programme was conducted under the leadership of Booth President Martha Usharani. During the visit, Ganta Ravi Kumar interacted with residents to verify whether they had received the enumeration forms and whether they had filled them out correctly. He also created awareness among those who had not yet completed the forms and urged every eligible voter to fill in the enumeration forms accurately and submit them to the concerned Booth Level Officer (BLO) without delay. “Speaking on the occasion, Ganta Ravi Kumar said that preparing a transparent, error-free and clean elec-



toral roll is the responsibility of everyone. He appealed to all voters to make the best use of the special revision process and ensure that their voting rights are protected. “Mandal President Mohammed Rafi, District Leader Bairi Shyam Sundar, Mandal Leader Sunchu Keshav, BLA-2 Ganta Sandeep, Division Convener Poshala Satish, and Division leaders Kandukuri Vijay Kumar, Bojja Ranjith, Pradeep, Chamakuri Shirisha, and Shraavan Thoutam, along with others, participated in the programme.

Aavulagadda Srinivas Yadav Pays Courtesy Visit to Telangana Yadav-Kuruma Cooperative Development Corporation Chairman



“UPPAL, JULY 19 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Aavulagadda Srinivas Yadav, Vice President of the Akhil Bharatiya Yadav Mahasabha, Greater Hyderabad, paid a courtesy visit to the Chairman of the Telangana State Yadav and Kuruma Cooperative Development Corporation and felicitated him with a ceremonial shawl. On the occasion, Srinivas Yadav extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Chairman on assuming his new responsibilities. He expressed hope that the Corporation's initiatives for the welfare, socio-economic development, empowerment, and overall progress of the Yadav and Kuruma communities would achieve great success. He also assured that he would extend his full support to all developmental and welfare programmes undertaken by the Corporation for the benefit of the community. The meeting was held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere.

Make the 11th All India National OBC Conference in Bengaluru a Grand Success: Prof. Sangani Malleshwar



“Narsampet, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Prof. Sangani Malleshwar, State Convener of the BC Intellectuals Forum, called upon BC community members to make the 11th All India National OBC Conference, scheduled to be held on August 7 in Bengaluru, Karnataka, a grand success. “The appeal was made during a meeting held at the BC Welfare Association Constituency Office in Narsampet, Warangal district, under the chairmanship of Daggala Srinivas Mudiraj, District President of the BC Welfare Association and Narsampet Constituency In-charge. On the occasion, wall posters promoting the August 7 conference were unveiled by Prof. Sangani Malleshwar. “Addressing the gathering, Prof. Malleshwar demanded that the Central Government conduct a nationwide OBC caste census and increase reservations for Backward Classes in proportion to their population. He also called for 50% political reservation for OBCs. “He alleged that the Central Government is planning to pass the Delimitation Bill and the Women's Reservation Bill during the upcoming Parliament session, and urged opposition parties to oppose these bills.

He claimed that these legislations would not provide any political benefit to OBCs and were intended primarily to serve the political interests of upper castes. He warned that the BC Welfare Association, under the leadership of its National President Jajula Srinivas Goud, would launch a nationwide agitation until justice is ensured for OBCs. “Speaking on the occasion, Daggala Srinivas Mudiraj appealed to BC Welfare Association leaders, women representatives, and party workers from across Warangal district to participate in large numbers and ensure the grand success of the 11th All India National OBC Conference in Bengaluru on August 7. “The programme was attended by BC Welfare Association District Vice-President Chennuri Ravi Mudiraj, District Spokesperson Marupala Veeraswamy Kuruma, Youth District President Kadari Suresh Yadav, Narsampet Town Vice-President Noone Ranjith Kumar Mudiraj, Town Secretary Gandla Srinivas, Chennaraopet Mandal President Barla Yakaiah, Chennaraopet Mandal Women's President Bandi Vijaya, Gatla Narsimha Ramulu, Tabeti Prakash, Jakkula Renuka, Karu Radhika, and several other leaders and activists.

Strive to Resolve the Problems of Postal Employees: Eega Mallesham

“Hanumakonda, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Former Director of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Eega Mallesham, attended as the chief guest at the 7th Biennial Conference of the All India Gramin Dak Sevaks Union, held on Sunday at the Zilla Parishad Conference Hall in Hanumakonda. “On the occasion, he congratulated Bodduna Venkateswarlu on being elected for the second consecutive term as the National President of the All India Gramin Dak Sevaks Union and felicitated him with a ceremonial shawl. “Speaking on the occasion, Eega Mallesham urged that the key issues faced by postal employees be addressed comprehensively, with efforts focused on ensuring job security, improving salaries, providing better promotional opportunities, enhancing working conditions, and effectively implementing welfare schemes. He also assured the employees of his continued support and co-operation in safeguarding their rights and



welfare. “During the event, National President Bodduna Venkateswarlu, along with members of the postal employees' union, felicitated Eega Mallesham with a traditional garland, a shawl, and presented him with a memento. A large number of postal employees participated in the conference.

Speed Up the SIR Process: MLA K.R. Nagaraju

“Hanumakonda, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Wardhannapet MLA and retired IPS officer K.R. Nagaraju called for expediting the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process being undertaken across Telangana and en-

Hanumakonda District Youth Congress President Dileep Raj and attended by MLC Kethavath Shankar Naik, TPCC

State General Secretary Duddilla Srinivas Babu, and SIR In-charge Nazir. “Speaking on the occasion, K.R. Nagaraju stressed that the process should be carried out efficiently without causing any inconvenience to voters. He urged party workers and officials to create widespread awareness so that voters voluntarily register and update their details. He also instructed Booth Level Agents (BLAs) to visit every household, assist voters in filling out the required forms, and expedite the process. He emphasized the need to safeguard the voting rights of every eligible citizen. “He further announced that the first 100 Booth Level Agents who successfully complete the SIR process would be felicitated by Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi. “Earlier, the participants observed a moment of silence and paid tributes to Congress leader Adupa Mahesh, who lost his life in a petrol attack. “The meeting was attended



suring that it is completed transparently within the stipulated deadline. “He participated in a review meeting on the SIR process held on Sunday at the Circuit Guest House in Hanumakonda. The meeting was chaired by

by Warangal DCC President Mohammed Ayub, SIR Coordinator Ravali Reddy, and several constituency, division, mandal, and village-level Congress leaders and party workers.

Mamnoor Airport to Reflect the Grandeur of Kakatiya Heritage: MP Dr. Kadiyam Kavya

“Warangal, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal Member of Parliament Dr. Kadiyam Kavya said that the proposed Mamnoor Airport should be developed as a symbol of the artistic and architectural grandeur of the Kakatiya dynasty, showcasing Warangal's rich historical heritage to future generations. “On Sunday, in Hyderabad, the MP held a special meeting with Dr. Emani Sivanagi Reddy, a renowned architect, heritage conservationist, and Chief Executive Officer of the Pleach India Foundation, who is widely recognized for his contributions to Indian temple architecture, sculpture, and heritage preservation. During the meeting, Dr. Kavya felicitated him with a ceremonial shawl and held detailed discussions after reviewing several design concepts for the proposed Mamnoor Airport. “In line with the vision of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the MP suggested that the airport's design should prominently reflect Warangal's historical significance and the legacy of the Kakatiya dynasty. She also urged that further study be undertaken on Warangal's history, architectural styles, and heritage monuments so that these elements could be effectively incorporated into the airport's design. “Dr. Kavya emphasized that the airport should embody the Kakatiyas' architectural excellence, sculptural heritage, and the unique historical identity of Warangal. She said the design should leave travel-



ers from India and abroad with an immediate impression of Warangal as a city of immense historical and cultural importance the moment they arrive at the airport. “She specifically proposed incorporating architectural elements inspired by the Kakatiya Kala Thoranam, the Thousand Pillar Temple, and other iconic Kakatiya sculptures and motifs into the airport's construction. “Dr. Kavya expressed hope that Mamnoor Airport would become a matter of pride for Warangal and evolve into a cultural landmark that introduces future generations to the rich historical legacy of the Kakatiya dynasty.

Farm Workers' Issues Should Be Resolved Immediately: Kashiboyina Ayodhya

“Khammam/Nelakondapalli, July 19 (Indian Chronicle): “Agricultural Workers' Union district leader Kashiboyina Ayodhya demanded that the government immediately address the problems faced by agricultural labourers. Speaking at a meeting held at the mandal headquarters on Sunday, he alleged that successive governments have been neglecting the welfare of farm workers. “He urged the government to give priority to agricultural labourers under the Indramma Housing Scheme and to ensure the effective implementation of laws meant for agricultural workers. He also demanded an increase in daily wages, pointing out that the rising prices of essential commodities have made it difficult for agricultural labourers to meet their daily needs. “Union leaders Mekala Babu, Bhurugugadda Srinu, Gunji Nagaraju, Kandagatla Saidulu, Maddela Kalahasthi, Pamyelu, Tirupathi Rao, Bodda Sudhakar, Budiga Krishnayya, Potapinjar Sreekanth, and Gattigundla Dasu, along with others, participated in the meeting.



US Senators table Bill slapping 100% tariffs on India for buying Russian oil



GNS News Agency, July 19

A bipartisan group of US Senators has introduced a legislation proposing tariffs of up to 100 per cent on imports from India, China and three other countries over their continued purchase of Russian oil, marking Washington's latest attempt to intensify economic pressure on Moscow over the Ukraine war. The legislation targets the five largest buyers of Russian oil — India, China, Slovakia, Hungary and Azerbaijan — while exempting 15 European countries that continue to import Russian natural gas.

Lawmakers argued that gas purchase by those nations accounted for only a small share of their energy requirements and that they were steadily reducing their dependence on Russian supplies. The Bill significantly scales back an earlier proposal that sought to impose punitive tariffs of up to 500 per cent on countries importing Russian energy. Instead, it authorises US President Donald Trump to impose tariffs ranging from zero to 100 per cent, depending on the circumstances. The measure, one of the last

major legislative initiatives backed by the late Republican Senator, Lindsey Graham, has been introduced along with Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal, who urged Congress to move quickly on the proposal. Announcing the Bill, Blumenthal said the White House had agreed to the revised framework before Graham's death. "Now is the time for this sweeping sanctions Bill," Blumenthal said, describing it as far broader than a tariff measure. According to Blumenthal, the legislation will impose "full blocking sanctions" on key sectors of the Russian economy, including its energy, financial and defence industries, while also targeting Russian President Vladimir Putin, oligarchs and other influential business figures. He said the tariff provision had been "narrowly crafted" to apply only to the five largest importers of Russian oil. Speaking to reporters, one of the lawmakers said the exact tariff rate — anywhere between zero and 100 per cent — would be determined with the objective of strongly discouraging continued purchase of Russian energy by the targeted countries. The proposal comes as Washington seeks to tighten economic pressure on Moscow, with US lawmakers arguing that curbing Russia's energy revenues remains critical to weakening its ability to sustain the war in Ukraine. India had sharply increased imports of discounted Russian crude after the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict in 2022, maintaining that its energy purchases were driven by national interest and the need to ensure affordable supplies for its consumers. New Delhi has consistently defended its position, saying it does not recognise unilateral sanctions that are not mandated by the United Nations and that its energy sourcing decisions are based on market conditions and domestic requirements. The legislation must clear both chambers of the US Congress before it can become a law, and its prospects of passage in the current form remain uncertain.

Pakistan fuel crisis deepens as policy delays deepen supply concerns

According to The Express Tribune, industry officials have warned that petrol inventories have fallen to nearly 379,000 tonnes, including supplies from local refineries, leaving enough stock for only about two weeks at the current rate of consumption. Demand has surged significantly during the first half of July, with daily petrol sales exceeding projections and last year's figures, driven by expectations of another increase in fuel prices. The rise in consumption has intensified pressure on already limited reserves, while delays in scheduled fuel imports have added to uncertainty.

Although shipments carrying around 153,000 tonnes of petrol are expected to arrive in the coming days, at least one planned cargo failed to receive approval last month, and another import involving multiple oil marketing companies was reportedly cancelled, further tightening supply. The situation has also been complicated by international shipping disruptions linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, which have pushed up global oil prices and freight costs. However, industry representatives argue that domestic administrative and financial challenges remain the primary factors worsening the crisis. Oil marketing companies have urged the government to immediately release approximately Rs 66.7 billion in pending Price Differential Claims (PDCs), saying the delayed payments have weakened their ability to finance fresh fuel imports. Industry estimates suggest the outstanding amount could fund nearly 250,000 tonnes of petrol, equivalent to



several import cargoes that would significantly strengthen national reserves, as cited by Officials have also highlighted delays in customs clearance through the WeBOC system, warning that slow processing of imported fuel at ports could disrupt supplies to inland markets. While diesel stocks remain relatively stable due to continued refinery production, industry representatives cautioned that panic buying or hoarding could quickly create shortages if uncertainty persists, as reported

BIMSTEC security chiefs reaffirm regional security cooperation at 5th meeting

New Delhi [India], The 5th Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs, chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on Thursday, reaffirmed the member states' commitment to strengthening regional security cooperation, with discussions focusing on counter-terrorism, cyber and maritime security, disaster management and emerging security threats. According to an official statement, NSA Doval hosted National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

"BIMSTEC bridges South Asia and Southeast Asia, two of the most significant and vibrant regions of the Indian Ocean. Over the years, BIMSTEC has deepened cooperation in regional security, disaster management, transport and trade connectivity, technological issues, and people-to-people contacts," the statement said. During the meeting, BIMSTEC Secretary General Indra Mani Pandey presented a comprehensive overview of cooperation in the security sector and briefed member states on the progress made across various sectors.

The National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegations discussed "practical and result-oriented solutions" to combat terrorism and organised crime, ensure security in the cyber, maritime and energy domains, enhance connectivity, facilitate efficient disaster management, and tackle new and emerging threats. The member states also adopted guidelines for the maritime component of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), which, according to the statement, "will help BIMSTEC member states to undertake relief operations in the region in an expeditious manner." They further endorsed a set of guiding principles for the conduct of maritime law enforcement agencies during interactions at sea. The principles are expected to "outline reference points for increasing predictability and promoting safety during maritime engagements among member states," the statement said. As BIMSTEC approaches its 30th anniversary next year, the National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegations reiterated their resolve to enhance collaboration and knowledge-sharing towards strengthening regional security, building resilience and enhancing institutional capacities to address diverse security threats, the statement added. Meanwhile, Doval underscored the need for closer regional cooperation to tackle evolving security challenges, saying the current global landscape marked by conflicts, geopolitical uncertainties and technological disruptions requires BIMSTEC member states to work together and take "decisive actions" for their mutual benefit.

Addressing the fifth BIMSTEC National Security Advisers' Meeting, Doval said, "We are meeting today in the backdrop of a challenging global landscape. We are witnessing conflicts and geopolitical uncertainties. We are also facing multi-domain security threats, amplified by rapid technological advancements. Disruptions in global supply chains have also resulted in economic hardship for all our countries." "In this setting, there's an urgent need for us to



collaborate, take decisive actions for our mutual benefit, and find solutions to mutual discussions and deliberations to the vexed problems that we are all facing," he added. Highlighting the significance of the Bay of Bengal grouping, Doval said BIMSTEC unites two of the world's most dynamic regions and represents a population of 1.7 billion people, around 22 per cent of the global population, with a combined GDP of nearly USD 5 trillion. "We are united by the Bay of Bengal, not just geographically, but also through deep civilizational and cultural legacies that have evolved over a millennium of shared history," he said. BIMSTEC is a key regional organisation that was established on June 6, 1997, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), the organisation is now known as BIMSTEC and comprises seven Member States, with the admission of Myanmar on December 22 1997, and Bhutan and Nepal in February 2004.

Iran threatens to destroy 'all infrastructure in region' as US strikes intensify

Dubai: Iran's joint military command stepped up its threats on Thursday as intensifying US airstrikes target the country, saying it would destroy "all the infrastructure in the region". The threat from the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters referenced US President Donald Trump's repeated warning that he could launch attacks against power plants and bridges in Iran.

Col Ebrahim Zolfaghari, a spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, issued the warning. "All the infrastructure in the region will be crushed under the steel blows of the powerful armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran" should Trump's threat be carried out, Zolfaghari said.

Ajit Doval chairs 5th BIMSTEC Security Chiefs Meeting in New Delhi



New Delhi [India], National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Thursday chaired the fifth BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs' meeting, hosting top-level intelligence and security officials from across the Bay of Bengal region to reinforce regional stability. The high-level gathering brought together delegates from the seven member nations of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The delegates gathered for a joint family photo, with discussions centring on counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and strengthening regional maritime cooperation. BIMSTEC Secretary General Indra Mani Pandey attended the meeting along with delegations from all member countries. Nepal was represented by Home Secretary Raj Kumar Shrestha. Thailand's delegation was led by Chatchai Bangchaud, Secretary General of the National Security Council. Bangchaud had also held bilateral talks with NSA Doval on Wednesday, focusing on enhanced intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation. Sri Lanka was represented by Air Vice Marshal Sampath Thuyacontha, Secretary at the Ministry of Defence. Bangladesh's delegation was led by Dr Shamsul Islam, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and included Bangladesh High Commissioner to India M Riaz Hamidullah. Myanmar was represented by Tin Aung San, Minister in the President's Office. Bhutan's delegation comprised Home Secretary Sonam Wangyel and Bhutan's Ambassador to India, Major General Vetsop Namgyel. Meanwhile, Doval underscored the need for closer regional cooperation to tackle evolving security challenges, saying the current global landscape marked by conflicts, geopolitical uncertainties and technological disruptions requires BIMSTEC member states to work together and take

"decisive actions" for their mutual benefit. Addressing the fifth BIMSTEC National Security Advisers' Meeting, Doval said, "We are meeting today in the backdrop of a challenging global landscape. We are witnessing conflicts and geopolitical uncertainties. We are also facing multi-domain security threats, amplified by rapid technological advancements. Disruptions in global supply chains have also resulted in economic hardship for all our countries."

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Doval said. He stressed that BIMSTEC's long-standing goals of regional security, connectivity, capacity building and economic security should continue to guide the grouping's collective efforts. He said, "BIMSTEC's long-standing goals of regional security, connectivity, capacity building, and economic security should continue to drive our collective efforts." BIMSTEC is a key regional organisation that was established on June 6, 1997, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), the organisation is now known as BIMSTEC and comprises seven Member States, with the admission of Myanmar on December 22 1997, and Bhutan and Nepal in February 2004.

Keeping you on the leading edge of lethality: Pete Hegseth announces annual testosterone screenings for US troops

Washington, DC [US], July 16 (ANI): US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has announced a new initiative requiring annual testosterone screenings for service members aged 30 and above, saying the move is aimed at ensuring troops remain on the "leading edge of lethality." According to The Hill, the testosterone screening will be incorporated into the military's periodic health assessment for service members aged 30 and older, while personnel under 30 will have the option to undergo the test voluntarily. In a video message posted on X on Wednesday (local time), Hegseth said, "While we invest heavily in our weapon systems, platforms and gear, our most decisive tactical advantage will always be the individual warfighter." "We have a sacred duty to maintain that advantage, which is why we must constantly look for new ways to optimise your performance, your resilience and your long-term health," he added. Hegseth said the screening programme is intended to ensure troops "have the right testosterone levels to operate at [their] absolute best because it's well-established science that as we age, testosterone levels often naturally drop."

According to The Hill, service members found to require treatment after testing will be offered the option of testosterone replacement therapy (TRT). "This initiative... it's not about artificial enhancement; it's about restoring and optimising your natural capabilities, protecting your longevity, ensuring you have the biological foundation required to sustain and fight," Hegseth said. "We owe our warriors the absolute best medical care in the world. And this program delivers on that obligation," he added. The Hill reported that the initiative comes amid the Trump administration's broader emphasis on traditional masculinity. In April, the US Food and Drug Administration expanded access to testosterone replacement therapy after years of recommending it pri-



marily for men with medical conditions affecting testosterone production. According to The Hill, Hegseth has also introduced stricter military fitness standards requiring personnel to meet a uniform "male standard" and has frequently highlighted physical fitness by working out with service members. Last September, he said he did not want to see overweight troops or "fat generals and admirals." The Hill noted that about 5.6 per cent of men aged 30 to 79 are estimated to have testosterone deficiency, which can lead to muscle loss, fatigue, weight gain and sexual dysfunction, and is also associated with conditions including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and depression. "By addressing these health markers early, we're keeping you on the leading edge of lethality and giving you the same level of support that you give this nation the absolute best," Hegseth said.

Sikka Groups Vision for Sustainable Urban Growth

New Delhi [India], July 16: India's urban transformation is entering a defining phase, where the emphasis is no longer limited to constructing buildings but extends to creating sustainable, resilient, and future-ready cities. With rapid urbanisation, growing infrastructure investments, and evolving consumer expectations, the real estate sector is increasingly becoming a key driver in shaping integrated urban ecosystems that promote economic growth, environmental stewardship, and enhanced quality of life. India's urban population is projected to exceed 600 million by 2030, driving unprecedented demand for well-planned developments that seamlessly integrate residential, commercial, retail, hospitality, and recreational infrastructure. This shift is encouraging developers to move beyond conventional construction and adopt a holistic approach centred on sustainability, technology, connectivity, and community living. Sikka Group believes that the cities of tomorrow must be designed around people, not just infrastructure. Future-ready developments should promote walkability, efficient mobility, energy conservation, digital infrastructure, open green spaces, and mixed-use ecosystems that reduce commute times while fostering healthier and more vibrant communities. Across the country, integrated developments are emerging as engines of urban growth by combining premium residences, organised retail, office spaces, hospitality, and entertainment within a single destination. Such projects stimulate economic activity, create employment opportunities, and support local businesses while delivering greater convenience and improving the overall urban experience. Sustainability has become central to modern real estate development. Green building practices, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, energy-efficient systems, waste management, and environmentally conscious landscaping are increasingly becoming standard features of responsible developments. Simultaneously, the integration of smart technologies, including intelligent building management systems, EV charging infrastructure, digital security solutions, and IoT-enabled services, is helping create more efficient, future-ready communities that align with India's sustainability and climate goals. The emergence of infrastructure-led growth corridors is further redefining India's urban land-

scape. Mega infrastructure projects such as expressways, metro rail expansions, multimodal transport networks, and the upcoming Noida International Airport are unlocking new investment opportunities and accelerating planned urban development. These infrastructure advancements are attracting homebuyers, businesses, and institutional investors seeking destinations with long-term growth potential. Noida and Greater Noida have emerged as prime examples of this transformation. Supported by world-class infrastructure, expanding metro connectivity, expressway networks, and the upcoming Noida International Airport, the region has become one of India's fastest-growing real estate markets. Increasing demand across residential, commercial, and retail segments is reinforcing its position as a preferred destination for integrated urban development. Reflecting this vision, Sikka Group continues to develop projects that align with evolving urban aspirations while contributing to sustainable city-building. The Group focuses on creating thoughtfully planned developments that combine contemporary architecture, efficient infrastructure, green spaces, and lifestyle-driven amenities designed to meet the needs of modern consumers. One of the most significant examples of this philosophy is the Mall of Noida, Sikka Group's landmark mixed-use development, envisioned as one of the region's premier lifestyle destinations. More than a conventional shopping centre, the project integrates retail, fine dining, entertainment, and leisure experiences within a vibrant urban ecosystem. Designed to cater to changing consumer preferences, Mall of Noida is expected to strengthen the region's commercial landscape, generate substantial employment opportunities, attract leading national and international brands, and contribute significantly to Noida's economic growth. Speaking on the evolving urban landscape, Harwinder Sikka, Managing Director, Sikka Group, said: "India's urban future will be shaped by developments that seamlessly integrate sustainability, innovation, and community-centric planning. As cities continue to expand, the focus must shift from standalone projects to creating holistic urban ecosystems that promote economic growth, environmental responsibility, and an enhanced quality of life."

The forgotten 9,909: 34 Punjab Registers document sacrifice of unrecorded Indian soldiers who fought in World War 1 -



More than a century after the guns of World War I fell silent, nearly 10,000 Indian soldiers whose deaths slipped from the official historical record are finally to receive the recognition they were denied.The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has announced that 9,909 previously unrecorded Indian servicemen will now be commemorated after a decade-long research project centred on a remarkable archive in Pakistan: 34 handwritten Punjab Registers containing the names of some 3,20,000 men recruited into the Indian army during the war.

It is one of the largest single additions ever made to the Commission's casualty records, and represents far more than an administrative correction. It restores identities, acknowledges forgotten sacrifice and shines a light on one of the last major gaps in the history of India's contribution to the Great War.More than 13 lakh Indians served during World War I, making the Indian army one of the largest volunteer forces in history, with soldiers fighting from Flanders and Gallipoli to East Africa and Mesopotamia.Behind the announcement lies an extraordinary story of historical detective work that began not in London or Delhi, but in the Lahore Museum.The 34 Punjab Registers found in the Lahore Museum by Amandeep Madra, co-founder of the UK Punjab Heritage Association, in 2014. He worked with British and Punjabi scholars, Pakistan archivists, and transcribers in India and Pakistan for over 10 years to convert thousands of handwritten pages into searchable data. Photo courtesy: CWGC

The 34 Punjab Registers found in the Lahore Museum by Amandeep Madra, co-founder of the UK Punjab Heritage Association, in 2014. He worked with British and Punjabi scholars, Pakistan archivists, and transcribers in India and Pakistan for over 10 years to convert thousands of handwritten pages into searchable data. Photo courtesy: CWGC"I found them in 2014 during research for our Empire, Faith & War project," recalls Amandeep Madra, co-founder of the UK Punjab Heritage Association, whose discovery set the entire process in motion."Military historians knew the registers existed in principle, but no one had gone to look. It seemed unlikely: an art museum holding 34 handwritten volumes of military records. But they were there: a systematic record of every Punjabi man who served in the Indian army during the First World War. I knew straightaway it was significant."The significance became deeply personal. One of the first registers photographed was from Ambala district, the home of Madra's own family. "My father's Chacha (paternal uncle), Bishen Singh, had served," he says. "My dad remembered being taken to collect his pension as a boy and that he'd been blinded by sandstorms during the war. That was all we knew. Then I found him in the register. He was the only man from our village to serve. If it could do that for my family, I knew it could do it for thousands of others."The 26,000 pages had first to be photographed, digitised, indexed and transcribed. The project later became a collaboration between the UK Punjab Heritage Association, the University of Greenwich and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.Prof Gavin Rand of the University of Greenwich recognised the scholarly importance of the archive and secured funding for its transcription. The CWGC then undertook the laborious task of comparing the information with its own casualty database.Names had often been spelled differently by different clerks. Villages appeared under several spellings. Regimental records varied. Punjabi naming customs created further complications.As Madra explains, researchers had to learn to think like Edwardian record keepers. 'Roor Singh' and 'Rood Singh' could be the same man. 'Dulla' might turn out to be Abdullah Khan, "but only if every other detail — father's name, village and regiment — matched".

During the Covid lockdown, volunteers began checking a sample of soldiers listed in the registers as having died during the war against CWGC records. They immediately discovered dozens whose names simply did not exist in the Commission's database.As the work expanded, the omissions kept growing. Ultimately, researchers examined almost 16,000 recorded deaths against some 74,000 existing Indian army casualty records. Supported by computer-assisted analysis and multiple layers of verification, they iden-

tified 9,909 men who had never previously been commemorated.

Why had they disappeared from history? According to Dr George Hay, Official Historian at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the reasons were both administrative and political."The British Indian Government made a conscious decision not to extend full war graves status to Indian army soldiers who died at home and away from operational zones," he explains.Many of those men had survived the battlefields only to die later from wounds or disease after returning to India. Unlike British soldiers who died in comparable circumstances, their names were never passed on to the Commission's predecessors for permanent commemoration.Administrative failures compounded the problem, meaning that some operational casualties also disappeared from the historical record.The findings reinforce the conclusions reached by the CWGC's Special Committee on Historical Inequalities in Commemoration, established in 2021, that entrenched racial prejudice and discriminatory colonial attitudes had contributed to unequal commemoration.For Madra, who served on that committee alongside Professor Rand, the present announcement demonstrates that history can sometimes be corrected rather than merely debated."This is one of the rare cases in Britain's colonial history where we can actually correct a wrong rather than just argue about it," he says.The Punjab Registers reveal far more than military service. Taken together, the registers amount to an unparalleled census of rural Punjab on the eve of modern history, recording not simply soldiers but families, villages, religions, castes and communities that would later be divided by Partition.A close up of the Punjab Registers shows the handwritten entries. There were 26,000 pages of detailed entries which had to be photographed, digitised, indexed and transcribed. Photo courtesy: CWGCEach entry records a soldier's religion, caste, father's name, village and district, creating an extraordinarily detailed portrait of rural Punjab between 1914 and 1918.The newly identified casualties themselves reflect the diversity of that society: approximately 41 per cent were Muslim, 26 per cent Hindu, 25 per cent Sikh and less than 1 per cent Christian.

"It gives us Punjab from the village up," Madra says. "You begin to see how communities were organised and how people identified themselves. It tells the social history of Punjab as much as its military history."That Punjab no longer exists. The villages recorded in the registers now lie across India and Pakistan, reminding us that the soldiers belonged to an undivided province long before Partition divided families, communities and memories."It isn't an Indian story or a Pakistani story," Madra says. "It's a shared Punjabi story." The research itself crossed modern borders. British and Punjabi scholars worked alongside archivists in Pakistan, while transcribers in both India and Pakistan painstakingly converted thousands of handwritten pages into searchable data.For many families, the project has already transformed fragments of family legend into documented history.Among those newly recognised is Jagat Singh of the 34th Reserve Mountain Battery, who died in Mesopotamia in January 1918. His great-granddaughter, Manjinder Nagra, became the first Sikh woman to play rugby for England.Another descendant, Leicester dentist Dr Inder Singh Palahey, spent years searching for information about his great-grandfather, Kesar Singh."From just hearsay to now discovering the facts about my great-grandfather's ultimate military sacrifice has been incredibly poignant," he says. "The fact that he will now be remembered in perpetuity simply means everything to us."Madra has experienced that same emotion himself. Finding his own relative, Bishen Singh, in the registers remains his most powerful memory of the project."It's probably the only surviving record where both his name and his father's name still exist," he says.The work, however, is far from complete. The 9,909 names represent only those who died and were omitted from commemoration.

The registers themselves contain details of around 3,20,000 soldiers and promise to become one of the richest resources ever assembled on the Indian army during World War I.Researchers hope eventually to create a public, searchable database allowing descendants across the world to trace relatives, add family histories and photographs, and piece together stories that have lain buried for generations. The CWGC also believes similar archives may survive elsewhere in the former British Empire, raising the possibility that more forgotten soldiers may yet be found.For Madra, however, the work will not be complete until the names exist not only in a digital database, but on permanent memorials where descendants can stand before them. He believes the men should ultimately be commemorated physically, with their names carved in stone, just like those of other Commonwealth war dead.For thousands of families, the project has transformed fading memories and family folklore into documented history.After more than a century, the forgotten soldiers of undivided Punjab have begun their journey back into history.

India for key starting materials and active pharmaceutical ingredients used to manufacture many generic medicines.She said stronger oversight was needed to understand the extent of foreign influence while ensuring that trusted international investment continues. "We must bolster federal oversight efforts and increase transparency on how foreign capital impacts American health care infrastructure," Gillibrand said.Several witnesses told the committee that China has expanded its presence beyond generic drug manufacturing into biotechnology research, clinical trials and pharmaceutical innovation, raising concerns about long-term US competitiveness and supply chain resilience.Former Commerce Department official Nazak Nikakhtar urged Congress to tighten oversight of Chinese investments in US biotechnology companies. She argued that existing laws leave significant gaps, allowing some investments, licensing arrangements and data-sharing agreements to escape government review.Stephen Ezell, vice president at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, said China has used industrial subsidies, aggressive pricing and acquisitions to build a dominant position across the pharmaceutical value chain. He called for stronger disclosure rules requiring companies operating in strategic sectors to identify their beneficial ownership and foreign control.Rush Doshi, director of the China Strategy

Highs and lows of driving in the mountains



I have spent the last 15 years travelling across India, leading expeditions through some of the country's most remote and challenging terrains. Month after month, I travel with groups of people to destinations such as Ladakh, Spiti, Zaskar, and other Himalayan regions. Having witnessed these places evolve over the years, I believe it is important to highlight both the positives and the growing concerns surrounding development and tourism in these fragile ecosystems. There is no denying that infrastructure development in the Himalayas has transformed connectivity. From a strategic perspective, better roads are invaluable for the swift movement of our armed forces and for improving accessibility to remote regions. However, every development project must be evaluated not only for its economic and strategic benefits, but also for its long-term environmental impact.

I first travelled to Leh-Ladakh in 2010. At that time, there were no proper highways, no mobile connectivity, and reaching Leh from Chandigarh often took nearly three days. Today, the same journey can be completed in around 14 hours on well-built roads, and 5G connectivity is available in many parts of the region. This transformation has undoubtedly boosted tourism and opened economic opportunities for local communities. However, it has also placed unprecedented pressure on landscapes that were never designed to handle such large numbers of visitors. One issue that has become increasingly evident is the decline in civic sense among many tourists. During recent expeditions, I witnessed vehicles from different states being washed directly in sacred rivers such as the Shyok using detergents and chemicals. Plastic bottles, food wrappers, and other waste are frequently discarded in valleys, rivers, and mountain passes. These are not isolated incidents anymore; they are becoming common sights in places that were once untouched. If we continue to treat these destinations as picnic spots rather than environmentally sensitive regions, we risk permanently damaging what makes them so unique. Another growing concern is that travelling to high-altitude regions has become easier, but not necessarily safer. In the past, reaching Ladakh required preparation, research, and respect for the terrain. Travellers would spend weeks understanding altitude sickness, road conditions, vehicle requirements, and weather patterns before attempting the journey. Today, digital maps and viral social media reels have created the illu-

sion that these destinations are just another weekend road trip.

Many visitors arrive without understanding the risks posed by high altitude, reduced oxygen levels, or rapidly changing weather conditions. It is increasingly common to see families travelling with very young children to elevations above 11,000 feet without adequate acclimatisation or medical awareness. Many tourists ignore the importance of gradual ascent, proper hydration, and rest. Every year, local authorities and rescue teams respond to preventable medical emergencies caused not by the mountains themselves, but by a lack of preparation. Equally concerning is the tendency of many travellers to ignore the knowledge of local communities. The people who have lived in these regions for generations understand the mountains better than anyone else. They know which roads become dangerous after rainfall, how weather changes within minutes, and how visitors should acclimatise before travelling further. Yet many tourists rely entirely on navigation apps or social media recommendations. Technology is a useful tool, but it should never replace local wisdom in environments as unpredictable as the Himalayas.

The increasing number of landslides across Himalayan states is another issue that deserves attention. While natural geological conditions certainly play a role, aggressive hill cutting for road widening and new highway projects has undoubtedly weakened mountain slopes in many areas. Roads that were originally designed as single carriageways are now being expanded, often requiring extensive excavation. Development is necessary, but it must be carried out with careful environmental assessment and scientific planning rather than speed alone. Tourism is essential for the local economy, and no one is suggesting that it should be discouraged. However, tourism must become sustainable. Ecologically sensitive regions cannot continue to receive unlimited numbers of visitors without consequences. Introducing a regulated permit system or seasonal cap on visitor numbers in highly sensitive areas would reduce pressure on infrastructure, minimise environmental degradation, improve the travel experience, and provide local communities with a more stable source of income throughout the year rather than concentrating tourism into only a few months. Authorities should spread awareness to promote responsible tourism. Visitors must understand that preserving these places is as important as enjoying them. Carrying back waste items, respecting local customs, avoiding pollution of rivers, and following advice from local residents should be considered basic responsibilities rather than optional choices. The Himalayas are among India's greatest natural treasures. They are not merely tourist destinations but living ecosystems that support millions of people downstream. Development and tourism are both important, but neither should come at the cost of the environment or the well-being of local communities. Progress and conservation must go hand in hand. If we fail to protect these mountains today, future generations may inherit roads and hotels, but they will lose the pristine landscapes that once inspired millions to visit them in the first place.

The inescapable earthiness of Teejan Bai

Many decades ago, sometime in the mid-1980s, I arrived in Paris and knocked at my painter friend SH Raza's door early in the morning. He was awake. As soon as we settled down to the morning tea, he asked me who Teejan Bai was. He added that the Parisian high society was abuzz with scandal since Teejan Bai had stated in an interview, published the previous day in the French daily Le Monde, that "French women are beautiful, but they are so flat-chested!"

Teejan Bai, a dark-skinned, well-endowed woman from Chhattisgarh, was a Pandavani performer who narrated episodes from the Mahabharata with pithy and sharp comments, relating them to current affairs, to the eternal dilemmas and contradictions of humans. A solo actor, a dancer, a singer, she was all rolled into one, her body and an ektara her only physical assets.

No stage set, no complicated light arrangement, not even a public address system was required for Teejan's art. It was an art that teased and brought the grand epic of Mahabharata to the utterly ordinary, infusing it with the earthiness of Chhattisgarh. In her narrative, the classical was folk, and the grandeur and the heroics were teased into being everyday occurrences. Teejan creatively, and significantly, transformed the distant and inaccessible narrative into its inevitable everydayness. The living and the grand, the awe-inspiring and the interrogative were all pulled down, as it were, to be located and rooted in the mundane, and the earthiness and mess of daily life. Pandavani, a popular folk form of Chhattisgarh, is the narrative art of telling the tales of the Pandavas from the Mahabharata. Teejan Bai, born and brought up in the lowliest of social and economic circumstances, almost single-handedly transformed this art into a vehicle of not only the epic episodes, but also of social and moral criticality. She was very nearly the first woman performer in the exclusively male-dominated Pandavani. She took this Chhattisgarhi genre of creative expression to the national and international levels. Teejan, through her self-chosen art, converted the lowliness of her circumstances into depth. She was able to transgress the conventional constraints into a bold, open-ended arena of moral and social interrogation. The irony of a low-caste woman making a foundational text, a classic of Hinduism, come alive could not be lost on her audience, nor its contemporary relevance be overestimated. It became Teejan Bai's Mahabharata. She seemed to be possessed by it. On the stage, she almost owned it. Classics are classics because they allow constant discovery and reinvention. However, reinventions in performance often do not get the recognition that scholarly or intellectual discoveries and explorations of the same classics get. In our time, if Buddhadeb Basu (Bengali), Durga Bhagwat and Irawati Karve (Marathi), and Dharmveer Bharati (Hindi) have discovered the Mahabharata and reinterpreted it in literature, Teejan Bai has done so in performance. We came to know of Teejan Bai through theatreperson Habib Tanvir in the late 1970s. He was already creating a new kind of modernism in theatre by engaging the energy and vitality of some of the folk performers of Chhattisgarh. When Teejan Bai performed for the first time in Bhopal, we were struck by the many elements of her performance; and the ease and confidence with which she handled a variety of emotions and experiences: love, longing, grief, tenderness, waiting, wonder, shock, challenge, resolve to fight, retaliation, contemplation, moral dilemma, burning questions. She smoothly moved from one to the other, as she did from enacting a variety of characters such



as Krishna, Duryodhana, Karna, Bheema, Arjuna, Draupadi, and Gandhari. While they were part of a narrative being said and sung, suggested and enacted, each one emerged with a marked and distinct persona. She spoke, sang, whispered, shouted, wailed, laughed, and, in a manner, wove them together in her unending, almost interminable, episodes from the great epic. In between, with humour and sarcasm, she would punctuate the narration with bits of contemporary happenings, commenting sharply on their import and implication. In her performance, we, who watched her, were transported to an epic time, in which the past and the present seamlessly merged. Teejan Bai spoke to the great epic Mahabharata, but she also addressed the clumsy, chaotic, clueless 'Mahabharata' we currently live in. Teejan Bai had a troubled personal life, a depressing ethos of social stigma. But she fiercely protected her art from being soiled by it, refusing to carry the suffering visibly. Perhaps she was, in this respect, an unsuspecting classicist who did not use art for self-expression. And yet she was a woman, her female presence and gesture undeniable, and sometimes stark. She was a woman who was telling us stories and episodes from a classical past, revealing aspects of our eternal human condition. She became a human voice, a human presence, a human oracle, reaffirming that we are all human beings who have a lot to share with each other: songs, stories, strengths, foibles, dignity and arrogance — all markers of irrepressible humanity. Teejan Bai was admired by lakhs of people, both in India and abroad. She received many honours: the Rajya Shikhar Samman of the Madhya Pradesh government, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the Padma Shri, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Vibhushan. She emerged as the most admired and awarded folk performing female artiste in India. She travelled far and wide and carried both the Mahabharata and the Chhattisgarhi fragrance all along. I recall that when she went to Paris to perform for the first time, she was scheduled to give about a dozen concerts, but performed twice the number due to public demand. From singing on small chabutaras and under trees in rural Chhattisgarh, she rose to perform in hallowed halls and glittering spaces, both within India and elsewhere. But she remained the same Teejan, always narrating and singing in Chhattisgarhi, in a sari, with an ektara in her hand. She occupied the stage, as it were, for more than half a century. She has now left. If there is a heaven, the ultimate resort of gods and heroes, Teejan Bai must already be performing before them, singing to them their own tales, which might have disappeared from their memory due to widespread divine amnesia. She might also be reminding them how they were like other humans — earthy, fallible and lovable.

US Senate targets China's drug supply grip

Washington: A bipartisan group of US senators has unveiled legislation to increase scrutiny of foreign ownership in America's pharmaceutical industry, warning that growing dependence on China for critical medicines and drug ingredients poses risks to US national security and public health. The proposed Pharmaceutical Investment Oversight and Accountability Act, introduced by Senate Special Committee on Aging Chairman Rick Scott along with Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand and Senator Elizabeth Warren on Wednesday (local time), would require annual reports to Congress on foreign investment in pharmaceutical manufacturing and related technologies.

Supporters said the measure is intended to improve transparency over who ultimately owns or controls companies that supply medicines to Americans. "The American people, and especially seniors, deserve to know who actually controls the medicines keeping them alive," Scott said while opening the hearing. Indian entertainment newsScott argued that Washington lacks a complete picture of foreign ownership across the pharmaceutical supply chain, including facilities that manufacture medicines, produce key ingredients or hold sensitive clinical data.

He warned that geopolitical tensions could expose vulnerabilities if critical supplies were disrupted. Gillibrand said the United States remained heavily dependent on China and

Why food noise is real: It has more to do with biology than willpower, so stop guilting



"I've just finished breakfast, and I'm already thinking about lunch." It's a sentence I am hearing with increasing frequency from my patients. They often describe a relentless stream of thoughts about food: planning the next meal while eating the current one, wondering what snacks are available, battling cravings throughout the day, or feeling as though food occupies far more mental space than they would like. Many arrive in the clinic worried that something is wrong with them. Some blame themselves for lacking discipline or self-control. But what they are experiencing is "food noise." While not an official medical diagnosis, food noise has become a widely used term to describe persistent thoughts about food, eating and cravings that seem disproportionate to actual physical hunger. As research sheds more light on the biology of appetite, these experiences may have more to do with hormones and brain signalling than with willpower alone.

What exactly is food noise?

This refers to frequent, intrusive thoughts about food, eating, cravings or the next opportunity to eat. These are not driven by genuine physiological hunger. A person may have consumed sufficient calories and nutrients but still find themselves repeatedly thinking about food. My patients often describe it as a constant internal dialogue centred around food. Occasional food-related thoughts are entirely normal. However, for others, these thoughts can become persistent enough to interfere with daily life, concentration and eating behaviours.

The brain-hormone connection

Appetite regulation is controlled by a complex communication network between the gut, brain, pancreas and fat tissue. Several hormones influence hunger and satiety, including ghrelin, leptin, insulin and a hormone known as GLP-1, or glucagon-like peptide-1. GLP-1 is naturally produced in the intestine after eating. It plays multiple roles in regulating energy balance and metabolism. It helps signal the brain that enough food has been consumed, slows the rate at which the stomach empties, reduces appetite and assists in controlling blood glucose levels. In essence, GLP-1 acts as one of the body's natural appetite regulators.

Why food thoughts can become overwhelming

The human brain evolved to seek food because survival depended on it. But today's food environment is dramatically different from the one our biology was designed

for. Highly processed, calorie-dense foods are available around the clock. Advertisements, food delivery apps, social media feeds and stressful lifestyles constantly stimulate the brain's reward pathways. At the same time, inadequate sleep, chronic stress and irregular eating patterns can disrupt normal hunger and satiety signals. The result can be a heightened focus on food that goes well beyond physical need. Researchers believe that brain regions involved in reward, motivation and impulse control play an important role in the experience of food noise. The term food noise entered mainstream discussion largely because of the experiences reported by people taking newer GLP-1 receptor agonist medications such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, which mimic the functioning of gut hormones.

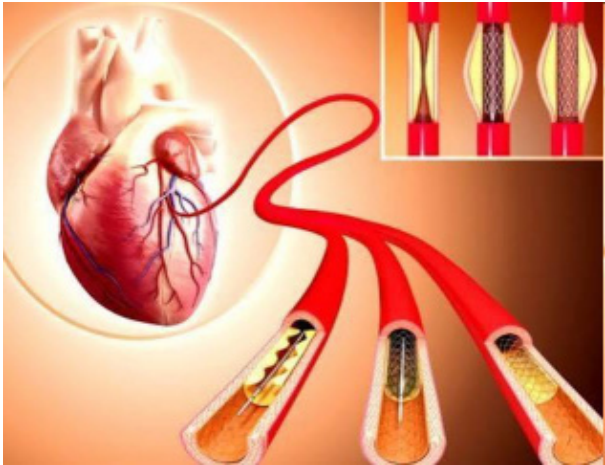
One of the most common observations among patients is not simply weight loss but mental relief. Many report that food no longer dominates their thoughts. The constant internal chatter about eating becomes quieter. They feel satisfied after meals and are less likely to spend the day thinking about what to eat next. This has been one of the most striking aspects of these medications because it highlights the role biology plays in appetite regulation. By enhancing the effects of GLP-1, these drugs strengthen signals of fullness, slow gastric emptying and help reduce excessive appetite. For many patients, that translates into fewer cravings and less mental preoccupation with food. But these medicines do not eliminate hunger.

A common misconception is that GLP-1 drugs completely switch off appetite. They do not. Hunger is a normal and healthy biological signal. The purpose of treatment is not to eliminate hunger but to reduce excessive cravings and persistent food thoughts that occur even when the body's energy needs have already been met. Patients still experience hunger. What changes is the intensity and frequency of food-related urges that are disconnected from genuine physiological needs.

Who can take GLP-1 drugs then?

Despite growing interest, these medications are not appropriate for everyone. Eligibility depends on factors such as body mass index, the presence of obesity-related conditions, diabetes status, medical history and overall health profile. Like all medications, GLP-1 therapies can have side effects, most commonly nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation. Their use should always be guided by a healthcare professional. Even as medications transform obesity treatment, lifestyle interventions remain essential. Several strategies can help improve appetite regulation and reduce food noise. These are as follows: Eating adequate protein and fibre. Maintaining consistent meal timings. Prioritising good-quality sleep. Managing stress effectively. Staying physically active. Limiting ultra-processed foods. Avoiding extreme or highly restrictive diets. These measures support the body's natural hunger and satiety mechanisms and can complement medical treatment where appropriate. Understanding food noise helps shift the conversation away from blame and toward biology. The goal is not simply to help people eat less. It is to help the brain and body communicate more effectively, so that food occupies its proper place in daily life — something to be enjoyed and nourished by, rather than something that constantly dominates the mind.

4 heart attacks in 5 years and 8 stents: My patient is now fit; his biggest lesson wasn't about surgery



When this corporate executive suffered his first heart attack at 50, he assumed the worst was behind him. The attack was relatively mild, with a blocked coronary artery. Doctors moved quickly, opening the narrowed vessel and implanting a stent to restore blood flow. Like many patients, he believed that once the blocked artery was fixed, normal life could resume. Instead, the next five years became an education in the stubborn nature of heart disease. He experienced three new blocks in different arteries and at the end of it all, he had eight or nine stents. But he made aggressive changes in his lifestyle that has kept him intervention-free so far. And that brings to the most fundamental misunderstanding about heart disease itself. You have to keep working towards heart health continuously, not just hope one intervention will work for the rest of your life.

For decades, heart disease was often explained as a simple blockage problem: an artery narrows, blood flow is restricted, a heart attack occurs and the blockage is fixed. Modern cardiology views the disease very differently. A stent can treat a blockage, but it cannot cure the underlying process that created it. Coronary artery disease is a chronic condition affecting the entire arterial system. The artery that receives a stent may remain open, while disease continues to progress silently elsewhere. That reality became painfully clear in this patient's case. Following his first heart attack, he embraced the kind of lifestyle transformation doctors dream of seeing. He quit smoking, made his diet and exercise non-negotiable. His LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol was driven below 40 mg/dL, an exceptionally aggressive target reserved for patients at very high risk. He remained scrupulous about taking medication and was prescribed one of the newest cholesterol-lowering therapies available, administered by injection to keep LDL levels suppressed over long periods. He was also given anti-inflammatory and anti-platelet drugs.

The changes undoubtedly improved his odds. But they could not reduce his risk to zero. One of the biggest misconceptions surrounding recurrent heart attacks is that they are always caused by a failed stent. In reality, most are not. A small proportion of patients develop problems within the treated segment itself. The artery can gradually narrow again, a process known as restenosis. In rarer cases, a clot forms inside the stent. The danger from stent thrombosis is greatest during the first month after angioplasty. Because a stent is essentially a foreign object inside the artery, the body can react by forming a clot around it. This is

why patients are prescribed two blood-thinning medications after the procedure. With modern drug-releasing stents and contemporary blood thinners, the risk of stent thrombosis is roughly 1 per cent during the first month. If blood-thinning medication is interrupted or does not work effectively, that risk can rise, potentially reaching 3 per cent in some circumstances. The larger threat often lies elsewhere.

Only a small percentage of these recurrences is directly related to the site of stenting. Far more commonly, fresh blockages develop in previously unaffected portions of the coronary circulation. This happens because coronary artery disease is rarely confined to a single location. Plaques can be present throughout the arterial tree, some large enough to be detected, others too small to attract attention during an angiogram. Over time, one of these plaques can become unstable, rupture and trigger a new heart attack. In many cases, therefore, the recurrence is not a failure of the original procedure. It is evidence that the disease itself remains active. Patients with poorly controlled cholesterol, diabetes, hypertension, obesity or continued smoking face the highest risks. But even among those who follow medical advice rigorously, biology can sometimes prove difficult to outrun. Aggressive cholesterol lowering, blood thinners, blood pressure control and lifestyle modifications can reduce risk by as much as 90 per cent. The remaining 10 per cent reflects factors that medicine still cannot fully control. Some patients carry a powerful genetic predisposition to atherosclerosis. Others have elevated levels of inflammatory activity within their arteries. Conditions such as diabetes and kidney disease can continue to accelerate vascular damage despite treatment. Researchers are also increasingly focusing on lipoprotein(a), an inherited cholesterol particle that appears to increase cardiovascular risk even when conventional cholesterol levels are well controlled. For these patients, treatment becomes a process of constant risk reduction rather than complete risk elimination. The encouraging news is that recurrent heart attacks are far from inevitable. Most patients, who adhere consistently to medication, maintain very low LDL levels, avoid smoking and manage associated risk factors, do not experience repeated cardiac events. The period immediately after a heart attack remains the most concerning. As time passes, the risk falls substantially. After the first year, recurrence rates typically decline to about 1 to 2 per cent annually for patients who remain compliant with treatment.

Amazon India focuses on long-term growth, big investments, says Samir Kumar

New Delhi: Amazon is in the midst of its "most aggressive phase of expansion" in India yet, country head Samir Kumar has said, adding that the e-commerce giant is firmly focused on playing the long game for market and customer wins. The comment from Amazon India's top honcho comes against the backdrop of the company's recently announced USD 35 billion investment by 2030 — building on USD 40 billion already invested — to support business expansion, AI-driven digitisation, exports and job creation. "If you look at our investments, we are one of the largest investments in India... USD 35 billion over the next five years,

After 60, they went back to college to study ageing: How this TISS course helps them take care of themselves



On a Friday evening at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), long after most college campuses begin to empty out, a different kind of classroom slowly fills up. A retired Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) scientist walks in carrying handwritten notes. Beside him sits a former schoolteacher from Hyderabad. A homemaker in her 60s quietly adjusts her spectacles before opening a notebook. Someone else has rushed in after finishing caregiving duties at home. There are no discussions about second life placements or corporate careers. Instead, the lesson begins with a question: How to manage the process of growing old, specially when one is alone? A faculty member projects an image of the human brain and begins explaining dementia and cognitive decline. The discussion quickly moves beyond medicine. Students speak about parents forgetting names, elderly relatives repeating stories or withdrawing after their children migrate abroad. One student recalls watching his father age rapidly after his mother died. Another talks about the silent exhaustion of caregiving. In another session, soft music fills the room as students participate in dance movement therapy and art exercises later explained as methods used to stimulate memory and emotional expression among older adults. Many laugh awkwardly at first. Weeks later, the same group would stage a street play on ageing and loneliness.

These are among the experiences shaping students enrolled in TISS' one-year diploma in Gerontology, a part-time programme where elderly Indians are learning not only about ageing, but also about survival, companionship and purpose in later life. "India is witnessing a major demographic shift with people aged 60 and above projected to form nearly 20 per cent of the population by 2050. Loneliness, caregiving stress, emotional neglect, social isolation and the need for dignified ageing are emerging as critical concerns," said Dr Saigita Chitturu, assistant professor at the Centre for Lifelong Learning and faculty coordinator for the programme, which was launched in 2008. Open to candidates above 25 years of age, it combines classroom teaching with field-based experiential learning focused on the biological, psychological, social and economic dimensions of ageing. Over the last couple of years, it has opened to the elderly, helping them help themselves. The programme currently admits around 30 students each year. Classes are held on Friday evenings and Saturdays over two semesters, with course fees of around Rs 63,000.

Learning to Teaching At 67, when most people are expected to settle into retirement, Prakash Apte walked into the classroom to study ageing. "For years, I have seen older people around me struggling with loneliness and neglect. I wanted to understand what ageing really means and how society can respond to it," said Apte, a student from the 2021-22 batch of TISS' Diploma in Gerontology programme. A yoga teacher, he said the course gave him a structured understanding of the challenges faced by senior citizens, from loneliness and declining health to the absence of support systems. "India's elderly population is rising rapidly but support for them is still extremely limited. Most policies remain on paper," he said. He now conducts awareness sessions for senior citizen groups, combining gerontology lessons with yoga practices suited for older adults. He also hopes to launch a social enterprise focused on helping elderly people living alone. Students are allowed to ask the most uncomfortable of questions, from retirement planning and elder abuse to grief, emotional neglect and the fear of dependency — Who will care for you in old age? What happens when children move away? How does one emotionally prepare for ageing?

For 76-year-old Arun Rahulkar, a retired senior scientific officer from BARC, the course became a way to rebuild purpose after retirement. "Retirement creates a vacuum. Your children grow up and move away, and suddenly you are left wondering what your purpose is. This course taught me how to age with dignity and meaning," he

said. After completing the diploma, Rahulkar enrolled in a three-year light music course. He now spends time travelling, practising music and conducting awareness sessions for senior citizens. "People think retirement means sitting idle. But if you remain engaged and socially connected, ageing becomes easier," he said. For Milind Patil, 59, who works in the oil and gas sector, the course helped him process years of caregiving stress after caring for ageing parents. His mother died in 2020, while his 95-year-old father continues to live with him. "I have seen ageing very closely inside my own house," said Patil, a student from the 2024-25 batch. He is now constructing a senior citizens' home in rural Amravati. "Migration has left many elderly people in villages and small towns ageing alone," he said.

Practical life lessons The learning often extends beyond the classroom. Students visit old age homes, NGOs, hospitals and low-income settlements, including Dharavi, where they spend time listening to elderly residents speak about abandonment, illness and isolation. One student recalls interviewing an elderly woman while her son repeatedly shouted at her in front of them. Another remembers bedridden seniors who simply wanted someone to sit beside them without rushing away. The course introduced students to concepts such as neuroplasticity, cognitive stimulation and dementia care, while field visits exposed them to the realities faced by economically weaker elderly populations. Patil said modules involving art therapy, music therapy and street theatre also helped students overcome social hesitation and reconnect emotionally with themselves. "At 59, I had never performed before an audience. I have gained confidence and empathy," he said. For many women, the classroom became a space for rediscovering identity after decades spent caring for others. Ela Thakur joined the programme in 2012 at the age of 60 after years as a homemaker. "I had lost my sister and was emotionally broken. Initially, I felt intimidated because many students were professionals or doctors. I was just a housewife. Then I started developing my own views and expressing myself. Today I write regularly and participate in discussions. I realised older people too need identity and self-worth," she said.

Dr Anita M Kumar, a former radio producer who spent years caring for her elder sister with polio, described the programme as a refuge after emotional burnout. Now she conducts virtual support sessions while her weekly programme, Dil Se Dil Talk, is a space where senior citizens openly discuss loneliness, grief and emotional struggles. "People literally cry during these sessions because many have nobody to talk to. Sometimes what elderly people need most is for someone to sit beside them, maintain eye contact and simply listen," she said. Her field visits reinforced how widespread loneliness among elderly Indians has become. "Children are not always intentionally neglectful. Modern life is demanding. But the result is that many elderly people spend entire days without meaningful human interaction," she said.

Education for Self-reliance Dr Prasun Chatterjee, Group Clinical Lead, Geriatric Medicine and Longevity Science at Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, said educating people about ageing, including its medical, social, physical and familial aspects, can help them prepare better for later life. "Ageing in India has largely happened by chance, not by preparation. Courses on ageing science help older adults understand their own health, remain mentally engaged and also support others in their peer group who may be struggling," he said. Emphasising the need for meaningful engagement post-60, he feels gerontology, which focusses on the social aspects of ageing, should be promoted as the country's elderly population continues to grow. "Every family will eventually deal with ageing. Basic understanding of elderly care and ageing should not be limited only to senior citizens, but extended to caregivers, healthcare workers and younger generations as well.

Older caregivers often understand the emotional and physical needs of elderly people better than younger caregivers because they themselves are going through similar experiences," he said. He also pointed to the shortage of trained geriatric specialists and caregivers. "There are very few trained geriatricians and geriatric nurses in the country despite the growing elderly population. India needs stronger caregiver training systems, health educators and community-based support structures for older adults," he said. For elderly students, a diploma is no longer an academic course. It has become a way of reclaiming visibility in a society that often sidelines the elderly once their professional and familial roles begin to fade.

Researchers find a protein that halts brain decline



Scientists may have uncovered a hidden biological switch that helps control how quickly the body ages. Research published in PLOS Biology suggests that declining levels of a brain protein called Menin can trigger inflammation, memory decline and other age-related changes throughout the body.

Researchers find a protein that halts brain decline Menin levels dropped sharply in the hypothalamus of lab mice as they grew older. It's a protein that helps suppress inflammation. Scientists may have uncovered a hidden biological switch that helps control how quickly the body ages. Research published in PLOS Biology suggests that declining levels of a brain protein called Menin can trigger inflammation, memory decline and other age-related changes throughout the body. In experiments with mice, restoring the protein reversed several signs of ageing, while a simple amino acid supplement improved cognitive function. The findings add to growing evidence that ageing may be strongly influenced by the hypothalamus, a small but powerful brain region that regulates metabolism, hormones, body temperature, sleep and stress responses. Researchers increasingly view the hypothalamus as a central command centre

for aging itself.

The study, led by Lige Leng and colleagues at Xiamen University in China, focused on Menin, a protein that helps suppress inflammation in the brain. Earlier work had already shown that Menin plays an important role in controlling neuroinflammatory activity. The team wanted to know whether losing this protective protein might contribute to ageing. Their experiments revealed that Menin levels dropped sharply in the hypothalamus as mice grew older. The decline occurred specifically in neurons within the ventromedial hypothalamus (VMH), a region linked to metabolism and systemic ageing. Interestingly, Menin levels did not significantly decrease in nearby support cells such as astrocytes or microglia. To investigate what this loss might mean, the researchers engineered mice in which Menin activity could be selectively reduced. The effects were striking. Younger mice with lower Menin levels developed increased brain inflammation, thinning skin, lower bone mass, impaired balance, memory problems and a shorter lifespan compared to normal mice. The results suggest that Menin may act as a protective "anti-ageing" factor inside the brain. One of the most surprising discoveries involved D-serine, an amino acid that also functions as a neurotransmitter in the brain. D-serine helps regulate communication between neurons and is important for learning and memory. When Menin levels fell, D-serine production also dropped. The researchers traced this effect to reduced activity of an enzyme required for D-serine synthesis, which itself appears to be regulated by Menin. D-serine naturally occurs in foods including soybeans, eggs, fish and nuts, and is also sold as a dietary supplement. The connection caught the attention of researchers because other studies have linked declining D-serine levels with ageing-related cognitive impairment and reduced synaptic plasticity, which means the brain's ability to strengthen neural connections involved in memory and learning.

Can India's national accounts make the grade?



On November 28, the Union Statistics and Programme Implementation Ministry reported that India's real GDP grew 8.2% and the nominal GDP 8.7% in the second quarter of the financial year 2025-26 — the strongest print in six quarters. Just two days earlier, the IMF, in its data adequacy assessment, had given India's national accounts a "C" grade — the second lowest in its four-tier system — noting "shortcomings that somewhat hamper surveillance", even as the overall macro data set earned a "B". The timing underscores a troubling irony.

India once set standards in official statistics. Under P.C. Mahalanobis, the National Sample Survey and a robust system of national accounts turned a poor postcolonial state into a model for the developing world. Today, that legacy is fraying. The uninterrupted decennial Census series (since 1881), which underpins most sampling frames, has been broken. The official consumption expenditure survey, the backbone of poverty and inequality statistics and consumer price index (CPI) reweighting, was last released in 2011-12. The 2017-18 round was scrapped after leaked results suggested a fall in real consumption, with the government citing "data quality" problems. In that sense, the IMF's "C" grade distils several long-running concerns. First, the current GDP series still uses 2011-12 as its base year — a benchmark that will be 14 years out of date by the time a new series with 2022-23 as base is rolled out in February 2026. Real growth, obtained by deflating nominal aggregates, uses price indices derived from consumption and production patterns that no longer accurately reflect the economy's structure. Both the consumer and wholesale price baskets, which should be refreshed roughly every five years, are long overdue for revision.

Moreover, the narrow gap between nominal and real GDP in the latest quarter, barely half a percentage point, is also telling. When deflators are based on outdated expenditure weights, they are prone to understating effective inflation and overstating real growth. Point estimates of 8%-plus growth should, therefore, be treated as only indicative. Second, the current price architecture is particularly ill-suited to a services-led economy. Services now account for about 55% of the gross value added (GVA). Yet India still relies heavily on the wholesale price index (WPI), which omits most services, for deflating output. The IMF has been explicit that the absence of a comprehensive producer price index (PPI) and "excessive use of single deflation" are central reasons for the "C" grade.

Third, the treatment of the informal economy in national statistics is a serious weakness. The informal sector contributes roughly 45% of the GDP, but is not measured annually from the ground up. Instead, statisticians fix the formal-informal relationship in the base year and then ex-

trapolate informal activity from formal-sector indicators such as corporate filings or GST data. That shortcut might work in a stable environment, but it breaks down when shocks, such as demonetisation, GST, and the pandemic, hit small, cash-dependent firms much harder than listed companies. Proxying kirana stores, small workshops, and petty services with large firms makes aggregate GDP look healthier precisely when vulnerability is greatest. Fourth, the quarterly GDP numbers are difficult to interpret in their current form. In an economy with pronounced monsoon and festival cycles, raw quarter-on-quarter changes say little about the underlying trajectory. Most advanced statistical systems publish seasonally adjusted series to strip out predictable intra-year patterns and identify genuine turning points. India does not, leaving investors and policymakers to read the cycle off unadjusted GDP, where a festival quarter and a genuine upswing are virtually indistinguishable.

Reform agenda To be fair, India is moving on the reform agenda. A new GDP series with 2022-23 as the base, an updated CPI with 2024 weights, and a revised IIP are all slated for release in early 2026, with greater use of GST returns, corporate filings, digital payments, and recent consumption and enterprise survey data. If these revisions are implemented rigorously and then institutionalised as a regular cycle, India's statistical methods will come much closer to international best practice. Three reforms are essential. First, statistics must be treated as economic infrastructure, not an administrative by-product. The National Statistical Commission (NSC) should be given a firm statutory basis, its own budget, security of tenure for members, and a clear mandate to publish data without political clearance, with protections for its Chair analogous to those of the RBI Governor. India was an early supporter of the UN's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It now needs to write those principles into domestic law rather than merely endorsing them in international forums.

Second, a binding data calendar is overdue. The Census, consumption, labour-force and enterprise surveys should have legislated periodicity and statutory deadlines for release, with deviations explained to Parliament. Anonymised microdata should be routinely available to researchers with reasonable lags to enable independent "shadow" estimates that provide external validation, as investors and multilaterals often demand. Third, as digital sources multiply, the risk grows that selective high-frequency indicators (GST collections, toll data, UPI volumes) will substitute for, rather than complement, a coherent system. The integration of digital data into national accounts must be transparent and replicable; otherwise, dashboards will multiply, but doubts will persist. For global investors, weak and unreliable data mean mispriced risk; for policymakers, they mean misjudged slack, misplaced priorities and a macro stance looser than what fundamentals warrant. If trend growth is overstated and poverty undercounted, job creation looks less urgent than it is, and the case for safety nets and basic public goods appears weaker than it should. India's economic rise is real, but its statistical institutions have not kept pace. If the coming overhaul succeeds in building an independent, modern and transparent system, what will finally matter is not IMF's grade card, but whether an 8.2% print commands confidence, not scepticism. Sankalpa Bhattacharjee and Amarendu Nandy are faculty members in the economics and public policy area at the Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi; views expressed are personal.

Diabetes Atlas projections indicate 900 million people will have diabetes in 2050



In its projections for 2050, the 11th edition of the International Diabetes Federation Diabetes Atlas has calculated that from around 500 million people living with diabetes in 2024, the number will grow to nearly 900 million people, between the ages of 20-79 years. Publishing the key results as an article in the peer reviewed journal Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol 2025, the authors, who are scientists collaborating across the world, pointed out that in 2024, that figure was 11.11 % of the population and just over 580 million adults. As per their projections, diabetes will affect 12.96 % of the population, over 850 million people, in 2050. In the paper, Irini Genitsaridi et al, stress: As the diabetes epidemic has continued unchecked since the turn of the millenium, stronger efforts are needed to slow down progression, with strategies tailored appropriately across countries and population groups. A total of 210 countries and five

territories were included in the 11th edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas.

Urban-rural estimates play a very important division in the epidemiological study of non communicable diseases, as they also have a strong correlation with risk-inducing behaviours in different settings. In 2024, more people with diabetes were living in urban areas (400 million) than in rural areas (189 million). The authors state that this trend would continue with the projection for 2050, for urban centres (655 million) but in rural areas, it is likely to remain almost the same (198 million) in 2050. Further disaggregating data on the basis of income levels, in 2024, middle income countries had the highest age-standardised prevalence of diabetes, followed by high income countries. The lowest prevalence was in low income countries. However, it is estimated that over 95 % of the increase in number of people with diabetes will occur in low and middle income countries in 2050. The explosion of population growth in the low and middle income countries, population aging and urbanisation are factors that explain the sheer rise in numbers. A. Ramachandran, one of the authors of the paper, from the India Diabetes Research Foundation, says "one of the unique features of this year's Atlas, is the table listing the top 10 countries of the world with diabetes load. China is right at the top of the table with about 148 million people with diabetes, and India comes up second on the table, with nearly 90 million. The United States comes third, and Pakistan, fourth. In 2050, while China and India will maintain their top positions on the table, it is projected that Pakistan will climb to the third slot.

cording of life events such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces, is more than paperwork. It's a gateway to belonging." "In terms of birth certification, in India, there's no explicit discrimination on the basis of disability," says Pratik Aggarwal, executive director, ASTHA, a non governmental organisation working to include children with disabilities. But he hastens to add: "When it's a larger ecosystem - how do you count children with disabilities? Apart from the Census and other surveys, we really don't have disaggregated data on the health conditions of children with disabilities. The National Family Health Survey should actually cover children with disabilities, but it doesn't. So, we don't have data on how many children with disabilities have been immunised, or how many children with disabilities are enrolled in anganwadis, how many of them have malnutrition. This is also undercounting of disability." When a parent has a disability, or if both parents have some form of disability, it can be a nightmare trying to access hospitals and government systems in order to access treatments and services meant to assist them, including trying to figure out interventions for their child, school admissions, and immunisation, says Mr. Aggarwal. Then the efforts to ensure the child gets a gainful education and is trained to be independent can be excruciatingly painful.

Why intimate partner violence is an under-recognised public health crisis in India



When Meera (name changed on request) first sought medical help, she was 34, a mother of two, and visibly exhausted. She went to a doctor at a private clinic, complaining of tightness in her chest, an uncomfortable awareness of her rapidly-beating heart, and episodes of intense panic that left her gasping for air. "The doctor ran some tests. Everything came back normal," Meera recalled. "She just gave me multivitamin tablets and told me it would get better."

Meera next consulted another private doctor, who referred her to a government hospital for specialist care. Over the next three years, Meera shuttled between multiple departments at the same government hospital in Assam—general medicine, cardiology, psychiatry—searching for an explanation for her symptoms. During this period, she developed severe insomnia. Long after her husband and children had fallen asleep, Meera would pace the darkened corridors of her home. The lack of rest left her exhausted and irritable during the day. She began falling behind on household work and sometimes found herself breaking down in tears without knowing why. Doctors continued to investigate. Her ECGs were normal. Blood tests showed mild anaemia. She was prescribed iron supplements, antacids for gastric discomfort, and eventually sleeping pills to manage what was described as stress. It was only after a particularly severe episode, when Meera collapsed following an intense panic attack and was brought to the emergency department, that someone noticed what was really happening. A junior doctor noticed her flinch when her husband answered questions on her behalf and asked to speak to her alone. What emerged was a long history of physical violence, marital rape, economic control, and threats that she was enduring in her marriage. Meera was not suffering from an inexplicable collection of symptoms. She was living with untreated post-traumatic stress disorder, and it had taken years for the health system to recognise it. Meera's trajectory through India's health system mirrors what a recent Lancet analysis now describes as a global, yet under-recognised, public health failure. Drawing on data from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2023, the paper identifies intimate partner violence as a significant and measurable contributor to a wide range of health outcomes, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety, suicide, chronic pain, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, substance use, sexually transmitted infections, and adverse reproductive outcomes.

In health, this burden is measured using disability-adjusted life years, or DALYs—a metric that captures not only deaths, but the years of healthy life lost to illness and disability. Globally, the paper estimates that intimate partner violence costs women 1.85 crore DALYs in 2023—years of life lost to premature death and years lived with disability due to conditions such as depression, PTSD, chronic pain, and reproductive ill-health. According to the paper, the prevalence of this is highest in the South Asian region. For women of reproductive age in South Asia, the analysis finds that intimate partner violence is a greater risk factor for poor health than high fasting plasma glucose, obesity, smoking, or alcohol use—placing violence among the leading drivers of disability and chronic illness. This evidence enables a crucial paradigm shift. Domestic violence is no longer a social issue but is a risk factor that impacts health.

Intimate partner violence is an insidious exposure that accumulates over years, shaping mental illness, non-communicable disease, and long-term disability rather than presenting as a single, identifiable event. This reframing also helps explain why violence so often remains invisible within the health system—even to the women living through it. When asked why she never reported the violence earlier, Meera put it simply: "How would I know this was what was causing all these symptoms? It's not like he beat me and I came to the hospital with an injury."

A.K. Jayashree, head, department of community medicine at the Government Medical College in Kannur, Kerala has worked at the intersection of gender and health for several decades now. Dr. Jayashree began her career in the 1980s, volunteering with an autonomous women's organisation working on gender issues and moved on to working with vulnerable populations such as transgender women and sex workers in the 90s. During this time, she worked with a large number of women who had been subjected to intimate partner violence. But when she entered formal medical education as a teacher in 2009, she was struck by how little of this knowledge had translated into training. What was being taught to medical students neither reflected the realities she had seen on the ground, nor did it take into account evidence generated by decades of research. Studies show that women come to outpatient departments repeatedly with non-specific complaints that do not resolve — such as chronic pain, tiredness, inability to sleep etc. — but medical students are not taught to look for everyday violence. As a result, as doctors, they are often unprepared for what they encounter in real-world settings: women may arrive at emergency departments after being beaten, accompanied by husbands or in-laws who answer questions on their behalf. Junior doctors may sense something is wrong but lack the training to ask safely, document accurately, or refer appropriately.

What little information does reach medical students is fragmented. "Most of it is confined to forensic medicine, as a legal and evidentiary exercise" Dr. Jayashree says. "It is not taught in clinical subjects that actually shape how doctors practise." For Dr. Jayashree, the Lancet analysis underscores an urgent need: to integrate gender and intimate partner violence into the training of all health workers, alongside practical guidance on how to respond when violence is disclosed. Some efforts are underway. In Kerala, Bhoomika clinics—district-level centres housed within government hospitals—offer counselling, referrals to shelters, legal support, and skill development under the National Health Mission. Yet large numbers of women remain underserved. "Most women do not want to leave their partners or file police complaints," Dr. Jayashree says. "They want the violence to stop without their families breaking apart. Our systems are not designed to support that reality."

Nancy Angeline Gnanaselvam, assistant professor of community medicine at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru, says the women most visible to the system are not representative of those living with intimate partner violence. "What we see in crisis centres or one-stop facilities are usually women in extreme distress, often brought by

the police after calling helplines or when neighbours report the violence," she says. "They are just the tip of the iceberg." Research by groups such as CEHAT, which is working on gender and health in India, also reveals that most women who receive help through the health system do so after a major crisis event, such as violence that necessitates a visit to the emergency department or a suicide attempt because of the violence. The much larger, invisible group, she explains, are women who continue to live with their partners and do not want to file complaints or leave their homes. "They come to outpatient departments of hospitals or clinics instead," she says. "They come with diabetes, hypertension, anxiety, and chronic pain. And we don't recognise what we are seeing." Dr. Nancy argues that intimate partner violence remains poorly understood within medicine because it sits at the uneasy intersection of healthcare, social services, and law enforcement. "Physicians and police often don't understand why a woman would want to go back to a violent man," she says. "They are not trained to understand gender, power, and dependence within intimate relationships." In her practice, Dr. Nancy has seen women with diabetes and hypertension, disorders that remain uncontrolled despite being given the maximum possible medications, who eventually tell her that they are being subjected to violence at home. "One patient who had heart failure and was on a pacemaker told me, 'From the day I was married, I have lived hearing my husband scream and shout, I am sure that that has something to do with me getting heart disease'" she recalls.

Referrals to psychiatry or other mental health services are often resisted by families or blocked altogether. The physicians, who are the only people the women have safe access to, receive little training in even basic mental healthcare, let alone trauma-informed care. "So the woman remains in medicine clinics, cardiology clinics, diabetes clinics—treated symptom by symptom, while the cause remains untouched," says Dr. Nancy. These women have enormous visible and invisible scars," she says. "And no one is trained how to even offer them empathy." For Dr. Nancy, this is why reframing intimate partner violence as a public health and chronic disease issue matters. It shifts the focus away from isolated incidents and moral judgment, and toward cumulative exposure, with it being seen for the long-term disability and preventable illnesses it causes. Without that shift, she argues, the health system will continue to manage diabetes, heart disease, anxiety, and depression—while remaining blind to the violence that fuels them. At this point the official core competency dealing with issues faced by women in the National Medical Council curriculum is only a one-hour lecture, says Dr. Nancy. Curriculum changes needed

"There are many entry points into the conversation about gender, for example, when discussing the PCPNDT (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques) Act and sex selective abortion, there is potential for conversation as to why sex selective abortions happen in India. When studying nutrition, there is potential to discuss why anaemia is so common in Indian women. But medical education continues to miss these opportunities to have these conversations," says Dr. Nancy. According to her, gender must be an ongoing conversation brought up again and again in various health contexts, not just in a single lecture. "This needs to make it into the curriculum of nurses, psychologists and other healthcare workers as well," adds Dr. Jayashree. Last month, in a modest auditorium at the Sree Uthradom Thirunal (SUT) Academy of Medical Sciences in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, an unfamiliar conversation took place. For the first time, a panel discussion brought doctors together to talk about intimate partner violence, not through case sheets or diagnostic codes, but through questions the health system has long avoided. What should a doctor notice? What should they ask? And what responsibility does medicine carry when violence shapes a patient's life? The discussion did not yet frame violence in the language of chronic disease or disability. But its significance lay elsewhere: in the acknowledgement that domestic violence is not external to healthcare. Several speakers spoke about discomfort, uncertainty, and the absence of training—about not knowing how to ask questions when family members sit beside the patient, or what to do after a disclosure. Others reflected on how often women return with the same complaints and symptoms, without anyone naming the underlying cause. The conversation was a nod toward to shift that is now happening: moving intimate partner violence out of the margins of emergency care and social work, and into the core of how medicine understands illness, risk, and long-term health. For women like Meera, this recognition came years too late. But the Thiruvananthapuram panel suggests that something is perhaps beginning to change, not in protocols or textbooks as yet, but in the questions doctors and healthcare workers are starting to ask themselves. If intimate partner violence is to be addressed as a public health issue, those questions—asked in clinics, classrooms, and conferences—may be where the work begins.

Russia warns U.S. not to make 'fatal mistake' in Venezuela

Russia on Thursday (December 18, 2025) called on U.S. President Donald Trump's administration not to make a "fatal mistake" in the Venezuela crisis, calling for restraint and saying it was in "constant contact" with its ally Caracas. Mr. Trump ordered a blockade of sanctioned oil tankers in Venezuela this week, marking a new escalation between Washington and the South American country led by leftist authoritarian Nicolas Maduro. Venezuela has insisted its crude oil exports were not impacted by the announcement, showing defiance. Mr. Maduro is a friend of the Kremlin's and has been a regular guest in Moscow for years. Moscow's Foreign Ministry said it hoped the White House would "not allow a fatal mistake and will refrain from further sliding into a situation that threatens unpredictable consequences for the entire Western hemisphere." It called for a "de-escalation" and expressed support for Maduro's government.

The Kremlin said it was in "constant contact" with its "ally and partner" Venezuela. "We, of course, call on all countries of the region to show restraint in order to avoid any unpredictable development in the situation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. It is unclear how the blockade will play out, with U.S. warships in the Caribbean. In his announcement earlier this week, Mr. Trump also said, "Venezuela is completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America" — raising fears of a potential U.S. intervention. The Kremlin has, in the past, helped prop up Venezuela's struggling economy. Russian leader Vladimir Putin reaffirmed his support to Maduro in a phone call earlier this month.

Visibility and inclusion- advancing the case of children with disabilities

An invisibility cloak is a prop that is sure to excite children; what better than a touch of magic, to vanish, disappear for others, even when you are right there. But for children with disabilities, being invisible is a terrible fact of life — being counted, is a challenge. The cascade of other inadequacies in society that inhibits children with disabilities from achieving their full potential continues to be a call for action — on the part of communities and governments. With World Disabilities Day observed in early December, it is time to evaluate what more needs to be done, acknowledging that the barriers are physical, but also much more. A recent UNICEF report reveals stark disparities in access to rights and services for the nearly 108 million children with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. Birth registration, in particular, is a fundamental human right. Yet for many persons with disabilities, especially children, the process is riddled with barriers. Tanja B. Sejersten, and Manal Hassan of the ESCAP's (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) Statistics Division, say that a number of children in the region do not even have a birth certificate — thus impeding their access to basic rights, services such as health education and social protection. They argue, in an article, that "Civil registration, the official re-

Why eliminating tobacco smoking should be on the agenda of governments



Accelerating the decline in tobacco smoking globally, by decreasing smoking prevalence from current levels to 5% everywhere, could increase life expectancy and prevent millions of premature deaths by 2050, according to a study from the Global Burden of Disease, Injuries and Risk Factors (GBD) Tobacco Forecasting Collaborators published this week in *The Lancet Public Health* journal. The authors reiterate what experts world over have said for long that speeding up progress towards ending smoking could deliver substantial health benefits to the population. The authors focussed on a scenario for the next three decades.

Based on current trends, the authors find global life expectancy will likely rise to 78.3 years by 2050 – up from 73.6 years in 2022. However, if tobacco smoking were to gradually decline from current levels to a rate of 5% in 2050, this would result in one year of additional life expectancy in males and 0.2 years in females. In a scenario where tobacco smoking was eliminated from 2023 onwards, this could result in up to 1.5 additional years of life expectancy among males and 0.4 years among females in 2050. In both scenarios, millions of premature deaths would also be avoided. Smoking, as has been established, is a leading risk factor for preventable death and ill health globally. While rates of smoking have fallen substantially over the past three decades, the pace of decline varies and has slowed in many

countries. Cancers, ischemic heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are—and will continue to be—the leading causes of premature deaths from smoking, said the paper. Together, these conditions account for 85% of potentially avoidable years of life lost (YLLs)—a measure of premature deaths. Several countries have set ambitious goals to reduce smoking rates to below 5% in the coming years. However, there is still significant opportunity to expand and strengthen proven policies and interventions to achieve these targets, they pointed out. “We must not lose momentum in efforts to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, smoking around the world. Our findings highlight that millions of premature deaths could be avoided by bringing an end to smoking,” said senior author, Stein Emil Vollset, from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). The new analysis provides in-depth forecasts of the health burden for 204 countries, categorised by age and sex, from 2022 until 2050. It is the first study to comprehensively forecast the health impacts due to smoking for all countries and all causes, as well as on 365 diseases and injuries. The main measure studied was YLLs or Years of Life Lost, a measure of premature deaths, counting each death by the remaining life expectancy at the age of death. In the scenario in which countries reduce smoking rates to 5% by 2050, there would be 876 million fewer YLLs compared to the most likely future scenario. Life expectancy in 2050 would be 77.1 years in males and 80.8 years in females. The greatest gains in life expectancy among males would be in East Asia, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, with between 1.2 and 1.8 extra years of life gained. Among females, life expectancy would increase the most in East Asia, High-income North America and Oceania, with between 0.3 and 0.5 additional years gained. For the scenario in which smoking would have ended globally in 2023, the estimates indicate a maximum of 2.04 billion YLLs could be avoided by 2050 compared to the most likely future scenario, and life expectancy in 2050 would be higher still, at 77.6 years for males and 81 years for females. Bottomline: use of tobacco kills and countries must throw in all the resources they have to ensure there is a decline in the prevalence of users.

A war that can have no winners



It's been a year since Hamas launched its ill-conceived and brazen terrorist attacks on Israel that enabled the group to take scores of hostages but led to a debilitating war. Israel's disproportionate response to the assault has led to the death of more than 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza, most of them women, children, and the elderly. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been unable to achieve his stated goals of destroying Hamas and bringing all the hostages home. With Israel's decision to expand the war to Lebanon, apparently, to decapitate Hezbollah and facilitate the return of Israelis who had fled the northern part of the country, concerns about the violence spiralling out of control have grown. Netanyahu, who just a year ago was desperately clinging to power to avoid facing corruption and fraud charges, today enjoys popular backing within his country. But this has come at a tremendous human cost — nearly two million Palestinians have been displaced in Gaza and nearly all of them remain trapped, while one million Lebanese have fled their homes in recent days. Netanyahu's actions in the West Bank and Gaza have triggered fears that he wishes to leave no room for a two-State solution.

Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have faced the brunt of Israel's military might as Netanyahu claims he is destroying an ecosystem of Islamist terror. Israel has the support of the US, from where evidence has emerged of the Biden administration turning a blind eye to Netanyahu's flagrant human rights violations, but Tel Aviv has lost the propaganda war. The Palestinian cause has received a fillip with countries such as Ireland, Norway and Spain voicing support for a two-State solution. The gains and diplomatic wins made through the Abraham Accords lie in tatters and West Asia has been dragged back several decades, with Israel isolated in a hostile region. The United Nations has again been exposed as a toothless body that is a prisoner to the interests of the five permanent members of the Security Council. In India and elsewhere, concerns have increased about the conflict's impact on oil prices and exports at a time when the global economy remains fragile. Israel's plan to retaliate against Iran could well tip West Asia past the breaking point. This war must end, and the world must then seriously look at UN reforms to ensure there are mechanisms in place to assert a rules-based order and avert prolonged wars.

When imagination becomes real: How AI is quietly rewriting fashion's creative rules

A homemaker in her 40s from Punjab, self-taught with a needle and thread after a tailor once quoted her more than she could afford, was scrolling through Pinterest the way she always does, looking for something beautiful to make. She found it: an elaborate gown, detailed and dreamy. She studied it, sourced leftover fabric scraps from her elder daughter's fashion work, and spent the better part of ten days bringing it to life, stitch by careful stitch, between her household chores. The dress was stunning. The original image, it turned out, had never existed in the physical world. It was AI-generated.

“I had no idea it was AI,” Sunita says. “I just liked the design and thought about it and made it. I will try to make any dress I like, be it AI or not. I just want to bring out the design in its truest sense.” Her daughter Shalu, a 19-year-old content creator, posted the video of her mother's creation. It spread quickly, not merely as a feel-good moment, but as an almost perfect illustration of something larger quietly happening across fashion: the dissolving boundary between the imagined and the made.

For Delhi-based fashion designer Afsha Noor, who goes by Noor Alchemy on Instagram and creates AI-generated couture and bridal collections, this dissolving line is not a side effect. It is the entire point. “You cannot come inside my head and see what I am imagining,” she says. “What we are doing with AI is imagining out loud.” Noor uses AI at every stage of her process, from concept sketching to presenting finished looks to clients, and says the results have changed how buyers engage with her work. “Till date, whatever clients I have are not able to differentiate between what is real and what is AI. They are able to see what the actual outfit will look like. And this makes them feel confi-

dent in placing an order.” She is emphatic, though, that AI is not the author of her vision. “We treat AI as an assistant. You have a vision, and AI is just helping you. That is it.” Her creative instinct comes first, always, and the technology follows. This distinction matters enormously to Vijay Raj, a visualiser and branding expert based in Kochi with over a decade in advertising, who has watched AI reshape the industry from the inside. “My workflow is that when I get a concept or a brief, I think it through by myself first. After that process, I use AI only for prompting,” he explains. “Otherwise, we are not controlling something; the AI is completely controlling us.” Raj is both an enthusiast and a watchdog. In workshops he conducts at universities, he tells students plainly: “You are completely free to generate anything you want, but as a designer, you have a value to your society and a responsibility to it.” He argues that fashion shares the same ecosystem of trust and misinformation as any other part of society, and designers must take that seriously. Luxury label founder Ranna Gill, trained at FIT New York and a veteran of Donna Karan and Ralph Lauren, sees AI with the measured pragmatism of someone who has watched several revolutions come through the industry. Her studio uses it for early visualization, testing how a colour, print, or embroidery might look before committing to samples, but she is clear about its limits. “AI generates designs, but we still have to recreate it. We rework on it, reposition it, colour it. It is not the final draft,” she says. She draws a longer arc: “When the computer was invented, we learned to use it. We learned to use smartphones. And as we will learn to use AI, we will bring it into our worlds in the ways best for us.” Couture designer Ridhi Mehra, known for blending traditional Indian craft with contemporary silhouettes, echoes this measured view.

After the decapitation of Hizbullah, Iran could race for a nuclear bomb



WHEN AN ISRAELI bomb killed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah, last week, it did not just decapitate a fearsome militia that has driven some 60,000 Israelis from their homes with frequent rocket attacks. It also dealt a hammer blow to Iran's “axis of resistance”, a constellation of proxy forces that Iran has for decades used to attack both Israel and Western interests in the Middle East. In addition to its current assault on Hizbullah, Israel's year-long dismemberment of Hamas in Gaza has vastly diminished Iran's capacity to cause trouble if threatened. Those defeats, in turn, may be prompting Iran to fall back on its other main form of deterrence: its nuclear-weapons programme.

In recent days, amid Israeli strikes on Hamas, Hizbullah and militants backed by Iran in Yemen, Iranian officials have been insinuating that Israel's belligerence may induce Iran to develop nuclear weapons. Others have suggested that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, might rescind an earlier fatwa, or religious edict, ruling out the pursuit of nuclear weapons. The regime has been expanding the number and sophistication of centrifuges it uses to purify uranium. It now has a big stockpile of near-weapons-grade material. It is plausible, though not yet likely, that Mr Khamenei might decide that the only way to protect his regime, which is despised by its own citizens and vulnerable to Israeli attack, would be to seek nuclear weapons.

America and Israel have long promised that Iran will not be allowed to build a bomb. Israel, in particular, appears to have detailed intelligence on the progress of Iran's nuclear programme. If it were to pick up signs that Iran was crossing a threshold, it might well attack Iranian nuclear sites—something it came close to doing in 2011. But there is no guarantee that this would succeed. Israeli insiders, in their more candid moments, acknowledge that the chance to set Iran's nuclear programme back significantly with air strikes may have passed: the relevant facilities are too deeply buried and nuclear know-how too widely dispersed. Bombing them would set the region ablaze while only delaying the programme by months, some argue.

The first question is, what sort of arsenal would Iran seek? Becoming a country with nuclear arms is more of a spectrum than a single point. Such weapons require three things: a core of fissile material, such as enriched uranium; a warhead that can house the material and initiate a chain reaction that ends in an explosion; and a delivery system, such as a bomb or missile, to transport the warhead to a target. Iran might not make all these things at once. It could produce weapons-grade material without a viable warhead, or it could build a warhead without a suitable delivery system. Iran could also build a complete weapon but, like Israel, refrain from announcing that it had done so. The intention behind such opacity is to reap the deterrent benefits of nuclear arms without incurring all the diplomatic costs. Much would depend on how blatant Iran was. It could build a weapon entirely covertly, on the assumption that deterrence would still be established because foreign intelligence agencies would have some idea of what it was up to. It could signal its intentions more clearly by expelling international inspectors, pulling out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and renouncing the fatwa. Or it could conduct a nuclear test, guaranteeing that it had a working device and demonstrating its capability to the world, but also inviting international outrage. Whether Iran crossed the nuclear threshold openly or furtively, it would then have to choose how many bombs to build and how to deploy them. It could, like Israel in the 1960s, build just a handful of devices in the hope that sympathetic powers would come to its aid when it was threatened to avert a nuclear war. Iran's problem is that it has no clear patrons: it is not certain that Russia would step in to save the regime. A second option would be to emulate India. That would involve building a larger, though still modest, arsenal, which could survive an enemy's first strike, allowing subsequent retaliation. A decade ago many experts and officials thought that the Indian option was Iran's likeliest course. It would appeal to Iran's leaders, who could maintain close control over the weapons—as they did with chemical weapons in the past—rather than devolving authority to use them to commanders in the field. In recent years, however, Iran's calculations may have changed. The military gap with Israel appears to have widened. Worse, the regime is more vulnerable at home, with mounting dissent. It is also becoming bolder militarily, as it showed when it launched missiles at Pakistan in January and Israel in April. An Iran that has decided to build nuclear weapons, perhaps in the aftermath of Mr Khamenei's death, is one in which the armed forces are probably more powerful, exacerbating these tendencies.

Iran's emboldened generals may prefer a third option: the Pakistani model, in which they would build a much larger arsenal—hundreds rather than tens of warheads—designed to be used first and early in a conflict to ward off even minor conventional military threats. That might require building small nuclear weapons, dispersing them widely to ensure they could be used in a crisis and delegating the authority to use them to commanders in the field. The choice of posture relates to a second question: how would a nuclear capability shape Iran's behaviour? In 1981 Kenneth Waltz, a political scientist, published an essay entitled, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better”, which argued that countries tended to become more secure and thus more cautious when armed with nuclear weapons. “It's been proven without exception that whoever gets nuclear weapons behaves with caution and moderation,” Mr Waltz argued years later, with reference to Iran. In 2007 Jacques Chirac, France's president at the time, was plegmatic about the idea of a nuclear Iran. “What is dangerous about this situation is not the fact of having a nuclear bomb,” he said. “Having one or perhaps a second bomb a little later, well, that's not very dangerous.”

Many others are horrified by these arguments. Scott Sagan, another political scientist, has offered two counter-arguments. One is the risk that nuclear material might be stolen or sold to terrorists, either by rogue members of the regime or with its blessing. The second is that the weapons might serve as a “nuclear shield”, which would allow Iran to become more aggressive, safe in the knowledge that it could not be attacked in response. That is just what happened with Pakistan, Mr Sagan has argued: the country's armed forces allowed paramilitary groups and disguised troops to encroach on Indian-controlled territory in 1999, in part because Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons the year

before had made its top brass more confident. Similarly North Korea, having conducted its first nuclear test in 2006, torpedoed a South Korean ship in 2010. How would these dynamics play out in Iran? It, like Pakistan, has a long history of funding, arming and supporting armed groups to compensate for conventional military weakness and to put pressure on its adversaries, Israel foremost. The regime would not want to share nuclear technology with proxies, as much as some militant groups might like to syphon off some nuclear material via sympathetic members of the Iranian security forces. But it could well decide that the immunity afforded by nukes would allow it to redouble its support for proxy groups and to encourage those groups to intensify pressure on Israel. This issue is not clear-cut, though. Nuclear weapons offer security, but not complete immunity from attack. Argentina invaded the Falkland islands in 1982 despite Britain's nuclear capability. Iran's own missile strikes on Israel and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed states, are proof that nuclear shields have holes. Moreover, Pakistan has tended to host Islamist proxies on its own soil—and even then India launched air strikes against them in 2019. Iran has preferred to cultivate foreign groups located far from its borders. So unless Iran extended a nuclear umbrella over Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen—an unlikely prospect, not least because it would require a very large arsenal with sophisticated command and control, capable of surviving multiple rounds of strikes—those groups would still be at the mercy of American and Israeli firepower. That raises the third question: how would others respond to an Iran that had successfully built and deployed nuclear weapons? In the 1960s America contemplated attacking China's nascent arsenal. It decided against such a risky operation. Today Israeli intelligence has clearly burrowed deep into Iran and, with America, might believe it could locate and strike a site where warheads were being assembled or stored. That in itself could trigger turmoil inside Iran, Iranian retaliation against American bases and Arab states and a wider regional war, perhaps layered on top of existing ones. In practice, the response might be more muted. “Although an Iranian nuclear test would be condemned across the globe and lead to a temporary spike in support for new penalties against Tehran,” says Eric Brewer of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, an advocacy group, “enthusiasm would wane in the subsequent months and years.” Iran is already subject to many sanctions; China and Russia would help insulate it from any more that might follow. And if the arsenal could not be eliminated, Iran's rivals would turn to deterring its use—as America has sought to do in Asia after North Korea acquired nukes in 2006.

America would probably extend its nuclear umbrella over Saudi Arabia, other Arab allies and Israel, none of which currently enjoy formal guarantees. That step, which would raise many questions—would America, for instance, deploy tactical nuclear weapons to the Middle East, as it does in Europe?—would have two purposes. One would be to persuade Iran that any use of its weapons would risk the destruction of the regime. The other would be to dissuade America's friends in the region from pursuing nukes of their own. Saudi Arabia has long said that it would respond to the development of an Iranian bomb by making one of its own. Egypt, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) would all be likely to explore such an option, too. That does not mean a nuclear arms-race is inevitable. The UAE wants to cool tensions with Iran and stay away from a regional conflict, not paint a target on its back. Egypt is insolvent and dysfunctional, and is farther from the threat. Jordan is broke. Even Saudi Arabia would probably prefer American protection to the uncertain pursuit of a bomb, which it might only be able to obtain with Pakistan's help.

Israel faces a different dilemma. Since the 1960s it has been coy about its nukes, saying only that it would not be the first country to “introduce” nuclear weapons to the region. Israel would face strong pressure to reverse that policy, publicly declaring its nuclear status despite the inevitable diplomatic backlash. Israeli leaders might also want to advertise their nuclear capability, by showing off the submarines and missiles that carry the country's bombs. A nuclear test is another possibility. This would be risky, cautions Richard Nephew of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think-tank. “If they provided a lot of new information about their alleged weapons programmes, they might even expose weaknesses or deficiencies no one thinks they have,” he says. “Keeping that club in the bag may have much greater deterrence value than brandishing it, since everyone assumes they must have some top-flight stuff.” In any case, the deterrent dynamics between Israel and Iran would be worryingly untested. America and the Soviet Union had worked together as allies for several years before they began their nuclear stand-off. India and Pakistan had well-established backchannels of communication. Israel and Iran have no such history. In the past year their shadow war has turned ever hotter. An Iranian bomb would be a dangerous and unpredictable addition to an already combustible region.

Akshay Kumar is getting Rs. 35-40 crore for ‘Golmaal 5’, here's what Ajay Devgn's charging

Mumbai: Bollywood's very own “Khiladi” Akshay Kumar, who will be seen in the fifth installment of Rohit Shetty's “Golmaal”, is getting a whopping Rs. 35-40 crore for his 18 to 22-day shoot, which is more than the film's lead actor Ajay Devgn's upfront fees.

A source close to IANS knows about the development and went on to share: “Akshay Kumar is shooting for 18-22 days, and he is getting around 35-40 crs, which is more than Ajay Devgn's upfront fees because he is on a profit-sharing basis.” Rohit had announced “Golmaal 5” on the occasion of his 52nd birthday in March. It was also on the filmmaker's birthday that news of Akshay being a “surprise package” was revealed. In the BTS moments shared by the director from the sets of the new installment, Akshay's bald look was unveiled. On April 27, Ajay revealed that the new shoot schedule for the film had commenced. He had also shared a fun video montage from Ooty featuring Arshad Warsi, Tusshar Kapoor, Sharman Joshi, Shreyas Talpade and Kunal Kemmu. The first installment of the Golmaal film series, it stars Ajay Devgn, Tusshar Kapoor, Arshad and Sharman along with Rimi Sen and Paresh Rawal. It is reportedly based on Harsh Shivsharan's Marathi play Ghar Ghar, which also inspired Vora's Gujarati play Aflaton, in turn one of the inspirations for the film. The film was followed by 4 sequels such as Golmaal Returns, which released in 2008, 2010's Golmaal 3 and Golmaal Again, which hit the silver screen in 2017. All the films starred Ajay, Arshad, Tusshar, Sanjay Mishra, Vrajesh Hirjee and Mukesh Tiwari, with Shreyas Talpade appearing in three, Kunal Khemu and Johnny Lever in two. Akshay is joining the fifth installment.

Goldman Sachs hikes India’s GDP growth forecast



Global investment and financial services firm Goldman Sachs has raised its calendar year 2026 real GDP growth forecast for India by 30 basis points to 6.8% and FY27 forecast by 40 bps to 6.5% in the wake of the fall in crude oil prices.The recent US-Iran peace deal should improve India’s growth outlook — lower oil prices have taken out the risk of additional fuel pass-through to consumers, while easing supply constraints were already beginning to support a recovery in investment related indicators in May from their March-April troughs, the firm said in a report.

On June 5, the RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee lowered the growth projection from 6.9% to 6.6% and hiked the inflation forecast from 4.6% to 5.1%.International benchmark Brent crude futures for August were 3.2% lower at \$72.83 a barrel on Friday.“While the fuel price hikes already announced will continue to feed through into inflation over the coming months, the lower oil price path suggests that the risk of additional pass-through has diminished materially,” Goldman Sachs said.The firm said lower crude oil prices have also been accompanied by a decline in petrochemi-

cal product prices.“Although the earlier increases in polymer price are still likely to lift core goods inflation in the near term, we now expect the impact to be limited (vs. our earlier expectations), with a lower likelihood of incremental price increases across the core goods basket,” it said.Reflecting the lower oil price assumptions and reduced manufactured goods inflation pressures, Goldman Sachs lowered its core goods inflation forecast for CY26 and FY27 by 30 basis points and 50 bps each to 3.2% and 4.1% respectively.“Going forward, we expect consumption growth to moderate in Q2 and Q3 on earlier pump fuel price increases. We have also seen deterioration in the RBI’s urban and rural consumer confidence surveys (90.7 in May vs. 93.2 in April for the urban confidence index),” Goldman Sachs said.However, the recent decline in oil prices reduces the likelihood of further fuel price increases, implying no further incremental drag on consumption growth from Q4, it said.Further, the sharp correction in global urea prices is likely to limit the increase in the government’s fertilizer subsidy bill relative to our earlier expectations.“Recent import tenders have cleared at substantially lower prices than those seen at the peak of the Middle East conflict, prompting the government to indicate that the FY27 fertilizer subsidy requirement could be reassessed. Together with lower oil prices, this should help alleviate near-term fiscal pressures,” it said.Goldman Sachs said the Indian economy remained resilient through the West-Asia shock, as fiscal and quasi-fiscal measures absorbed much of the increase in energy costs and limited pass-through to consumers. As a result, consumption held up in March and April, even as investment somewhat softened amid supply disruptions and commercial LPG allocations remained around 70 per cent of pre-conflict levels, it said.

US warns tariffs will be back ‘exactly where they were’ as India eyes trade deal

“We have rebooted the tariff program. Right now, we have something called Section 122 tariffs, which is a 10 per cent global tariff. Currently, USTR Ambassador Jameson Greer is doing studies for Section 301s, and if those studies are successful, and I have no reason to believe they won’t be, but we don’t know until they are – then the tariff rates are going to go back to exactly where they were,” Bessent said in a TV interview.The International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) tariffs on India were set at 25 per cent before it was brought down to 18 per cent in February, just days before the US President Donald Trump’s powers under the IEEPA were declared illegal. Washington has already proposed 12.5 per cent tariffs on India, which is expected to come into effect on July 7. The results of another Section 301 are also expected before the end of next month.

“I would say the good thing about having used IEEPA in 2025... it allowed us very quickly to get to trade deals that we never would have gotten to before. You know, the EU... the EU is going to pay us 15 per cent, and they are going to charge us zero. So we have had a big rebalancing there. And they are bringing down their non-tariff trade barriers, many of their unfair financing practices. And it’s the same around the world, whether it’s Japan, Korea, our allies... whether it’s China,” he said.The Commerce and Industry Minister on Thursday said that the India-US trade deal was confirmed by both the countries on February 6 based on IEEPA tariffs, which gave India a competitive edge over competing countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and China and that India is looking for a similar advantage in the new US tariffs architecture.

Meanwhile, India has accelerated its attempts to strike more and more trade deals. The UK trade deal is set to come into effect next month, EU by the end of the year. The India-Oman deal also came into effect on June 1. Indian negotiators are also in talks with the Russia-led Eur-



asian Economic Union (EAEU), Canada, Peru and Chile.Notably, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) was due to visit Uzbekistan after India this week. While the India-US deal was not announced, the US and Uzbekistan agreed to an early harvest of trade commitments to strengthen the bilateral ties.USTR had launched two sets of broad Section 301 investigations based on forced labour and excess capacity. India, China, the European Union, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, Switzerland and South Korea feature in both the lists, and the US has already proposed the first set of tariffs. However, countries like the UAE, the UK, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, as well as Pakistan only feature once and may face lower tariffs compared to other countries.US proposed a lower rate of 10% on Pakistan, Canada, Ecuador, the European Union, Indonesia and Mexico, stating that they have demonstrated a commitment to addressing forced labour imports and have committed to imposing and enforcing a forced labour import prohibition through a formal Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) with the United States.Separately, the US has launched a third investigation on Vietnam and a fresh case against Germany. China has also been facing Section 301 tariffs since Trump’s first administration.

Govt, RBI’s June 5 bond measures working; pull 8 months of foreign money in two weeks



The measures announced by the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on June 5 to attract foreign capital into Indian sovereign bonds have started to work as hoped — debt falling under the fully accessible route (FAR) category has seen inflows to the tune of \$2 billion in the subsequent two weeks, almost equal to the money that had come in the previous eight months combined.Data from the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) showed that foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have net bought FAR bonds on all but one day since capital gain taxes on government bonds were done away with and the pool of securities in this category expanded. This has led to net inflows in these bonds in June rising to \$2.2 billion — the highest in 15 months.

In March 2025, FPIs had invested \$3.34 billion in FAR bonds — a category of government bonds that foreigners can invest in without any restrictions.According to Radhika Rao, Senior Economist at DBS Bank, foreign investors have “turned constructive” on rupee debt. “Sentiment has been supported in part by expectations that Indian government bonds could be considered for inclusion in Bloomberg’s global bond indices,” Rao said on Wednesday.

The removal of long- and short-term capital gains as well as the withholding tax on investment by foreign investors in government bonds was aimed at spurring their inclusion in the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index, which economists predict could pull in anywhere between \$20 billion to \$30 billion of passive foreign funds over a period of 10 months post inclusion.Several global funds track the weight a certain country has in these bond indices and invest accordingly.In January, Bloomberg Index Services Ltd (BISL) had deferred the inclusion of Indian government bonds into its flagship global index, saying it will provide another update by mid-2026. Over the last couple of years, Indian government debt has been added to bond indices of JPMorgan, Bloomberg’s Emerging Market Local Currency Index and that of FTSE Russell.

Nifty and Sensex post weekly gains as crude oil prices decline

Mumbai: The Indian equity benchmarks posted a third consecutive week of gains, aided by a sharp correction in crude oil prices to pre-Iran war levels and improved traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.Nifty added 0.18 per cent during the week and edged up 0.14 per cent on the last trading day to reach 24,056. At the close, the Sensex was up 109 points, or 0.14 per cent, at 77,100. It added 0.39 per cent during the week.The domestic markets navigated a week of mixed signals with notable resilience, even as broader indices, especially mid-caps, faced modest selling pressure.

Meet leafy seadragon, the ocean’s most remarkable master of disguise



At first glance, it looks less like an animal and more like a piece of floating seaweed. With delicate, leaf-like structures covering its body, the leafy seadragon is one of the ocean’s most extraordinary masters of disguise.Found off the southern and western coasts of Australia, this unusual marine creature has evolved an appearance so convincing that predators often struggle to spot it among underwater vegetation.Despite its dragon-like name, the leafy seadragon is actually a close relative of seahorses and pipefish. Growing up to about 35 centimetres long, the animal is covered in elaborate appendages that resemble drifting leaves. Surprisingly, these “leaves” aren’t used for swimming. Their main purpose is camouflage.

As the seadragon gently sways with ocean currents, its leaf-like extensions move too, helping it blend seamlessly into kelp forests and seagrass meadows. To both predators and prey, it can appear almost indistinguishable from the surrounding plants.Although it looks fragile, the leafy

seadragon is a skilled hunter. It feeds primarily on tiny crustaceans, plankton, and small shrimp-like animals. Instead of chewing, it uses its long tube-shaped snout like a straw, sucking prey directly into its mouth.Unlike many fish, leafy seadragons have no teeth and no stomach. Food passes through their digestive system quickly, meaning they need to eat frequently throughout the day.Another fascinating feature is how they swim. Most fish rely on powerful tail movements to propel themselves through the water. Leafy seadragons, however, use nearly transparent fins that are so small they are difficult to see. These tiny fins allow them to glide gracefully through the ocean while maintaining the illusion of drifting seaweed.Interestingly, unlike seahorses, leafy seadragons cannot curl their tails around plants or objects for support. Instead, they rely heavily on their remarkable camouflage to stay safe from predators.Like their seahorse relatives, leafy seadragons also have unusual parenting habits.After mating, the female deposits her eggs onto a specialised brood patch under the male’s tail. The male then carries and protects the eggs for several weeks until they hatch, taking on the role of primary caregiver.The species is so beloved in Australia that it has been named the official marine emblem of South Australia.Today, leafy seadragons face threats from habitat degradation, pollution, and climate change. Their reliance on healthy kelp forests and seagrass habitats makes them particularly vulnerable to environmental changes.Fortunately, they are protected in Australian waters, and conservation efforts are helping researchers better understand and safeguard these remarkable creatures.With its leaf-covered body, gentle movements, and almost mythical appearance, the leafy seadragon looks like something straight out of a fantasy novel. Yet it is very real — and proof that some of nature’s most impressive disguises are hiding beneath the waves.

Bhagyashree shares home remedy for PMOS: ‘Without side effects’

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) — recently renamed to Polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome (PMOS) — is a condition many women silently struggle with on a regular basis. Bhagyashree recently took to Instagram to share a simple home remedy “without side effects” that can help reduce disruptions to your everyday life. As a part of her ‘Tuesday Tips with B’ series, the Bollywood actor suggested drinking mulethi water to ease symptoms.“PCOS is a condition in which there’s an excess of male hormone androgen in the body, which leads to irregular periods, unwanted facial hair, etc. Mulethi decreases the androgen level in the body and solves all your problems,” she could be heard saying in the video.Dr Gayathri Karthik Nagesh, Program Director – Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore says that Bhagyashree’s suggestion of drinking licorice water for managing PMOS is based on traditional use of mulethi, which may provide mild supportive benefits but is not a standalone treatment or cure for the condition.

She suggests always combining it with proper medical guidance, healthy diet, exercise, and lifestyle changes for better long-term results.“Licorice contains active compounds like glycyrrhizin that may help reduce excess androgen (male hormone) levels, support adrenal gland function, and reduce inflammation,” she tells indianexpress.com, adding that all of this can slightly improve common PMOS symptoms such as acne, unwanted facial hair, irregular periods, mood swings, stress, and digestive discomfort.“It



also has antioxidant and soothing properties that may support metabolism and hormonal balance, but scientific evidence is still limited and effects vary from person to person, so it should be seen only as a supportive home remedy rather than a proven treatment,” she elaborates.However, important precautions must be followed because regular or high intake of licorice water can cause serious side effects.Dr Nagesh recommends watching out for increased blood pressure, reduced potassium levels, water retention, weakness, fatigue, and in severe cases heart rhythm problems. “People with hypertension, kidney disease, or heart conditions should avoid it, pregnant women should be especially careful, and those taking medicines like diuretics, steroids, or blood pressure drugs should consult a doctor before using it,” she shares.

This is what happens to the body if you swim daily for a month



There is a reason swimming is often called the “perfect workout”. It is low-impact, full-body, and surprisingly meditative. But what actually happens if you commit to it every single day for a month? Or, more importantly, is it even a wise idea? According to Dr Manjusha Agarwal, Consultant – Internal Medicine, Gleneagles Hospital, Mumbai, the changes go far beyond just feeling fitter.One of the first things to improve is your cardiovascular fitness. Swimming consistently trains your heart to pump more efficiently, which boosts circulation and endurance over time.Dr Agarwal explains, “Daily swimming strengthens the heart, improving blood circulation and overall cardiovascular endurance.”You may notice this in small ways — less breathlessness while climbing stairs or an ability to swim longer laps without needing breaks.Lungs learn to work smarterUnlike many other workouts, swimming forces you to control your breathing. Over 30 days, this has a noticeable impact.“It enhances lung capacity by training controlled breathing, helping the body use oxygen more efficiently,” says Dr Agarwal.The result is better breath control, im-

proved oxygen use, and benefits that carry into other physical activities.Weight loss, muscle toning start showing up

Swimming is deceptively intense. Because water creates resistance, your entire body is constantly working—even when movements feel smooth and easy. “Swimming daily helps burn calories and supports weight loss by engaging the whole body in continuous movement,” Dr Agarwal notes.At the same time, it tones multiple muscle groups—arms, legs, core, and back—without the harsh strain of gym workouts. Over the course of a month, your body may feel tighter, stronger, and more balanced.Your joints get a break—but your mobility improvesOne of swimming’s biggest advantages is how gentle it is on the body. The water supports your weight, reducing pressure on joints.“Regular swimming is gentle on the joints as water supports body weight, reducing stress and risk of injury,” says Dr Agarwal.At the same time, the fluid, full-range movements help improve flexibility and overall mobility, making your body feel looser rather than stiff.Mind feels calmer, more balancedThe mental benefits are just as powerful as the physical ones. Swimming has a naturally calming rhythm—breath, stroke, glide—that can feel almost meditative.“Swimming regularly helps reduce stress by promoting relaxation and releasing feel-good hormones like endorphins,” Dr Agarwal explains.Swimming daily without rest can lead to fatigue or overuse injuries, especially in the shoulders.Dr Agarwal cautions, “Swimming every day without adequate rest can lead to muscle fatigue, shoulder strain, and overuse injuries.”The key is balance—mix intense sessions with lighter swims or rest days to allow proper recovery and prevent burnout.

Smart rings gain popularity as discreet alternative to smartwatches for health tracking

Hyderabad: Smartwatches may have dominated the wearable technology space for years, but smart rings are quietly emerging as a sleek alternative for those looking to track their health without a screen on their wrist.

Designed to look like ordinary rings, these devices can monitor a range of metrics including heart rate, blood oxygen levels, body temperature, sleep quality, stress levels and daily activity. Some models also provide menstrual cycle insights and recovery scores, helping users better understand their overall well-being.For many users, the appeal lies in their discreet design and the ability to collect health data around the clock. “I wanted something less distracting than a smartwatch. I want to use it to track fitness, but smartwatches keep showing messages and notifications too, and the ring has been perfect,” says Riya Menon, a lawyer who is into fitness.

Apart from their compact form, smart rings are also

helping users make small but meaningful lifestyle changes. By offering insights into sleep quality, stress and recovery, they can encourage better habits such as maintaining a regular sleep schedule, taking breaks and staying active. Many users say these changes have helped improve their energy levels and overall sense of well-being.

Others say the device has encouraged healthier lifestyle choices. “I never paid much attention to recovery or stress levels before,” says Rahul Verma, a software engineer. “Seeing those insights every day pushed me to take regular walks and prioritise sleep. Small changes have made a noticeable difference in my energy levels.”Among the better-known options in India is the Gabit Smart Ring, starting at around Rs 13,000-Rs15,000 depending on the variant and offers, the ring tracks sleep, heart rate, stress, activity and calorie metrics. As wearable technology continues to evolve, smart rings are proving that health tracking no longer has to come in bulky or highly visible forms.

Forty years after the hand of God, England meet the right foot of God



GNS News Agency, July 19

It was stoppage time of the World Cup semi-final. Argentina had already rescued themselves once, and now sensed one last opportunity to avoid extra time. Inside England's penalty area stood a wall of white shirts. One defender rushed out to close Messi down, another threw out a desperate leg to block the cross. Three more occupied the six-yard box, each standing exactly where a delivery ought to land. Jordan Pickford lurked behind them, waiting for anything overhit. Messi's right foot clipped the ball into the night sky. It rose over the first challenge, skimmed above the heads of England's defenders by inches, drifted beyond Pickford's reach, left him in a dilemma whether to commit or leave, and, almost impossibly, dipped at precisely the moment Lautaro Martínez arrived at the far post. By the time the Argentina striker nodded home the winner, guiding the defending champions to a second successive final, the ball had travelled over almost the entire England defence before landing gently on his forehead. Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the Swedish great, gushed on Fox: "I had said yesterday that you're going to see the left foot of God. You got to see the right foot of God ... beautiful moment." Football has always celebrated players who beat defenders with feints and dribbles.

Diego Maradona's 'Goal of the Century' against England in 1986 remains perhaps the sport's greatest act of individual brilliance. Starting inside his own half, he dribbled past five outfield players, rounded Peter Shilton and rolled the ball into an empty net. Forty years on, against the same opponents, Argentina produced another moment that be-

longed in the same conversation. Maradona erased six Englishmen by carrying the ball. Messi erased six with a cross. Messi has made those weaving runs, too. The slalom against Getafe, that run through Athletic Bilbao and countless solo goals for Barcelona belonged to a footballer who bent matches at his will, with his legs. That version of Messi is gone. Argentina's Lionel Messi in action during the World Cup semifinal vs England. (AP) Argentina's Lionel Messi in action during the World Cup semifinal vs England. (AP) Age takes away the explosive first step, the relentless dribbles and the ability to outrun younger players for 90 minutes. What it cannot touch is vision. If anything, it sharpens it. Against England, he wasn't looking at defenders. He was looking beyond them. Where most footballers would have seen a penalty area crowded with bodies, Messi spotted a passing route that wasn't through defenders but above them.

The margin for error was microscopic. A fraction lower and it strikes a defender. A fraction longer and Pickford claims it. A fraction slower and the opportunity disappears. The window existed for barely a second. Messi found the only solution: going aerial. Perhaps even more astonishing was the foot he used. For nearly two decades, coaches have devised plans around forcing Messi onto his weaker side. Every full-back who has faced him has been told the same thing: don't let him come inside onto his left. England did exactly that. For a fleeting moment, it even looked as though Messi would check back and recycle possession to a teammate waiting outside the box. Instead, he trusted his weaker right foot. The cross he produced is one many elite wingers would struggle to deliver with their stronger one. As much as the execution, it was the imagination that made it extraordinary. He saw an angle that didn't appear to exist and a space that revealed itself only after the ball had travelled through it. This assist deserves to sit alongside the greatest goals Messi has scored. Not just because it was spectacular at first glance, but also because every replay makes it seem even more impossible. Watch it once and it looks like a fine cross. Watch it again and you begin counting the defenders it clears. Freeze the frame and you wonder how the ball found its way through a corridor that appeared not to exist. At 25, Messi might have dribbled through six defenders. Now, he simply looks up, trusts his weaker right foot and lifts the ball over them, and Argentina into another World Cup final.

The baby in the bathtub with a legend: Messi & Yamal's 19-year journey to World Cup final



GNS News Agency, July 19

The photograph was taken in a Barcelona dressing room in late 2007. A 20-year-old Lionel Messi, with a shy smile and a head of untamed curls, held a six-month-old baby in a blue plastic bathtub. Neither of them knew, in that fleeting moment, that the world would one day look back at the image and see the beginning of something extraordinary. Almost two decades later, that baby, Lamine Yamal, will face Messi in the FIFA World Cup 2026 final on Sunday in New Jersey, a generational showdown that feels scripted by football's gods.

Defending champion Argentina secured their place in the title clash with a 2-1 victory over England, setting up a

meeting against Spain, the reigning European champions. It will be the first time Messi and Yamal have played against each other, but their story began long before either had kicked a ball on the world's biggest stage. Spain, meanwhile, thrashed pre-event favourite France 2-0 in the semifinal courtesy of goals from Mikel Oyarzabal and Pedro Porro. Yamal's dazzling rise for Spain and Barcelona has inevitably drawn parallels with Messi (AP Photo) Yamal's dazzling rise for Spain and Barcelona has inevitably drawn parallels with Messi

The unlikely origin of their connection dates back to a charity raffle organised by the Spanish newspaper Diario Sport and UNICEF in 2007. Local families in Catalonia were offered the chance to participate in a promotional calendar photo shoot with FC Barcelona players. Yamal's family won one of the slots. The shoot took place inside the Camp Nou dressing room. Messi, then a rising star for Barcelona, was paired with the infant Yamal. The resulting image, Messi holding Yamal in a plastic bathtub, was published in the 2008 charity calendar and largely forgotten. That changed during the 2024 European Championship, when Yamal's father, Mounir Nasraoui, posted the photo on Instagram with the caption: "The beginning of two legends." Now, almost 20 years after that photo shoot, the baby from the picture and the legend himself are set to face each other on the biggest stage in football.

India vs England Playing 11, 2nd ODI: Will Shubman Gill return after Injury scare? Brar's fitness in doubt



GNS News Agency, July 19

India vs England 2nd ODI Today Match Playing 11, Full Squad: After a morale-lifting win over England in the first One-Day International, Shubman Gill-led India will look to seal the series in the second ODI at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff on Thursday. India chased down England's total of 259 with ease, reaching the target in the 46th over. Captain Gill anchored the chase with an unbeaten 80 before retiring hurt, while Axar Patel and Washington Sundar chipped in with crucial half-centuries to see the side home. Axar had earlier starred with the ball, picking up four wickets to restrict the hosts to a below-par score.

Veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, whose inclusion was the central theme of the series, failed to impress in the opener. Both senior pros got out cheaply; Rohit fell for 11 while Kohli managed just 5, leaving the middle order to do the heavy lifting. Their lack of runs, however, did not hurt India on the day, but the team will hope for more from the experienced duo in the remaining games. There were injury scares for both Gill and pacer Gurnoor Brar during the first game, but it is being reported that the India skipper is fit and will be available for the second ODI. There is still no clarity on Brar's availability, however. Should he miss out, either Prince Yadav or Arshdeep Singh could come into the playing XI. England probable XI: Jacob Bethell, Ben Duckett, Joe Root, Harry Brook (c), Jos Buttler (wk), Sam Curran, Will Jacks, Jofra Archer, Liam Dawson, Josh Tongue, Adil Rashid. India probable XI: Shubman Gill (c), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, KL Rahul (wk), Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar/Prince Yadav/Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah. India: Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill (c), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Ishan Kishan (w), Axar Patel, Washington Sundar,

Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Gurnoor Brar, Prince Yadav, Shivam Dube, Prasidh Krishna. England: Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Joe Root, Harry Brook (c), Jos Buttler (w), Jacob Bethell, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, Saqib Mahmood, Tom Banton, Josh Tongue, Gus Atkinson, James Coles, Rehan Ahmed.

'My father sold a property to help me follow my ambition,' reveals shooter Sonam Maskar

New Delhi: Kolhapur's Sonam Uttam Maskar went from casually taking up shooting to preparing to represent India at the 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. She revealed that her father sold a property to provide her with the necessary equipment to follow her ambitions. The 23-year-old 10m air rifle shooter will be part of the Indian team heading to Japan, where the shooting events at the Asian Games are set to take place from September 17 to October 3 at the Aichi Prefectural General Shooting Gallery. Sonam's ascent to the global stage was preceded by financial struggles. As she committed to shooting seriously, the expense of professional gear became a barrier, especially as her family faced economic hardships after the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a time when we were facing financial difficulties, especially around the lockdown period. When it became clear that I needed my own equipment to progress further in shooting, my father sold a property so that we could buy it. It was a big decision for our family, but they have always supported me," Sonam recalled. Sonam's first encounter with shooting was in 2018 during her studies at Tolani College of Commerce in Mumbai, and a professional career in the sport was never part of her original plans. "I was always interested in sports and I used to play chess as well. I thought I should try something different, so I initially took up shooting. I started shooting as a hobby, but it soon became something I wanted to build my career around," she said. Following the pandemic disruption of her early progress, Sonam started focused training in 10m air rifle shooting at the Kolhapur range in 2021. She quickly rose to prominence, with one of her proudest accomplishments being the silver medal at the 2024 ISSF World Cup Final in New Delhi.

Leaving Rajasthan Royals was the toughest decision of my career, says Sanju Samson on trade to CSK



New Delhi: India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson has revealed that leaving IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals after more than a decade long association was one of the toughest decisions of his career. South Asians & Diaspora But the strong bond he shared with Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Ruturaj Gaikwad made his move to Chennai Super Kings an easy transition.

"Moving on from RR was a very big decision for me. I believe that after playing for a team for some time, you start to feel like this is your team and nobody can remove you. But, I always had the awareness that there is a limited time for everyone at one place," Samson, who led the Royals for five years before moving to CSK through a trade ahead of IPL 2026, told JioStar's 'Superstars'. "You do your part, and you move out and after the end of IPL 2025, a point came when I felt that I should move on. I told myself that the boys are ready, and RR is ready to play without Sanju Samson. That is when I thought of leaving," he added. The Kerala cricketer said he had a few options on the table after quitting RR but chose Chennai Super Kings because it felt like the perfect fit for his game. Samson added that finally donning the iconic yellow jersey was a special feeling. "There were two or three options at that time. But honestly, CSK, Mahi bhai's influence, the franchise itself, and my friends there, espe-

cially Ruturaj, meant I had great connections. Based on what I had heard about CSK from other players, I felt that this franchise was my type. 'If I go there, it will be very good for me. I had wished for that, but a trade is a tricky thing. I want to go there, but do they want me? And the original team needs to get what they want in return. Everyone has to agree. It was a major turning point. Luckily, I ended up in CSK. It was a great feeling," he said. Indian entertainment news Growing up, the 31-year-old Samson idolised Dhoni and his fearless batting style, often going to bed dreaming of the day he would get the chance to represent India. The way he carried himself and his aggressive batting style really attracted me. He used to appear in the ads, and I would cut out his picture and stick it in my diary. Every kid has an idol, and Mahi bhai was mine. "As a child, I used to watch India play every day. Mahi bhai would be captaining and winning matches. I would go to sleep thinking, 'I have to play one day too.' I used to dream of batting with him, building a partnership, and fielding alongside him." Now part of the CSK setup, Samson said one of his biggest dreams is to bat alongside Dhoni. Dhoni missed the entire 2026 IPL season with a calf injury, but Samson said he hasn't given up hope of playing alongside him.

Recalling how he got his first IPL opportunity, Samson said he spent the first few matches on the Rajasthan Royals bench before finally gathering the courage to approach then captain Rahul Dravid. "He calmly explained that I needed to be patient and that my time would come. I was frustrated and disappointed after hearing that, so I took out all my anger in the nets. I would go to the nets and hit sixes, thinking, 'I'll show them.' His lucky break came when wicketkeeper, Dishant Yagnik bhai, got injured. "There was no plan to play me, but Dishant bhai got injured for one match. So, they played me against Punjab (then KXIP), which was my debut in the IPL in 2013, and I won that game for the team." It was my first match. I scored 27 not out batting at number 6. I also got three-four dismissals while keeping the wickets. But in the next match, Dishant bhai was fit again, and I was dropped."

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will bring calmness and confidence to ODI squad, says Cheteshwar Pujara



New Delhi: Veteran India batter Cheteshwar Pujara believes the return of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for the ODI series against England will provide the Indian dressing room with much-needed confidence after a disappointing 4-0 defeat in the preceding T20I series. Reflecting on India's struggles, Pujara attributed the batting unit's difficulties to its lack of experience in English conditions and expressed hope that the presence of two seasoned campaigners would help the team respond positively in the 50-over format. India's young batting group came under scrutiny after failing to consistently counter England's pace attack during the T20Is, with several batters troubled by the short ball. Pujara, however, felt the challenge went beyond technique and stemmed largely from unfamiliarity with white-ball cricket in England. "If you look at this Indian batting group, they had IPL experience but very little white-ball experience in English conditions," Pujara told JioStar.

He explained that success in England demands a different range of scoring options than those commonly used on batting-friendly surfaces elsewhere, saying, "In England,

you can't rely only on six-hitting. You need to play more flat-batted shots, access straight boundaries and use options like the upper cut and cuts over point against the short ball. We didn't see enough of those shots, and I think that was largely down to a lack of experience in these conditions." Pujara also widened the discussion to the balance between bat and ball in T20 cricket, arguing that conditions should offer bowlers greater assistance to preserve the contest, as he stated, "Even in the IPL, you don't want matches where teams can easily chase 260. There has to be something for the bowlers." He believes increasingly powerful and inventive batting has made it essential for pitches to provide at least some early assistance. "In T20 cricket, the margin for error is already very small, especially on flat pitches with short boundaries, while batters continue to get stronger and more innovative. That's why it's important to have pitches that offer bowlers a little assistance, whether through some turn or a bit of movement in the first two or three overs," Pujara added. Looking ahead at the ongoing ODI series, Pujara said the return of Rohit and Kohli would extend beyond their individual contributions with the bat, bringing invaluable composure to a relatively inexperienced squad. "What Rohit and Virat will bring is calmness and confidence, and that only comes with experience. The T20I squad lacked experience, so having players who have consistently performed against England across Tests, ODIs and T20Is will give the dressing room belief because they know how to win," he opined. "It won't be easy. England have identified certain areas they can target, and after a 4-0 T20I series defeat, there will naturally be some pressure on the team. But the confidence Rohit and Virat bring can rub off on the rest of the squad. They have also had time to prepare before the ODI series, and that preparation should help them perform well. I hope they have a strong series," he added.

Abhishek Nayar urges patience with Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after India's tough England tour

New Delhi: Former India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar has urged patience in handling teenage batter Vaibhav Sooryavanshi following India's underwhelming T20I campaign against England, insisting the youngster needs understanding rather than immediate technical intervention. Reflecting on India's recent struggles and the team's loss of momentum, Nayar explained why the England assignment unfolded differently from the successful tour of South Africa in 2024, while outlining how the support staff should approach one of the country's brightest prospects. Sooryavanshi entered the series carrying significant expectations after attracting widespread attention in recent months, but endured a difficult run with the bat as India struggled to find rhythm throughout the tour. Nayar believes the priority should be understanding the teenager's state of mind before discussing cricket. "The most important thing is to evaluate where the kid is today and how he's feeling. As a young player, you're already conflicted, that three games ago, the whole world was excited about your batting, and suddenly everything seems to have changed," Nayar told JioStar.

According to Nayar, communication from coaches should focus on helping the youngster process the experience rather than overwhelming him with technical advice. "The support staff's response has to be measured. First, understand how he's feeling. Maybe the conversation isn't even about batting initially, but about life and what international cricket is. Every bowler is coming at you, so can you find different solutions?" he questioned. He added that allowing the player to reflect on his own experiences would be more effective than prescribing immediate fixes. "You don't want him to see it as a problem, but as a tactical challenge. Instead of telling him what to do, have a conversation. Let him explain what he felt in that moment and what he was trying to do. The more he speaks, the clearer he'll become," he added. Nayar also highlighted the role of coaches in shielding young players from additional pressure during difficult phases, saying, "As support staff, you don't put your emotions onto the player; you absorb theirs, so that the next time he walks in, he's clear in his mind." Discussing India's broader struggles, Nayar rejected comparisons with the team's successful T20I tour of South Africa in 2024, arguing that the circumstances surrounding the two series were vastly different. "To be honest, the pitches in South Africa



were very good. The conditions weren't the issue. In T20 cricket, form and momentum are everything, and this team had neither," he said. He pointed to the lack of preparation following the IPL, the introduction of a new captain, and the heightened attention around Sooryavanshi as factors that disrupted India's campaign before it had gathered momentum.

"After the IPL, there was a break. So, they went into the Ireland series without much preparation. The only question over the team was that there is a new captain and a couple of new players. There was so much discussion about Vaibhav Sooryavanshi going into it, that I felt that the team didn't have tunnel vision," the former India player stated. While acknowledging that India's batters found the short-ball strategy challenging, Nayar insisted the issue should not be viewed as a long-term concern given the players' proven ability. "The players are talented. They struggled against the short ball, but it's not like players like Ishan Kishan, Abhishek and Sooryavanshi haven't handled it well before," He also felt the disappointing Ireland series had a lingering impact on the team's confidence heading into England, with fine margins ultimately proving decisive. "Ireland series hit them like a storm. Taking that momentum into the England series, where you haven't gotten runs, was in itself a challenge. If that over from Ravi Bishnoi had gone differently in one game, we might have been having a completely different conversation. A few small things haven't gone India's way, but I don't think it's a major problem yet," he opined.

Paresh Rawal claims OMG 2 was his idea: ‘Akshay Kumar took the script, didn’t give me credit’



When OMG 2 was gearing up for release in 2023, it ran into trouble with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) over its blend of sex education and religious themes. After multiple delays, the film was eventually cleared with an A certificate, even though the makers had hoped for a U/ A rating as they intended to target adolescents. Several modifications were also made, including changing Akshay Kumar’s character from Lord Shiva to ‘Shiv ka Doot’. However, according to Paresh Rawal, much of the controversy could have been avoided had the makers stuck to his original story, which, he claims, centred on the relationship between a father and son and did not involve any divine intervention.

Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, the veteran actor claimed he had conceived the original story for what later became OMG 2 and shared the idea with director Amit Rai, with whom he developed the screenplay. According to him, the project took a different turn after Akshay Kumar came on board. “The story was never meant to have God. Recalling how the project began, Paresh said, “I had approached Amit Rai, the director of Road to Sangam, and asked him if he was planning another film. I admire him a lot. I told him, ‘I have an idea. Let’s sit and write it.’ I told him I wasn’t a writer but I could contribute ideas and help identify where we were going wrong because I understand screenplay to some extent.” He continued, “The story was about a boy who gets caught masturbating, and a video of the incident goes viral, making his life miserable. His father was a tourist guide at the Khajuraho temple. Amit suggested making him a part-time priest at the Mahakal Temple. We developed the script together and even brought sexologist Dr Prakash Kothari on board. We had several meetings because our intention was to make the film educational, entertaining and not vulgar. We were deeply

involved in the process.” Rawal said the script was later narrated to filmmaker Anurag Kashyap and subsequently to Somen Mishra from Karan Johar’s Dharma Productions. “Somen outright said it wouldn’t work,” he recalled. “We didn’t need God in the story.”

Rawal further revealed that the original concept was vastly different from the final film. “Our main idea was to have a biker guiding the father, not God. In the first OMG, God appeared because the case was against God. But this film was about a father’s fight to get justice for his son. There was no need for a divine character. We wanted someone like Kader Khan’s character in Muqaddar Ka Sikandar.” According to Rawal, he approached Ajay Devgn and Salman Khan for the role of the biker. “I didn’t approach Akshay because people would have assumed it was OMG 2, whereas that wasn’t the plan.” Paresh alleged that the project changed course after Akshay Kumar expressed interest in it. “I was under the impression that we were still figuring things out. We even had a meeting with Vipul Shah of Optimystix. They also asked about Akshay, and I said if I wanted to make it with him, I would have approached him directly. Akshay and I were partners in OMG. I didn’t need anyone to bridge the gap.” He added, “A few days later, Amit Rai called and told me Akshay wanted to do the film. The issue was that Amit had tentatively written ‘OMG 2’ on the script because the genre was similar.” Rawal believes the script reached Akshay through producer Ashwin Varde. “In one of our meetings, Ashwin Varde was present. That’s when they decided they wanted to do it with Akshay.” He continued, “I told Amit that I didn’t want to go ahead with it. Amit said, ‘But they want to make it.’ They took the script from him. I told Amit I couldn’t fight him; he’s my friend. If that’s what he had chosen, I wished him well. I repeatedly told them not to make it a franchise because it wasn’t one. But they still went ahead.” The veteran actor said Akshay Kumar later personally asked him to be a part of the film. “I spoke to Akshay. He asked me to do the film. I told him, ‘No. This isn’t the film I had envisioned. There is no role of God in this story.’ He tried to convince me, but I had lived with the script from the beginning. I knew exactly what it was supposed to be. That’s why I walked away.” The role eventually went to Pankaj Tripathi. Rawal also claimed he did not receive credit for the story. “The saddest part is that I wasn’t even given credit for the story or the concept. My name wasn’t mentioned anywhere.” He further claimed that everyone he had narrated the script to was aware that the idea originated with him. “Amit, Akshay, Ashwin, Ajay Devgn, Karan Johar and Salman Khan... all know it was my idea and my story. Ajay and Salman probably said no because of the subject. They thought it could become controversial. I tried explaining the concept to them.”

Ramayana actor Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar part ways after 15 years of marriage



Ramayana actor Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar confirm divorce after 15 years of marriage. Ramayana actor Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar confirm divorce after 15 years of marriage. Actors Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar have officially announced their divorce, bringing an end to their 15-year marriage. The couple shared the news in a joint statement on social media on Thursday, saying the decision to part ways was mutual. They also said they would continue to co-parent their daughter, Jizah.

Taking to their Instagram handle, the duo shared a long

note about navigating this new chapter of their lives. “To our friends, media, and well-wishers, After much thought and consideration, Urmilla Kanetkar and I, Addinath M. Kothare, have mutually and amicably decided to part ways as partners. While our journey as a couple has ended, our commitment to our daughter, Jizah, remains absolute. She is our utmost priority. We are happily and dedicatedly co-parenting her to ensure she grows up surrounded by love, security, and support,” the statement read. It further read, “We hold the deepest mutual respect for one another and the years we shared. We are incredibly grateful to the media and the public for the immense love and support you have given us over the years, and we sincerely hope and pray that you will continue to bless us with the same as we step into this new chapter of our lives.” In this spirit, we kindly request our friends in the media and the public to respect our privacy. This will be our only statement on this matter, and we will not be commenting further. Thank you for your continued warmth and understanding,” the statement concluded. Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar first met on the sets of Shubh Mangal Saavdhan in 2006. They got married in 2011 and welcomed their daughter Jiza in 2018, after seven years of marriage. While Urmila is known for projects like Duniyadari, Mala Aai Vhachay! and Ti Saddhya Kay Karte, Addinath, on the other hand, is a prominent name in Marathi cinema,

Anushka Sharma’s rare London appearance gets fans talking, see viral video



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Anushka Sharma may have stepped away from the spotlight, but every glimpse of the actor continues to send fans into a frenzy. Most recently, a fan spotted Anushka on the streets of London and shared a video of the actor on Instagram. The clip quickly made the rounds on social media, with admirers expressing excitement over seeing

Anushka, who has largely kept a low profile in recent years. In the clip, Anushka can be seen strolling through the streets of London dressed in a blue shirt paired with beige culotte pants. Keeping her look effortlessly chic, the actor opted for a minimal, casual ensemble that perfectly complemented her low-key outing.

As fans celebrated her latest appearance, an old interview featuring Anushka Sharma and Shah Rukh Khan also resurfaced online. The clip, from an episode of Yaaron Ki Baraat, reminded fans of the duo’s effortless camaraderie and Anushka’s witty sense of humour. During the chat show, host Sajid Khan asked Anushka what she would steal from Shah Rukh if she had the chance. Anushka replied, “Kitni saari cheezein hain (There are so many things).” She first joked that she would take his expensive watch collection because she could sell it. However, when asked what she really wanted, Anushka Sharma didn’t hesitate before saying, “Mannat. Obviously.”

Referring to Shah Rukh Khan’s iconic Mumbai residence, her candid answer left everyone on the set laughing. The fun banter continued as Anushka jokingly added, “Abhi kuch toh chhod deti hoon,” prompting Shah Rukh to respond with his trademark wit. The superstar quipped that if Anushka took Mannat, he would simply move into his vanity van with his family, drawing laughter from the audience. Anushka Sharma has consciously chosen to stay away from the limelight in recent years, prioritising her personal life with husband Virat Kohli and their two children, Vamika (5) and Akaay (2), over frequent public appearances. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Anushka is rarely spotted at Bollywood events or on social media, making every candid photo or fan-recorded video a special moment for her admirers.

‘Amitabh Bachchan ko noch dala’: Paresh Rawal says Big B was persecuted, he only wants peace



Paresh Rawal is known not just for his acting prowess but also for speaking his mind. Never one to shy away from expressing his opinions, the actor recently weighed in on the buzz surrounding Amitabh Bachchan’s cryptic X post, in which the veteran star wrote, “Wanted to say something, but thought – NO!! Don’t say it.” Reacting to the post, Paresh said he believes fear is what is stopping Amitabh Bachchan from speaking his mind. Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, Rawal said: “People are afraid. They fear harassment from those in authority. Earlier, some people spoke unapologetically. If you notice, the number of such people has also reduced over time.” He then reflected on Bachchan’s own political experience. “What will he do at this age? He has seen how people tore him apart after the VP Singh episode. If power comes after you, it can ruin your life. We don’t know everything he went through. He suffered a lot. Amitabh is not someone who believes in conflict. He prefers peace. He folds his hands and ends the argument there itself. Many mistake that for weakness. He doesn’t like fights, toxicity or negativity around him.” Talking in the same interview, Paresh Rawal also recalled the time he almost starred alongside Amitabh Bachchan in 102 Not Out, only to be dropped from the film at the last minute. Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, Rawal said, “Politics never really played a role in the reduced number of films I did. The number reduced because I refused to do them. I am using the word ‘refuse’ and not ‘reject’. Many times, I simply didn’t find merit in the scripts or the stories.” He added, “Even while being a politician, I had enough time to do films. Parliament functions for around 110 days a year. I still had about 265 days to myself. I had even reduced my theatre shows.”

Madhuri Grover doubles down on ‘rich vs poor’ childbirth remark: ‘Wealthy running country’

Ashneer Grover’s wife, Madhuri Jain Grover, recently got evicted from Netflix India’s Lock Up Sach Ya Sazaa. After her eviction, Madhuri sat down for a special conversation with actress Tejasswi Prakash, where she addressed her remark that “if poor people have more kids, poverty will increase.” Madhuri also got emotional and pledged to give Rs 1 crore to someone who went to jail because of her personal battles.

Madhuri Grover revisits her ‘rich vs poor’ childbirth logic. On the first judgement day of the season, Madhuri Jain Grover shared a secret from her life. She said that she wanted to plan a third child with Ashneer Grover. However, since their families opposed the decision, they didn’t go ahead with that decision. During that discussion, Madhuri went on to say that she believed that if the rich had more children, they would contribute more to the country’s economy. She said, “We wanted to have a third child, but we got influenced by our family’s circumstances. Despite being educated and having so much, we were not able to make that decision. We got influenced by Ashneer’s mom’s idea that two kids are enough, and later, when we wanted a third child, it was too late. We have that regret. All the rich people have a third child, and he makes you feel young. If the rich people have more kids, wealth will increase, and if poor people have more kids, poverty will increase.”

Now, in a special curated interview segment called Shut up with Tejasswi, hosted actress Tejasswi Prakash, Madhuri revisited her controversial statement. She said, “I never stopped anyone from having kids. The problem with this generation is that people don’t want to have kids. I said, ‘If the rich give birth to more kids, the country will get richer; if the poor give birth to more kids, poverty will increase.’ We resonated with that.” When Tejasswi pointed out how her remark came across as ‘insensitive’ on social media, Madhuri added, “The wealthy people are only running the country; others are getting employment through the rich.” Tejasswi disagreed and said, “Poor people are also running the country, ma’am.” Responding to this, Madhuri added, “While the poor also drive the nation, not all of them are doing so. You seriously think the poor are running the country? I never stopped anyone from having kids. On social media, people like to pity themselves. Humain gareeb bold diya. If they consider themselves poor, then they will stay poor.” While Lock Up Sach Ya Sazaa is said to be a journey of redemption for its contestants, an emotional Madhuri Jain Grover said her journey is not yet complete. Soon after her eviction, Madhuri teared up and told Tejasswi Prakash, “While I am still in the Lock Up area, there are a few things I couldn’t say. I was in London when the show was offered to me. It was not easy for me to say yes to it. My inner voice told me that this was a chance for redemption. I wanted to give the winning amount to that one special person who had to face Lock Up in real life due to my personal battles. I unfortunately could not win the show, but I will still give Rs 1 crore to that person; only then will my journey of redemption be over.”

In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, Madhuri Jain Grover also revealed that a lot of her fellow contestants were insecure about her. “When someone is so soft spoken and

‘Someone refused to work with me’ Rawal then recalled how he unexpectedly exited 102 Not Out. “In 102 Not Out, I was supposed to play the role that Rishi Kapoor eventually did. I was associated with the project for two to three years. Then suddenly, I was out. I asked Umesh what happened, and he told me someone had refused to work with me. He never named that person. I still don’t know exactly why I was removed, but I can tell you it had nothing to do with my political stint.” When asked whether he tried to find out who had objected, Rawal replied, “I didn’t pursue it because Umesh is a friend. I asked him once, understood that there were issues, and didn’t want to embarrass him. I could have dug out the truth. I was the victim in that situation. I know who wanted me out, but I don’t want to say it publicly. I even confronted that person, but they denied knowing anything about it. I let it go. Whenever I have a problem with someone, I prefer calling them directly instead of speculating.” At the peak of his acting career, Amitabh Bachchan entered politics in 1984 at the request of his close friend, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Contesting on a Congress ticket, he won the Allahabad Lok Sabha seat by defeating veteran politician Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna by a massive margin. Around the same time, Vishwanath Pratap (VP) Singh became Finance Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government. During his tenure, he launched a high-profile crackdown on tax evasion and expanded investigations by the Enforcement Directorate into suspected violations of foreign exchange laws. Given Amitabh Bachchan’s close friendship with the Gandhi family, media attention also turned towards the Bachchan family during this period. Allegations surfaced regarding possible foreign exchange violations, although no charges were ultimately proven against the actor. The controversy intensified after the Bofors scandal broke in 1987. Around the same period, a Swedish newspaper alleged that Amitabh Bachchan and his brother Ajitabh Bachchan held secret Swiss bank accounts linked to alleged kickbacks in the Bofors deal. The Bachchan brothers consistently denied the allegations.

VP Singh later resigned from the Congress government, alleging corruption in the Bofors deal and emerging as Rajiv Gandhi’s principal political rival. Amitabh Bachchan’s name frequently surfaced in the political discourse surrounding the controversy, despite his repeated denials. Facing mounting political scrutiny and media attention, Bachchan resigned from Parliament in 1987 and announced his exit from politics. However, the scrutiny didn’t end. In 1988, VP Singh formed the Janata Dal and went on to win the Allahabad by-election from the seat vacated by Bachchan, cementing his position as the face of the anti-Congress movement. After becoming Prime Minister in 1989, Singh’s government continued investigations into the Bofors affair and related financial matters. Amitabh and Ajitabh Bachchan remained under scrutiny for years in connection with Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) and tax-related investigations. However, they consistently denied any wrongdoing, and over time, the allegations against them were not substantiated. Various investigations and court proceedings ultimately did not establish their involvement in the alleged kickback scandal. In 2012, the actor was officially cleared of involvement in the scandal.



calm, people, of course, underestimate you in the first week, thinking how she would be seen on camera. All the TV personalities on the show kept saying I was a weak player since I wasn’t fighting. They gradually figured they were wrong; those who thought I was weak started feeling insecure about me because they thought I would come across as a very different person outside. They thought their fights would show them in a negative light, and I would be seen positively. Honestly, I didn’t do things for the camera; I was just the way I am. Many people knew I was a strong player, but they were in denial. I could feel the insecurities in them.”

Tamannaah starts filming ‘date night horror’ Ragini 3 in London

Mumbai: Actor Tamannaah Bhatia has started shooting for her upcoming film “Ragini 3”, the latest installment in the horror franchise, in London. The film, directed by Shashanka Ghosh, is slated for a theatrical release in 2027, the makers said in a statement. Billed as a “date night horror” entertainer, “Ragini 3” is expected to blend horror, romance and comedy while taking the franchise in a new direction. Tamannaah shared the update with fans on Instagram Stories, posting a behind-the-scenes photograph holding the film’s clapperboard. The “Ragini” franchise began with “Ragini MMS” (2011), starring Kainaz Motivala and Rajkumar Rao, followed by “Ragini MMS 2” (2014), headlined by Sunny Leone. The franchise later expanded with the streaming series “Ragini MMS: Returns”, starring Karishma Sharma, Siddharth Gupta and Riya Sen.