

CBI clean chit to 2024 NEET leak ‘kingpin’

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday said it did not find any evidence to establish the involvement of Sanjeev Kumar, alias Sanjeev Mukhiya, in the theft or distribution of the NEET-UG 2024 question paper.

The paper leak was exposed by the Bihar Police on May 5, 2024. During the investigation, the police suspected Mukhiya to be the kingpin in the case and subsequently named him in the FIR. Mukhiya was reportedly also involved in other cases of paper leaks.

He remained at large for a long time and was later arrested in connection with other cases. In the meantime, the CBI took over the NEET paper leak case and later got his custody.

Strict action against paper leaks: PM Modi

New Delhi, July23

Amid the nationwide student movement over alleged NEET paper leak and increasing demand for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over the NEET-UG paper leak, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the government would announce tougher paper leak measures in the Cabinet on Friday. He said that the Cabinet would discuss a draft law providing for fast-track courts and stricter punishment in paper leak cases. Efforts would be made for passing the legislation in the Parliament in the monsoon session.

Modi posted a three-minute video message on social media stating that the paper leaks of various examinations had caused immense pain to lakhs of students and parents.

Modi said that the immediate priority after the alleged paper leak was to ensure that students did not lose an academic year.

"The government used its full capacity to organise the exams for nearly 2.2 million students in the shortest possible time. Just five or six days ago, on the 19th, the results were declared, and reports of successful candidates celebrating their achievements have been coming in from across the country," he said.

The PM said the officials had taken action against those responsible for the paper leak. Many of the accused had been arrested and jailed. "But we are not the kind of



people who are satisfied with just that. Therefore, today I directed the departments to prepare provisions for fast-track courts," he said.

Lothukunta Land: HC Ready to Call Army to Take Custody of HYDRAA Chief, Officials If They Violate Court Directions

From Our Staff Reporter
Hyderabad, July 23

The Telangana High Court on Thursday made it clear that it would be compelled to call the Army to take custody of the HYDRAA commissioner and its officials who having the full support of the state government continued to disrespect the majesty of the court and violate judicial directions.

Justice Jukanti Anil Kumar, hearing a petition on land in Lothkunta, observed that the court was very conscious that the armed forces were ordinarily not called upon in civil disputes. But, the court said, it had lost the faith in the government and its instrumentalities, because of the repeated allegations that HYDRAA officials had continued to violate judicial directions. The court remarked that it was anarchy on part of the state administration.

The court noted that the government had the option of approaching the Supreme Court on the High Court orders. The court even dictated orders but, based on a submission by the Advocate-General, postponed its orders to Friday when it will hear the matter again. The orders have been kept in abeyance in the meanwhile.

The court remarked that support from the state government could not authorise a senior IPS officer to enter private property in disregard of court orders. The court said that it gave several chances to the HYDRAA commissioner based on the assurances made by the Advocate-General and additional advocate-general (AAG). In spite of these, it seemed that the HYDRAA chief and its officers were not mending their conduct towards the judicial directions, the court observed.

Hence, it came to decision to call the Army, which could take custody of the HYDRAA chief and even the police personnel and vehicles used by them and put them in the barracks if they again violated judicial directions.

Justice Anil Kumar, making these observations, pulled up HYDRAA commissioner A.V. Ranganath while dealing contempt cases filed by Shantha Sriram Constructions alleging interference of the authority in its property of 40 acres forming part of Survey No.s 1 & 2 of Lothkunta, Malkajigiri mandal, Medchal Malkajigiri.



The firm has filed three contempt cases against HYDRAA on the same allegations. Two days ago, Ranganath had personally appeared before the court on allegations of violating the status quo orders prohibiting entry into the private property. Advocate-General A. Sudershan Reddy had then interceded on his behalf.

The contempt petitioner filed an interim application alleging that despite the assurance given before the court two days ago, HYDRAA officials with the help of the police had interfered with the land parcel.

After perusing the photographs submitted by the petitioners, Justice Anil Kumar expressed serious concern over the repeated violations by the HYDRAA and made grave observations against Ranganath. When AAG Imran Khan tried to contend on behalf of Ranganath, the court observed "Let him not act smart... with the court." The court noted that Ranganath would not listen and used the word "audacity" to describe the alleged disrespect to judicial directions by the HYDRAA chief.

"In spite of the Advocate-General's assurance that (HYDRAA) would not enter the land, he (Ranganath) enters the land with the help of the police force. He has full support of the state government," the court observed. "How (does he have) the audacity to come (to the court) again," the judge asked. "We have told you very specifically," the court said that the government could move the Supreme Court with a special leave petition (SLP). "Whatever you want to do, you do. This is not fair on an IPS officer, a senior rank," the court observed.

PM responsible for ‘collapse’ of education system, says Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi, July23

The Congress on Thursday dismissed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on setting up fast-track courts for paper leak cases as inadequate, accusing him of shielding those responsible for repeated examination leaks and asserting that the crisis could not be resolved without the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

The Opposition also demanded that the Prime Minister apologise to students, withdraw cases against those arrested during the July 20 protest and ensure action against those responsible for the alleged police excesses against student demonstrators.

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi held the Prime Minister directly responsible for what he described as the collapse of the country's education system.

"You are the one who has harmed the future of our

Parliament proceedings washed out again on Day 4 amid Centre-Opposition deadlock

Parliamentary proceedings were washed out on the fourth consecutive day on Thursday amid the Opposition's continued protests, demanding resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, even as the government claimed that it was ready to discuss the paper leak issue in Parliament and accused the Opposition of running away from discussion. Meanwhile, government sources indicated that efforts were on to speak to the floor leaders of opposition parties for working out a way to end the stalemate, provided they don't put in pre-condition.

The Opposition, on its part, has kept Pradhan's resignation as a pre-condition, terming it as non-negotiable.

Revanth: Why Is BRS Not Demanding Dharmendra Pradhan's Resignation?

From Our Staff Reporter
Hyderabad, July 23

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy asked why the BRS was not demanding the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan over his failures including the NEET paper leak and the CBSE evaluation imbroglio, and claimed that it was because the party was in cahoots with the BJP.

He was speaking after BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao announced the holding of a protest at Indira Park on Friday against the police action against students and youth in Delhi.

In an informal interaction with media at the Legislative Assembly premises on Thursday, Revanth Reddy reiterated his allegation that Globarena was a benami company of Rama Rao. The BRS leader had earlier in the day served a legal notice on the matter.

Globarena was involved in irregularities in the Telangana Intermediate Examinations in 2019, following which 27 students had died by suicide due to the improper evaluation of answer sheets, Revanth Reddy said.

The Chief Minister alleged that Rama Rao had had influenced BJP leaders in Delhi to help the company secure the CBSE ex-



amination contract this year. He demanded Rama Rao's apology for the alleged irregularities. He also challenged Rama Rao to demand a probe into the Globarena issue and also over ownership of land at the Janwada farmhouse

Taking a dig at Rama Rao for serving him a defamation notice over his remarks on Globarena, Revanth Reddy said a defamation case was generally filed by a person who had reputation and integrity and sarcastically questioned whether Rama Rao was in a position to issue such notices. He demanded that Rama Rao lodge a complaint with the Central Crime Station (CCS) against Globarena if he believed the allegations were false.

He alleged that there was a BRS-BJP understanding, and asked why the BRS had not de-

free to conduct any inquiry it deemed appropriate.

On government recruitments, Revanth Reddy challenged Rama Rao to bring up the issue of filling of vacancies in the Assembly and said he was ready to provide a list of 70,000 appointments along with the names of the selected candidates. He claimed that the Congress government had filled 11,000 teacher posts within 55 days.

Revanth Reddy alleged that the previous BRS government's practice was to issue notifications, allow paper leaks and then profit from the process. Revanth Reddy also said the state government was taking a strict stand against food adulteration.

Revanth Reddy dismissed Rama Rao's prediction that the BRS would return to power in Telangana with 80 Assembly seats in the next elections. He said the predictions made by both leaders about their parties' performance in the 2023 Assembly elections should be compared.

Referring to the recent Jubilee Hills bypoll, Revanth Reddy said Rama Rao had predicted that the BRS would win by a margin of 50,000 votes, while he had forecast a 30,000-vote victory for the Congress. "My prediction came true," Revanth Reddy said.

Sonam Wangchuk ends 27-day hunger strike after PM Modis midnight assurance

New Delhi, July23

Climate activist and education reformer Sonam Wangchuk on Thursday ended his 27-day hunger strike that began on June 28, at Medanta hospital in the presence of Union Ministers JP Nadda and Jitendra Singh. Breaking his fast, Wangchuk thanked the Centre and supporters, saying that assurances had been given on the key issues raised by him and that he was therefore calling off the strike.

Wangchuk had launched the hunger strike as part of the ongoing agitation led by the Cockroach Janta Party for students, seeking educational overhaul and Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation from post of Union Education Minister.

While the Centre has repeatedly maintained that it is open to discussions with representatives of the protest, a conclusion is yet to come for CJP.

The development also comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared a video message on social media, stating that the Centre would introduce the Anti-Paper Leak Bill in Parliament on Friday, a move seen by some as addressing one of the broader concerns repeatedly raised by youth groups and protesters across the country.



Several public figures had urged Wangchuk to end his fast, citing concerns over his health. Veteran social activist Anna Hazare had also expressed solidarity with the movement and condemned the use of force against students on July 20.

With Wangchuk ending his fast, attention is now likely to shift to whether the Centre is considering Pradhan's resignation and compensation for victim's families.

very first day of the monsoon session, but the government refused to allow it. He alleged that instead of debating the issue in Parliament, the government allowed students protesting outside Parliament to face police action.

Kharge said the BJP was determined to protect Pradhan and asserted that the Opposition would insist on the Education Minister's resignation before any meaningful discussion could take place. He also questioned why the Prime Minister remained silent until now if he was genuinely concerned about students.

Congress general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal said students, parents and the country had been demanding Pradhan's resignation since the controversy erupted. He said the Education Minister should be removed immediately, cases against protesting students withdrawn and the Prime Minister should apologise to the youth.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Betting big on semiconductor dreams

The recent Cabinet approval for Semicon 2.0, a Rs 1.27 lakh crore mission to deepen India's semiconductor ecosystem, marks the country's most ambitious attempt yet to establish itself as a significant player in the global semiconductor value chain. The initiative represents a shift from merely attracting chip manufacturing plants to building an integrated semiconductor ecosystem encompassing design, fabrication, packaging, materials, equipment research, and skilled manpower. While the policy push is laudable, several factors continue to hold back India's aspirations to emerge as a global semiconductor hub. Extremely high capital requirements, long gestation periods, difficulties in accessing frontier manufacturing technologies due to commercial and geopolitical considerations, supply chain complexities, infrastructure constraints, talent shortages, and intense global competition are among the major challenges facing India. Semiconductors are the foundation of modern technologies—from smartphones, computers, and automobiles to telecommunications, artificial intelligence, defence systems, and space technologies. For India, which imports billions of dollars' worth of chips annually, building domestic capabilities is both an economic and national security imperative. Semicon 2.0 rests on six pillars: chip design, machinery and materials, new fabs, assembly-testing-marking-packaging, research and development, and talent development. It builds directly on the original India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), approved in December 2021 with a Rs 76,000 crore outlay — the largest single industrial-policy bet India had made in electronics. The goal is to secure India a leading position on the global semiconductor map, strengthen supply chains, bolster national security.

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Directs Robust Measures to Prevent Drinking Water Shortage in Khammam



“Khammam, July 23: Indian Chronicle”“Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu has directed officials to implement a comprehensive action plan to ensure that people in Khammam district do not face any shortage of drinking water despite the severe weather conditions caused by the El Niño phenomenon.”“The Deputy Chief Minister had earlier instructed officials during a review meeting to take all necessary steps to prevent any drinking water crisis in the district. Acting on his directions, the administration has initiated measures on a priority basis.”“Godavari Water Being Diverted to Wyra Reservoir”“As part of the initiative, backwaters of the Godavari River are being diverted from Dummugudem near Bhadrachalam through the Rajiv Canal and the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) Main Branch Canal to the Wyra Reservoir.”“Field Inspection by the Deputy Chief Minister”“On Thursday, Bhatti Vikramarka personally inspected the flow of Godavari waters through the NSP Main Branch Canal. He reviewed the water transfer process and issued key directions to officials to expedite the filling of all major tanks in the district with the diverted Godavari waters.”“Continuous Monitoring to Prevent Water Scarcity”“The Deputy Chief Minister instructed officials to maintain constant monitoring and ensure that no village in the district experiences drinking water scarcity, irrespective of the impact of El Niño.”“Relief for Khammam Residents”“With Godavari waters reaching the Wyra Reservoir through the NSP Main Branch Canal, the initiative is expected to provide significant relief to the people of Khammam district amid concerns over water availability.”“The inspection was attended by District Collector Divakar T.S., Wyra MLA Maloth Ramdas Naik, Irrigation Chief Engineer Srinivasa Reddy, NPDCL Superintending Engineer Srinivasa Chary, along with other officials and public representatives.

Mini truck catches fire on Bachupally-Miyapur road, police prevent major accident

Hyderabad: A mini truck caught fire on the Bachupally–Miyapur Road opposite Urbanrise on Thursday, triggering panic among commuters. However, no casualties were reported.

On being alerted by commuters, police personnel from Bachupally reached the spot and used the fire extinguishers available in the patrol vehicle to douse the flames before they could spread. Their prompt response prevented a major accident and ensured that the fire did not engulf the vehicle or its cargo. Officials said the fire was brought under control within minutes, preventing damage to the goods being transported.

Welfare for Every Household is Congress Party's Goal in Indiramma Rajyam: PARAMESWAR REDDY



“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Congress Uppal Constituency In-charge Mandumula Parameswar Reddy said that the Congress Party's primary objective under Indiramma Rajyam is to ensure that welfare benefits reach every household. He stated that standing by people in times of hardship and sharing their happiness is his duty. He said the State Government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, is making continuous efforts to ensure that every eligible beneficiary re-



ceives the benefits of various welfare and development schemes.”Parameswar Reddy said he remains accessible to the people of Uppal constituency at all times and gives top priority to resolving their issues. He emphasized that public service is his foremost commitment and that welfare initiatives will continue without interruption. “He further stated that the Congress Government is moving forward with the welfare and development of the people as its primary agenda.

Respecting the National Flag is Every Citizen's Responsibility: Kadavendi Srinivas



“Khammam, July 23 Indian Chronicle:”“On the occasion of National Flag Adoption Day, a special programme was organized on Wednesday under the aegis of Vasavi

Club Shivalayam Street, with Maremalla Ramakrishna presiding over the event.”The chief guest, Kadavendi Srinivas, Vice President (Administration) of Vasavi Clubs International and Diamond Star KCGF, participated in the programme. “Addressing the gathering, Srinivas said that the National Flag is a symbol of the nation's pride and dignity, and every Indian has the responsibility to respect and honour it. He called upon citizens to uphold the values represented by the Tricolour and conveyed the message: “Respect the National Flag and take the nation forward with responsibility.”“The programme was attended by Kodumuri Jagannadham, International Programme Coordinator; Kadavendi Viswanath Gupta, Vasavi Clubs International Programme Coordinator and recipient of the Seva Ratna Award; R.C. Das Srinivasa Rao; Gopalakrishnamurthy, Secretary of Shivalayam Street; the Treasurer; and other members.”The organisers expressed their gratitude to all the guests and participants for attending the event.

THUMMALA SANDEEP BHUSHAN Participates in 'Chalo Raj Bhavan' Protest, Condemns Detention of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi

“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Thummala Sandeep Bhushan, Telangana State Head of Policy Research Wing of the All India Professional Congress (AIPC), participated in the Congress party's 'Chalo Raj Bhavan' protest condemning the detention of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi. “Speaking on the occasion, Thummala Sandeep Bhushan strongly condemned the alleged police action against students and educated unemployed youth in Delhi. He alleged that repeated examination paper leaks, corruption in recruitment processes, and the Central Government's failure to safeguard the future of young people have led to the present situation.”He demanded the immediate resignation of the Union Education Minister, the Union Home Minister, and the Prime Minister, holding them morally responsible for the incidents. He criticized the BJP-led Central Government for its failure to prevent examination paper leaks and to ensure a transparent recruitment process. “Sandeep Bhushan further stated that the BJP government's functioning has become a blot on Indian democracy and said the time has come for the people to reject policies that, in his view, are harming the aspirations and future of the country's youth.



Massive Arrangements for Uppal Bonalu-9 Million CC Road Works for Temple Infrastructure



Former Corporator MANDUMULA RAJITHA PARAMESWAR REDDY“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Former Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameswar Reddy said extensive arrangements are being made to ensure that devotees face no inconvenience during the upcoming Bonalu festival in Uppal Division. “She stated that all necessary infrastructure and civic amenities are being provided not only at the Mahankali and Pochamma temples but also at other temples across the division.”On Thursday, she inspected the CC road construction works worth ₹90 lakh (₹9 million) being undertaken near the Nalla Pochamma Temple in Venkateswara Colony, Uppal Division. She instructed officials to expedite the works so that devotees would not face any difficulty during the Bonalu festivities.”Rajitha Parameswar Reddy said arrangements are being made to provide proper lighting, sanitation, drinking water facilities, barricading, and other essential amenities at all temple premises. She added that she would soon visit the temples along with officials from various departments to review the preparations and ensure that any additional works required are completed well before the festival.”The inspection was attended by Venkateswara Colony President Sridhar Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Vice President Srinivas Goud, General Secretary Nangi Srinivas, Treasurer Mittapalli Srinivas, colony members Bhaskar, Vijayender Raju, Pandu, Chandrudu, Dharma Reddy, Somayya, Nangi Sampath, Bharat, Jakkula

Sampath, Anand, Omkar, Pratap Singh, Ramakrishna, Sanjeev Reddy, Krishna Reddy, Rajendra Swamy, and several others.

Students Urged to Stay Away from Drugs: Uppal DI Ravikumar

“Drug Abuse Awareness Programme Held at Ramanthapur Government High School”“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “Uppal Police Station Detective Inspector (DI) Ravikumar urged students to stay away from drugs and said that protecting the youth from the menace of narcotics is the collective responsibility of society.”A drug abuse awareness programme was organized by the Police Department at Ramanthapur Government High School on Thursday. Addressing the students, DI Ravikumar said that drug addiction poses a serious threat not only to an individual's physical and mental health but also to families, society, and the nation's future. He advised students never to fall into the trap of drugs due to peer pressure, curiosity, or bad influences. He explained that drug abuse can lead to severe physical and psychological problems, loss of interest in studies, increased involvement in criminal activities, and the breakdown of family relationships. He encouraged students to remain focused on their goals, pursue their education with discipline, and grow into responsible citizens. Emphasizing that schools are the foundation of a strong society, he urged teachers and parents to closely ob-

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Employment Recruitment Marred by Irregularities, Fair Inquiry Demanded: Daggubati Samrajyam

“Khammam, July 23: Indian Chronicle”“Daggubati Samrajyam has alleged that she was subjected to injustice in the recent recruitment process conducted in her village and demanded a thorough inquiry into the appointments.”“Addressing a press conference at the Khammam District Press Club on Wednesday, she claimed that despite possessing the required qualifications, she was overlooked while candidates with lesser or no eligibility were selected for the posts.”“Samrajyam alleged that local ruling party leaders colluded with concerned government officials to influence the recruitment process. She said candidates were made to wait for several days under the pretext of interviews, but the interviews themselves lasted barely a minute, without any proper assessment of educational qualifications, merit, or experience.”“She questioned how appointments could be made without conducting a transparent and fair selection process. Although Intermediate qualification was prescribed as the minimum eligibility, she alleged that candidates with higher qualifications were ignored while individuals favoured by local leaders were selected.”“She further expressed suspicion that money may have exchanged hands during the recruitment process, raising serious doubts about the fairness of the appointments.”“Samrajyam urged higher authorities to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the recruitment process, including scrutiny of applications, candidates' qualifications, interview procedures, the final selection list, and the role of officials involved. She demanded strict action against those responsible if any irregularities are established and requested that deserving candidates be given employment opportunities.”“Appealing to the government for immediate intervention, she said, “The authorities should respond without delay, investigate the entire recruitment process, rectify the injustice done to me, and ensure a transparent review of the appointments.”“She also appealed to the media to bring the issue to the attention of the government and senior officials, urging journalists to help uncover the facts and ensure justice for the affected candidates.



TJA Celebrates 12th Foundation Day at Minister Ponguleti's Camp Office



“Khammam, July 23: Indian Chronicle”“The 12th Foundation Day celebrations of the Telangana Journalists Association (TJA) were held with enthusiasm at the camp office of Telangana Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy in Khammam on Thursday.”“The celebrations were inaugurated by Tamburu Dayakar Reddy, Camp Office In-charge, who marked the occasion by cutting a cake and extending his greetings to members of the journalists' fraternity.”“Speaking on the occasion, participants appreciated the role played by the Telangana Journalists Association in safeguarding the interests and welfare of journalists across the state.”“Among those present were TJA District President and Accreditation Committee Member G. Naga Swamy, district leaders Mati Ramakrishna (Vijaya Kranti), Sayankalam Rambabu, Manikumar, Syed Khasim (Akshita Daily), Vasam Rajendra Prasad (Crime Mirror), Tallapalli Ashok (Yuva Galam), Sampath (Sanchalana Vartha), Domala Kiran, Chinni, Pagidipalli Ravi Kiran, Bodabathula Satish, Ganji Brahman, Pamarthi Nageswara Rao, Malle Boyina Laxman, and several other journalists.

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ADMISSION NOTIFICATION FOR PG PROGRAMMES
ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-2027

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) announces admissions against few vacant seats in the select Post-Graduate Degree Programmes for the Academic Year 2026-2027.

Candidates are required to fill the online application form and appear for the entrance test conducted by TISS.

More details on the entrance test, programmes available for admission through the entrance test, eligibility criteria and other details for applying will be provided on <https://admissions.tiss.ac.in/>. Please keep checking the TISS website.

Any admission related queries at any stage should be sent to admissionsinfo@tiss.ac.in, or you could call the Admissions Helpline at 022-2552 5252.

Registrar

SIR Programme Successfully Completed at Somanpalli Village“



“Manthani, Peddapalli District, July 23(Indian Chronicle):“As per the directions of Telangana IT & Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu and TPCC Secretary Duddilla Srinu Babu, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

programme was successfully completed in Somanpalli Village, under Booth No. 131 of the Manthani Assembly Constituency.”

The SIR verification process was carried out successfully across the village with the active participation and co-operation of local leaders, officials, and residents.”Prominent participants included Peddapalli District Congress Party Official Spokesperson Seggam Rajesham, Somanpalli Sarpanch Gattu Damodar, Single Window Director Ravikanti Satish, District Congress Party Secretary Mrs. Ayesha Fathima, Anil Reddy, BLO Guvvala Manjula, along with Akash, Kumar, Raju, Mahesh, Satish, Ranjith, Durgayya, Sridhar Rajababu, Congress party workers, Congress family members, and a large number of villagers.

Dr. Anitha Reddy Receives Nelson Mandela Peace Award



“Hanamkonda, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): Dr. Anita Reddy, Chairperson of Anurag Society, has been honored with the prestigious Nelson Mandela Peace Award by the Global Human Rights, Anti-Corruption & Consumer Protection Council of India Trust in recognition of her outstand-

ing contributions to social service.”“The organization's Founder-Chairman, Advocate Dr. Chakravarthi, stated that Dr. Anitha Reddy was selected for the award in recognition of her dedicated efforts towards building a healthy society, guiding youth on the right path, protecting human rights, combating corruption, and creating awareness about consumer rights.”“He said that the awareness programs conducted by Dr. Anitha Reddy have become a source of inspiration for young people and have significantly contributed to the protection of human rights, the fight against corruption, and consumer welfare. In recognition of these valuable services, she was presented with the Nelson Mandela Peace Award.”“Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Anitha Reddy expressed her happiness at receiving the award and said that it also brings greater responsibility. She emphasized the need for increased awareness across the country on the protection of human rights, eradication of corruption, and safeguarding consumer rights.”“She further stated that if every individual performs their duties with sincerity and commitment, the nation will achieve greater progress. She affirmed that she would continue her mission of serving society by helping shape a value-based and responsible younger generation. Dr. Anitha Reddy added that receiving awards is not as important as living up to their honor through dedicated service, and that she believes in proving herself through actions rather than words.

District Medical & Health Department, Khammam

“Khammam | July 23 Indian Chronicle:“HPV Vaccine Awareness Seminar Held at St. Joseph High School“Under the directions of District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Dr. D. Rama Rao, an awareness seminar on the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine was conducted for girl students at St. Joseph High School, Srinivasa Nagar, Khammam, under the supervision of UPHC Medical Officer Dr. Harika.”“Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Harika explained that the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a major cause of cervical cancer and emphasized that the HPV vaccine plays a crucial role in preventing the disease. She stated that administering the vaccine to girls aged 14 years at the appropriate time can significantly reduce their risk of developing cervical cancer in the future.”“She urged parents to be well-informed about the HPV vaccine and ensure their daughters receive the vaccination as advised by healthcare professionals. She also stressed the importance of maintaining personal hygiene, adopting a healthy lifestyle, and



undergoing regular health check-ups to safeguard overall health.”The programme was attended by Deputy DEMO K.V. Raju, Health Educator Venugopal, Health Worker Shailaja, the school principal, teachers, Medical and Health Department staff, and girl students.

Office of the District Medical & Health Officer



“Khammam:July 23 Indian Chronicle:“Medical Camp Organized at Leprosy Patients' Colony in Khammam“A

medical camp was organized today at the Leprosy Patients' Colony near Warangal Cross Road, Khammam, under the directions of District Medical & Health Officer Dr. D. Rama Rao and Additional District Medical & Health Officer Dr. Praveen.”As part of the treatment and rehabilitation program, MCR (Micro Cellular Rubber) footwear, bandages, cotton, ointments for wound care, and supportive medicines were distributed to leprosy patients with disabilities by 30th Ward Councillor Dandi Srija.”Health officials advised patients to maintain personal hygiene, remain vigilant about their health, and avoid negligence towards the disease. They emphasized that anyone noticing skin patches or symptoms suggestive of leprosy should immediately visit the nearest Primary Health Centre for diagnosis. If detected in the early stages, leprosy can be completely cured with proper medication. Delaying treatment or neglecting the condition may lead to permanent disabilities.”PMO Mallayya, Physiotherapist Bhadru, Nodal Person Sudhakar, and ASHA workers also participated in the medical camp

Farmers Advised to Focus on Drought-Resistant Crops Amid Rain Deficit



“Khammam Nelakondapalli, July 23 Indian Chronicle:““In view of the prevailing drought conditions and below-normal rainfall, farmers should shift from water-intensive crops to drought-resistant crops, advised Kattukacharam Cluster Officer B. Sirisha.”“Speaking at a review meeting on “Drought Conditions and Alternative Crops” held at the Kattukacharam Gram Panchayat office on Thursday under the chairmanship of Sarpanch Saidayya, Sirisha interacted with village-level officials and offered several recommendations.”She said that due to the impact of El Niño, rainfall has been significantly lower than normal. Farmers were urged to avoid cultivating water-intensive crops such as paddy, maize, and chilli, as they require substantial irrigation and may lead to financial losses under the current conditions.”“Instead, she recommended cultivating drought-tolerant crops such as red gram (pigeon pea), green gram (mung bean), black gram (urad), sorghum (jowar), and pearl millet (bajra), which are better suited to

low-rainfall conditions and can help farmers reduce the impact of El Niño.”She also cautioned farmers against taking up paddy cultivation this season to avoid potential losses.”The meeting was attended by village-level officials and local representatives.

Malkajgiri MLA seeks review of proposed CURE Bill, raises concerns over local governance

Hyderabad: Malkajgiri MLA M. Rajasekhara Reddy on Thursday submitted a representation to Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan raising serious objections to several provisions of the proposed Core Urban Regional Economy Area (CURE) Bill, 2026 and urging the government to comprehensively review the draft before its enactment.

In his representation, the MLA stated that while urban development and better governance were welcome objectives, the Bill in its present form weakens democratic local self-government and is inconsistent with the spirit of the 74th Constitutional Amendment.Among other issues, he highlighted concerns such as excessive centralisation of powers, no mandatory Ward Committees, financial burden on citizens.

Every Vote Matters – Speed Up the SIR Programme: UPPAL MLA BANDARI LAKSHMA REDDY



“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy said that the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) programme in the Uppal constituency is not progressing at the expected pace and urged

every party leader and worker to take responsibility for ensuring that every eligible voter's name is included in the electoral rolls.The MLA inspected the SIR Registration Centre at Tirumala Nagar under the Meerpet Housing Board Division. He stressed that every vote is crucial and called upon party leaders and booth-level workers to create awareness among the public so that no eligible voter is left out of the electoral list.Lakshma Reddy advised citizens whose names are missing from the voter list or whose details contain errors to immediately approach the concerned election officials for necessary corrections. He urged party leaders, booth-level in-charges and party workers to work in coordination, conduct door-to-door outreach, and ensure the successful implementation of the SIR programme.Stating that every vote is valuable in a democracy, the MLA appealed to everyone to actively participate in the voter registration and verification process.Former Corporator Prabhudas, BRS party leaders, party workers, colony residents and others participated in the programme.

SIR Help Centres Should Ensure Smooth Implementation of the Process

“Former Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Calls Upon Congress Cadre”“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Former Uppal Division Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy urged Congress workers to actively support the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process and ensure that it is carried out smoothly and efficiently.”On Thursday, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy inspected the SIR Help Centre established at Padmavathi Colony Community Hall under the leadership of Uppal Division Congress President Eega Anjaneyulu Mudiraj.”Speaking on the occasion, she said that genuine voters should not face any inconvenience or loss due to the SIR process. She advised party workers to coordinate closely with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and provide all necessary assistance to voters in completing the voter list revision process without difficulty.”Among those present were Padmavathi Colony President Bhaskar Reddy, Lingampally Ramakrishna, Tummala Devi Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Poojari Hanumanth, Krishna, Narasimha Reddy, Balaram Naidu, Madhu, Lakshman Rao, Ravi, Ravikumar, Nagesh, Venu, Amrutha, Shailaja, Gorige Mahesh, Alugula Anil, Nomula



Suresh, Tummala Rajender Reddy, Nagoor Basha, Tummala Devender Reddy, Chandrasekhar Reddy, Bacharam, and other Congress leaders from Uppal.

Congress Protests Across District in Support of Rahul Gandhi; Modi's Effigy Burnt

“Hanumakonda, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): Condemning the Central Government's anti-democratic stance and extending support to senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Congress activists staged protests across Hanumakonda district on Thursday. Following directives from the AICC and TPCC, and at the call of Hanumakonda DCC President Inagala Venkat Ram Reddy, State Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar, and MLAs K.R. Nagaraju (Wardhannapet), Revuri Prakash Reddy (Parkal), and Kadiyam Srihari (Station Ghanpur), these protests were held in various GWMC divisions and mandal headquarters. During the events, protesters also burnt effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.”“The protests in GWMC divisions 1, 2, 44, 45, 46, 55, 56, 64, 65, and 66 were organized under the leadership of respective division presidents: Chirra Ramu Goud, Putta Tirupathi, Jakkula Sadanandam, Karra Harish Reddy, Vaskula Srinivas, Gaddam Arun, Konka Haribabu, Duvva Srikanth, Nedunuri Sunil, and Gorre Kiran.”“Addressing the gatherings, Congress leaders alleged that the BJP government at the Centre is undermining democratic values ??by



targeting opposition parties through acts of political vendetta. They strongly condemned the anti-democratic actions taken against Rahul Gandhi.”“Division and mandal-level leaders, Sarpanches, former Sarpanches, former Mandal Presidents, former public representatives, district committee members, leaders from SC, BC, and minority cells, senior Congress leaders, and a large number of party workers participated in these protests and raised slogans against the Central Government.

Congress slams Centre over NEET issue, seeks Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation

Former SUDA Chairman Komatireddy Narendra Reddy alleges crackdown on protesting students undermines democratic values; 'Chai Pe Charcha' held with intellectuals and aspirants in Karimnagar.

Karimnagar July 23 (Correspondent): Senior Congress leader and former SUDA Chairman Komatireddy Narendra Reddy on Wednesday criticised the Union government over the alleged NEET paper leak and the handling of student protests, demanding the immediate resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.Addressing a 'Chai Pe Charcha' programme organised at Siri Tea Hotel on Collectorate Road, Mr. Reddy alleged that the BJP's rhetoric on nationalism and values was not reflected in its response to the concerns of students. He said the Education Minister should accept moral responsibility for the controversy and step down.

Interacting with intellectuals, doctors, lawyers, senior citizens and students preparing for competitive examinations, Mr. Reddy accused the Centre of jeopardising the future of students and suppressing democratic dissent. He alleged that protesting students had been subjected to police action, including lathi charge and the use of tear gas.The Congress leader also condemned the reported arrest of Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi and other party leaders during a protest over the issue, describing the action as undemocratic.Participants in the discussion alleged that



democratic institutions were being weakened and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to tender an unconditional apology to students. They reiterated their demand for the resignation of Mr. Pradhan, alleging that the Centre had failed to safeguard the interests of students.Prominent advocates Korivi Venugopal and Penchala Laxman Rao; doctors Chatla Sridhar and Vodde Ram Reddy; walkers Gudipati Ramana Reddy, P. Kishan Rao, Yella Reddy and Boyini Ashok, along with several competitive examination aspirants, participated in the interaction.

Parameshwar Reddy Participates in Sri Varahi Matha Navaratri Celebrations

“UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy participated in the Kumkumarchana ritual held as part of the Sri Varahi Matha Navaratri Mahotsavam at the Sri Sri Sri Pochamma and Peddamma Temple in Tirumala Nagar, Meerpet HB Colony Division.”On the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy offered special prayers to the Goddess and prayed for the happiness, prosperity, good health, and well-being of the people of Uppal constituency. Following the puja, the temple committee members extended a warm welcome to him and felicitated him with a traditional shawl in recognition of his visit.”The programme was attended by Uppal Coordinator Varalakshmi, Division President Anjaiah, Srinivas, Mallikarjun, Uday, Kishore, Anil Kumar Gupta, Suresh, Srinivas Reddy, Shravan Goud, Sammaiah, Rupender Reddy, Balakrishna, Krishna, Gemini, Sunitha, Rani, Vittal, Srikanth, members of the temple committee, and several local residents.”



Party Cadre Should Work with the Goal of Winning the Mayor's Post: Ganta Ravi Kumar



“Warangal, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Warangal District Executive Committee meeting was held on Thursday at Sushil Gardens in Warangal under the chairmanship of District President Ganta Ravi Kumar. BJP National Council Member Gujjula Premender Reddy attended the meeting as the chief guest and guided the party cadre.”“The meeting began with the hoisting of the BJP flag, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp. Addressing the gathering, the leaders stated that the BJP has consistently been at the forefront of fighting for the resolution of public issues and the welfare of farmers in the district. They highlighted the party's struggles on issues such as MGM Hospital, the Model Bus Stand, double-bedroom houses for journalists, and the overall development of the city.”“The leaders called upon every party worker to strengthen the organization from the booth level with the goal of capturing the Warangal Municipal Corporation Mayor's post in the upcoming municipal elections. A political resolution titled “Raithu Gosa – BJP Bharosa” was unanimously adopted, pledging to continue the party's fight for farmers' rights and to address their grievances.”“The meeting also passed a resolution congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 12 years of governance, describing the period as one of historic and development-ori-



ented leadership. At the same time, the participants alleged that the Congress government in Telangana had failed to implement the promises and guarantees made during the elections and resolved to intensify grassroots-level agitations against what they termed anti-people policies.”“The leaders urged party workers to take issues such as the city's poor drainage system, the utilization of Smart City funds, and other civic problems to the people while exposing the failures of the Congress government. They emphasized that electoral success begins with winning every booth and called upon the cadre to actively participate in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process.”“Among those present at the meeting were State Official Spokesperson Rani Rudramadevi, Dr. Vannala Venkataramana, State Executive Members Jalagam Ranjith Rao, Ratnam Satish Shah, Gurumurthy Shivakumar, Siddam Naresh, former District President Edla Ashok Reddy, District General Secretaries Bakam Harishankar, Banna Prabhakar, Gogula Rana Pratap Reddy, State leaders Kambhampati Pulla Rao, Gande Naveen, Ramachandra Reddy, Narasimha Ramulu, Tabeti Venkat Goud, Manjula Reddy, Councillor Juluri Roja Rani, Sarpanches Thallapelli Kumaraswamy, Sriram Bhoopal, Rayapuram Ramya Raju, and several other party leaders and workers.

Prime Minister's Silence... Delhi Police Have Buried Democracy: Ambati Srinivas



“Warangal, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) State Vice President Ambati Srinivas and Warangal District President Sheikh Javid demanded strict action against those responsible for the NEET paper leak. They also called for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, holding him accountable for the incident, and sought compensation for the families of students who allegedly lost their lives due to the distress caused by the NEET paper leak.”“The leaders strongly condemned

the police lathi-charge on students staging a peaceful protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. They alleged that the Central Government has remained silent instead of responding to the students' demands and stated that using force against peacefully protesting students is against the principles of democracy.”“Ambati Srinivas questioned the government's decision to resort to lathi-charges and the use of tear gas on students seeking justice instead of punishing those responsible for the NEET paper leak. He urged the Central Government to stop what he described as vindictive action against students raising legitimate concerns.”“Alleging that democratic and secular values are being undermined in the country, the TJS leaders appealed to the Central Government to ensure proper medical treatment for students injured in the police action and to address their demands. They also urged the government to take necessary measures to prevent such incidents from recurring in the future.”“The meeting was attended by TJS Warangal District President Sheikh Javid, State leaders Gunti Ramachander, Bonagani Ravinder, Solthi Sai Kumar, Sandani Elisha, Rajesh, Gunti Sanjeev, and others.

Gift a Smile... Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar Brings Hope to a Young Man's Life



“Hanumakonda, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): With a commitment to social service and empowering underprivileged families through self-employment, former Government Chief Whip and former MLA Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar has once again brought hope to a deserving family through his “Gift a Smile” initiative.”“As part of the programme, Daravath Vinod Kumar, a young man from Theegalaveni village in Gudur Mandal of Mahabubabad district, was provided financial assistance of ₹2 lakh to establish a grocery

and general store. The support is expected to help him become self-reliant and build a stable livelihood for himself and his family.”“The assistance was extended under the “Gift a Smile” programme organized by Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar to mark the birthday of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) Working President, former Telangana Minister, and Sircilla MLA K. T. Rama Rao (KTR). During a programme held on Thursday at Sathya Sai Convention, Madikonda, KTR personally handed over the financial assistance to the beneficiary.”“Speaking on the occasion, Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar said that politics should not be confined to elections alone but should serve as a platform to bring meaningful change in people's lives through welfare and service initiatives. He stated that the objective of the “Gift a Smile” programme is to support unemployed and economically disadvantaged youth by helping them establish self-employment ventures and become financially independent.”“The leaders observed that celebrating KTR's birthday through welfare and service activities reflects the BRS party's commitment to public service. They expressed confidence that such initiatives would inspire positive social change and affirmed that the “Gift a Smile” programme would be expanded further to benefit many more deserving youth in the future.

Parameshwar Reddy launches SIR Awareness Campaign Vehicle arranged by Senior Congress leader Uppal Khan in Beerappagadda Division“

““UPPAL, JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): To create widespread public awareness about the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls, a special SIR Awareness Campaign Vehicle arranged under the leadership of Beerappagadda Division Senior Congress leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) was formally flagged off by Uppal Congress Party Constituency In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy.”“Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that every vote is invaluable in a democracy and urged every eligible voter to verify whether their name is correctly included in the electoral rolls. He appealed to the public to complete all voter-related processes, including new voter registration, correction of names, change of address, addition of family members' details, and other necessary modifications, on or before August 3.”“He stated that the Congress Government, under the leadership of Telangana Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy, is committed to protecting the voting rights of every eligible citizen. He also instructed Congress party workers to extend full cooperation to the public in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Election Commission.”“The special SIR Awareness Campaign Vehicle arranged by Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) will tour Beerappagadda Division as well as various colonies, slums, and residential localities across the Uppal Assembly Constituency, creating awareness about the SIR process. The campaign will reach every household, providing informa-



tion on voter registration, corrections, required documents, how to contact Booth Level Officers (BLOs), and how to fill out the necessary forms.”“The organisers said the primary objective of the campaign is to eliminate misconceptions about the SIR process and ensure that every eligible voter is aware of the steps required to safeguard their voting rights. They added that the Congress Party stands with the people and will provide all necessary assistance to every voter.”“Among those who participated in the programme were TPCC SC Cell State General Secretary Sandeep Bhushan, Senior Congress leaders Dr. Adla Anjaiah, Mohsin, Rajashekar, Waheed, Nagoor Basha, along with Congress party leaders, workers, and local residents.

Students Should Develop the Habit of Learning for One Hour Every Day: District Resource Person Etikyala Suresh Kumar

Nelakondapalli (Khammam), July 23: Indian Chronicle”“District Resource Person Etikyala Suresh Kumar has advised students to cultivate the habit of learning for at least one hour every day and urged teachers to work collectively towards helping every student achieve their academic goals.”“He was speaking at the Integrated Teacher Training Programme held on Thursday at the Government School in Nelakondapalli. The programme was inaugurated by Mandal Education Officer (MEO) B. Chalapathi Rao.”“Addressing the participants, Suresh Kumar emphasized that, under the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) initiative, schools should conduct a compulsory one-hour daily remedial programme. He recommended that students of Classes I to V be provided focused learning sessions every day from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.”“He stressed the importance of identifying learning gaps among academically weaker students and providing special instruction to help them improve their performance. Teachers should also allocate sufficient time for assessment, classroom teaching, practice, feedback, and evaluating learning outcomes, he said.”“Suresh Kumar urged teachers to work in coordination to achieve the government's educational objectives



and to conduct skill development activities on a daily basis to enhance students' learning abilities.”“The programme was attended by MEO B. Chalapathi Rao, Resource Persons Madhav, Swami and Srinivas, teachers Ramesh, T. Venkala Rao, Thorthi Suresh, Maragani Satyanarayana, Rama Rao, and others.

Boddireddy Prabhakar Reddy Extends Grand Welcome to Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka

““Hanumakonda, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Finance and Energy Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu visited NIT Warangal on Thursday as part of his Hanumakonda tour. On the occasion, Congress leaders and public representatives accorded him a warm and grand welcome.”“A large number of party leaders and workers gathered to receive the Deputy Chief Minister. During the interaction, discussions were held on the State Government's initiatives for Telangana's development, public welfare, and the strengthening of the education sector. Several issues concerning the development of Hanumakonda and Warangal were also brought to his attention.”“On the occasion, TPCC General Secretaries Boddireddy Prabhakar Reddy and E.V. Srinivas, MLC Baswaraj Saraiah, and PCC Member Battini Srinivas, along with other Congress leaders, felicitated Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka by presenting him with a bouquet and draping him with a ceremonial shawl.”“Speaking on the occasion, the leaders said that the State Government is giving top priority to public welfare, transparent governance, infrastructure development, strengthening the power sector, and maintaining fiscal discipline. They appreciated the



leadership of Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and stated that the government is moving forward effectively towards the comprehensive development of Telangana.”“The programme was attended by several Congress leaders, public representatives, party workers, and supporters, who extended a grand welcome to the Deputy Chief Minister.

OPPO India Launches Reno 16 Series

“Hyderabad, July 23 (Indian Chronicle) : OPPO India has launched its new Reno 16 series, comprising the Reno 16 and Reno 16C smartphones, the company's Head of PR & Communications, Goldie Patnaik, said in a statement released on Thursday. He said the new smartphones come equipped with several AI-powered features, including AI Portrait Camera, AI Remix Collage, Pop Cam, Popout 2.0, AI Snap Key, and AI Mind Space. The devices also feature a 50MP 3.5x telephoto camera, support for 4K 60fps HDR video recording, ColorOS 16, and a HaloVerse 3D design, which are among their key highlights. On the occasion, the company also introduced OPPO Bubble, its first smart camera companion, along with the OPPO Enco Air 5 earbuds featuring Active Noise Cancellation(ANC). Patnaik said the Reno 16 series has been designed with a premium look, powerful camera capabilities, and advanced AI features to help young users express their creativity and individuality more effectively.



Minister Konda Surekha Participates in Varuna Yagam Poornahuti at Yadadri Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple

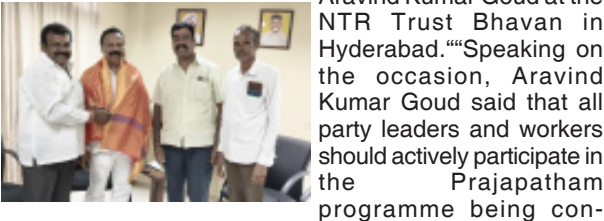


“Warangal, July 23 (Indian Chronicle): Praying for abundant rainfall, the prosperity of farmers, ecological balance, and a lush green Telangana, Telangana Minister for Forests, Environment, Endowments and Charitable Institutions Konda Surekha participated in the Varuna Yagam Poornahuti ceremony held on Thursday at the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple in Yadagiri Gutta.”“Amid Vedic chants and sacred fire rituals, Minister Konda Surekha, along with Vedic scholars, offered the Poornahuti to the sacred fire. She prayed to Lord Lakshmi Narasimha for the health and well-being of the people, the welfare of farmers, full reservoirs, lakes and rivers, flourishing greenery, and timely, abundant rainfall across Telangana.”“Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that Varuna Yagam is not merely a Vedic ritual but a symbol of India's rich cultural tradition of worshipping nature as divine. She described it as a sacred resolve for ecological balance, public welfare, and agricultural prosperity.”“She stated that due to the impact of El Niño, Telangana has not received timely rainfall this season. She added that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is implementing a comprehensive action plan to address the situation and that, along with the government's efforts, Varuna Yagams are being conducted in temples across the State to invoke divine blessings for good rains.”“Indian culture teaches us not to conquer nature but to live in harmony

with it. By respecting people's faith and preserving our Vedic traditions, these Varuna Yagams express our gratitude and responsibility towards nature. They are not merely spiritual ceremonies but reflect the Indian philosophy of living in balance with the environment,” Minister Konda Surekha said.”“On her arrival at the temple, the Minister was accorded a traditional welcome by Temple Executive Officer Bhavani Shankar, Deputy Executive Officer Bhaskar, the chief priests, and Vedic scholars. Following the Poornahuti, the temple priests offered Vedic blessings and presented her with the temple's sacred Theertham and Prasadam.”“The programme was attended by Government Whip and Aler MLA Beerla Ilaiiah, Trust Board Member Lakshmi Narayana Naik, local public representatives, temple officials, Vedic scholars, and a large number of devotees.

Strengthen Prajapatham Programme: Aravind Kumar Goud

“OU July 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Telugu Desam Party (TDP) National Politburo Member M. Aravind Kumar Goud has called upon party leaders and cadre to work in coordination to make the “Prajapatham” programme a grand success across the Secunderabad Parliamentary Constituency.”“Tarnaka Division President Gandikota Vijay Kumar, Mettuguda Division President Tadaka Vinod Kumar, and senior leader Vikram Mudiraj paid a courtesy visit to



Aravind Kumar Goud at the NTR Trust Bhavan in Hyderabad.”“Speaking on the occasion, Aravind Kumar Goud said that all party leaders and workers should actively participate in the Prajapatham programme being conducted under the leadership of Secunderabad Parliamentary Convener Nallela Kishore. He urged them to work collectively and strengthen the party's outreach among the people.”“He further advised party leaders to identify public grievances at the grassroots level, bring them to the notice of the concerned authorities, and strive for their early resolution.

CPI Condemns Attack on Students in Delhi; Calls for Continuous Voter Registration Drive



"Khammam, July 23 Indian Chronicle:—"The Communist Party of India (CPI) has strongly condemned the attack on students in New Delhi, CPI Khammam City Secretary S.K. Jani Miya said during a party meeting held at the CPI office in Khammam under the chairmanship of Varada Narasimha Rao. "Addressing the gathering, Jani Miya stated that suppressing students' right to peacefully protest in a democratic country is highly unfortunate. He demanded that the government immediately stop actions aimed at silencing the voices of students. "Speaking on voter registration, he emphasized that ensuring voting rights for every eligible citizen is essential for strengthening democracy. He urged all young men and women who have attained the age of 18 to enroll themselves in the electoral rolls without delay. He also appealed to party workers and Booth Level Officers

(BLOs) to continue the voter registration campaign by visiting households and creating awareness until all eligible voters are enrolled."He said that the right to vote is a constitutional right of every citizen and encouraged youth to actively participate in the democratic process that shapes the country's future. Registering as a voter, he added, should be considered a social responsibility by every eligible young citizen."Jani Miya also called upon party members to make the one-day CPI Political Training Programme, scheduled for July 29, a grand success. He said the training would help participants gain a better understanding of the party's ideology, the history of people's movements, the current political situation, and public issues. He appealed to leaders, party workers, youth, and women from all city units to attend the programme in large numbers."During the meeting, party leaders and workers passed a resolution condemning the attack on students in Delhi. They resolved to work collectively to protect democratic values, safeguard the rights of youth, strengthen the voter registration campaign, and ensure the successful conduct of the party's political training programme."Among those present were District Executive Committee members B. G. Climate, Mohammed Salaam, Yanali Sambasiva Reddy, Enugu Gandhi, Pagadala Mallesh, Mekala Srinivas, Thati Nirmala, Boda Veeranna, and others.

CMRF Cheques Distributed to Beneficiaries in Khammam City People's Government Extends Support to Needy Families

Khammam, July 23 Indian Chronicle:—"A Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) cheque distribution programme was conducted in Khammam City 3-Town Area to provide financial assistance to poor and middle-class families facing medical emergencies and other hardships."The programme was organized following the directions of State Agriculture, Cooperation and Handlooms Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao. It commenced on Thursday morning at the residence of a beneficiary near the Srinivas Nagar canal in 17th Division and covered beneficiaries in the 27th, 28th, 29th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 35th, 46th, and 47th divisions."Among those who participated were District Library Chairman M.D. Khader Baba, Market Committee Chairman Erragarla Hanumantha Rao, DCC Khammam Corporation President Nagandla Deepak Chowdhary, former Khammam Mayor Punukollu Neeraja, Khammam Assembly A-Block Congress President, Khammam 3-Town Area Party Coordinator Yerram Balagangadhar Tilak, SIR Khammam Constituency In-charge Kamartha Murali, along with several Congress leaders and local representatives."The leaders personally visited the homes of beneficiaries and handed over the CMRF cheques. They stated that the government is committed to providing timely financial assistance to poor families affected by illness, accidents, and other emergencies."They said the Congress government led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is prioritizing public welfare and is committed to ensuring



that eligible beneficiaries receive welfare benefits without delay. They urged recipients to make good use of the financial assistance."The leaders also highlighted that Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao has been working continuously to address public issues and improve infrastructure and welfare services across the district."Former corporators, division presidents, Congress office-bearers, local leaders, public representatives, officials from various departments, and a large number of beneficiaries attended the programme. The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to the State Government and Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao for the financial support.

TJA Should Lead the Fight for Journalists' Issues: Thumburi Dayakar Reddy



- Telangana Journalists Association (TJA) celebrates its annual day grandly in Khammam"- Cake-cutting ceremony held at Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy's camp office"- Fruits distributed at hospital and old-age home as part of social service activities""Khammam July 23 Indian Chronicle:—"Thumburi Dayakar Reddy, Camp Office In-charge of Telangana Revenue, Housing, and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, said that the Telangana Journalists Association (TJA) should continue to play a leading role in bringing journalists' issues to the government's attention and ensuring their resolution."He was the chief guest at the TJA Annual Day celebrations held at the Minister's camp office in Khammam under the leadership of TJA District President G. Nagaswamy, where he inaugurated the celebrations by cutting a cake."Speaking on the occasion, Dayakar Reddy praised journalists for their

tireless efforts in highlighting public issues and working for the welfare of society. He stated that the government would always stand by the media fraternity, which serves as the fourth pillar of democracy, and appreciated TJA's initiatives for the welfare of working journalists."Grand Celebrations at Various Locations"Cake-Cutting at SBI College"The TJA also celebrated its annual day at SBI College in Khammam. The event was led by College Chairman R.J.C. Krishna, who cut a cake in the presence of journalists and extended his greetings."Addressing the gathering, Krishna described journalists as guides for society and appreciated TJA's continuous efforts to protect journalists' rights, promote their welfare, and resolve professional issues. He urged the association to take an even more active role in presenting journalists' concerns to the government."Fruit Distribution at Government Hospital"As part of the celebrations, TJA members distributed fruits to patients at the Khammam Government General Hospital. Hospital authorities appreciated the humanitarian gesture and commended the association for caring for patients."Service at Old-Age Home"TJA members also visited the Jesus Old-Age Home in Pandurangapuram, where they distributed fruits to elderly residents. Celebrating the association's anniversary with the inmates and sharing moments of care and compassion was widely appreciated."Participants"The programme was attended by TJA District President and Accreditation Committee Member G. Nagaswamy, district leaders Mati Ramakrishna (Vijaya Kranthi), Sayankalam Rambabu, Manikumar, Syed Khaseem (Akshitha Daily), Vasam Rajendra Prasad (Crime Mirror), Thallapalli Ashok (Yuva Galam), Sampath (Sanchalana Vartha), Domala Kiran, Chinni, Pagidipalli Ravi Kiran, Bodabathla Satish, Ganji Brahmam, Pamarthi Nageswara Rao, Malle Boyina Lakshman, and several others."District and city leaders of the Telangana Journalists Association, senior print and electronic media journalists, photographers, cameramen, and representatives of various public organizations participated in large numbers, making the celebrations a grand success.



Krishna Goud, Shekhar, Somanna Goud, Kumar Mudiraj, Srinivas Chary, Shakeel, Sai, and several other BRS leaders and party workers.

Congress Holds Peaceful Protest Rally Condemning Rahul Gandhi's Arrest



--DCC President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav and Kotha Kishore Goud Participate in Protest""BODUPPAL JULY 23(INDIAN CHRONICAL): A peaceful protest rally was organized by the Congress Party's Boduppall Circle Committee of the Malkajigiri Municipal Corporation to condemn the arrest of senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders. The rally commenced from Boduppall Kaman on the Warangal Highway and proceeded up to Medipally. The protest was attended by Medchal-Malkajigiri District Congress Committee (DCC) President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav, Medchal District B-Block General Secre-

tary Kotha Kishore Goud, and several Congress leaders from the Boduppall Circle. Speaking on the occasion, Kotha Kishore Goud alleged that the arrest and harassment of opposition leaders were against the spirit of democracy. He further demanded that Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan take responsibility for the alleged NEET examination paper leak issue. He stated that the Congress Party would continue its fight to safeguard the constitutional values and protect the democratic rights of the people."The rally witnessed the participation of Boduppall, Chengicherla, Medipally, and Peerzadiguda Division Presidents Bommaku Kalyan, Pogula Dileep Reddy, Bandi Sriramulu Goud, and Thungathurthi Ravi. Former Boduppall Mayor Thotakura Ajay Yadav, former District Library Chairman Darga Dayakar Reddy, former Boduppall Congress Presidents Pogula Narasimha Reddy and Prabhakar Reddy, DCC Secretary Enugu Jalandhar Reddy, District Youth Congress President Bommaku Ajay, Constituency Youth Congress President Thotakura Rahul Yadav, former corporators, leaders of the Youth Congress, Mahila Congress, office-bearers of affiliated organizations, former public representatives, party leaders, and a large number of Congress workers also participated in the protest rally.

Congress Leader Inspects SIR Camp, Appreciates Successful Implementation

"Indian Chronicle, Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, July 23: Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) OBC State Vice President Saddam Hussain visited the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) camp being conducted in Ward No. 13 of Kagaznagar, following the directions of Minister Azhar Uddin."During his visit, he reviewed the SIR camp, which has been running continuously for the past 25 days under the leadership of Councillor Syed Anwar Sabri, and appreciated the overwhelming response from the public."Speaking on the occasion, Saddam Hussain said that, in accordance with the directions of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the SIR programme should be implemented effectively in every ward across Telangana. He commended Councillor Syed Anwar Sabri for successfully conducting the initiative and appreciated the efforts of the volunteers, including Sadiq and Mohammed Adil, as well as the Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and municipal staff for their dedicated service."Councillor Syed Anwar Sabri said



that nearly 90 per cent of the SIR process had been completed in Ward No. 13. He thanked residents for their cooperation and expressed special gratitude to the Municipal Commissioner and MLC Dande Vittal for their support in ensuring the smooth implementation of the programme.

Youth Congress Erupts in Protest Over Alleged Lathi-Charge on Students



"Protest Against BJP Government Held at Pocharam"Effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Burnt"Leaders Condemn Use of Force Against Students""BODUPPAL , July 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Protesting against the alleged police lathi-charge on students, the Telangana Youth Congress staged a demonstration at Jodimetla in Pocharam on Thursday. Acting on the directions of Telangana Youth Congress President Jakkidi

Shivacharan Reddy, Medchal Constituency Youth Congress President Thotakura Rahul Yadav led the protest, during which effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan were burnt."Speaking on the occasion, Rahul Yadav strongly condemned the police action against students, alleging that the use of lathi-charge and water cannons was unjustified. He also criticized the arrest of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, stating that his detention while expressing solidarity with students reflected the authoritarian attitude of the Central Government."He said that instead of addressing the concerns of students, the government had resorted to the use of force against them, which he described as being against the spirit of democracy."Among those who participated in the protest were Telangana Youth Congress State General Secretary Chandrika, Aiju, Medchal-Malkajigiri District Youth Congress President Bommak Ajay, District General Secretary Kranthi Goud, Pocharam Division President Yugender Reddy, leader Vinod Modi, Medipally Mandal President Chillumula Ajay Reddy, Shravan Reddy, Sanjeev, Akhilesh, Vinay Matla, Sai Goud, Ravi Teja, along with a large number of Youth Congress leaders and party workers.

Courier Boy Attacked After Giving Lift; Case Registered, Hunt On for Accused

"MEDIPALLY , JULY 23 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): A courier delivery executive was allegedly attacked with a sharp object by a man who had sought a lift on his motorcycle in the Medipally police station limits. Based on the victim's complaint, the police have registered a case and launched a search for the accused."According to the police, Maddikuntla Suresh (20), a resident of Devender Nagar in Boduppall, works as a courier delivery executive. On the evening of July 21, at around 5:00 p.m., while he was on his way to work, a man identified as Ellesh, who had previously lived in the same locality, stopped him near RNS Colony and requested a lift, stating that he needed to collect a motorcycle from a friend."After travelling about 1.5 kilometres, Ellesh asked Suresh to stop the bike in a secluded area and told him to wait for a while. Nearly 15 min-

utes passed, but no one arrived. When Suresh said he was getting late for work and decided to leave, Ellesh allegedly took Suresh's mobile phone, spoke to an unidentified person, and insisted that he accompany him to another location."When Suresh refused, Ellesh allegedly attacked him with a sharp object, causing injuries near his ribs and on his left hand."Despite the attack, Suresh managed to escape with his mobile phone and later lodged a complaint at the Medipally Police Station at around 10:00 p.m. on July 22."Based on the complaint, Medipally Sub-Inspector J. Tirupathi registered a case against the accused, Ellesh, under Crime No. 1067/2026, invoking Sections 118(1) and 351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The investigation has been entrusted to SI P. Srinu."Police said the accused is currently absconding, and special teams have been formed to trace and apprehend him.

Strict vigilance should be maintained on the transportation, sale and use of narcotics and drugs

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Anurag Jayanthi""(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. July 23):- District Collector Anurag Jayanthi said that strict vigilance should be maintained on the transportation, sale and use of narcotics and drugs. A district-level meeting of the Narcotics Control Committee was held under the chairmanship of the Collector at the Mini Meeting Hall on Thursday. "Revenue Additional Collector Venka Reddy, Additional SP Lakshmi Narayana and district officials of the concerned departments participated. Speaking on this occasion, the Collector discussed the measures taken to control narcotics and directed the officials on the steps to be taken to prevent them. One case has been registered under the Excise Department and seven under the Police Department in the district, the officials explained to the Collector about the raids and cases of seized ganja. They suggested that an iron fist be put on the transportation and sale of drugs that are making the youth and students addicted to drugs. They said that a committee should be formed under the joint auspices of the Police, Excise and Transport Departments and work hard. They said that awareness programs should be organized on a wide scale



to sensitize the people about the ill effects of drug use. They instructed the Education Department officials to create awareness about drugs in all schools and colleges. They said that people in the villages should be made aware about narcotics. District Excise Superintendent Tukanyayak, concerned officials and others participated in this meeting.

Drums, drizzle, and ‘Jai Bhim’: The day ‘Sansad Chalo’ protest rocked Delhi



GNS News Agency, July 23

It was 11.48 in the morning on Monday, and the Rapid Action Force (RAF) and layers of police barricades were in place to separate a sea of around 12,000 protesters who gathered there or were heading from Jantar Mantar towards the Parliament as part of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led ‘Sansad Chalo’ march. As slogans like ‘police ko aage karta hai (Using the police as a shield)’ grew louder, one of the marchers said those on the Parliament side near the Niti Aayog building want the protesters on the other side, from Jantar Mantar, to be allowed to join them.

Among this massive crowd was 27-year-old IT professional Nitesh Verma from Jaipur. When asked about the reason behind his joining the march, he said: “Government not ready to talk about the state of education... and accountability needs to be set.” He, along with two others from the same office as his, had arrived at 4 am to take part in the march. “We will wait and are ready to stay back to join the protest if it spills over into the second day,” Verma added.

Not only Verma and his colleagues, but many others like them travelled to Delhi from various parts of India — all bound by one cause: reform in the education system. When the crowds took to the streets on a rain-soaked Monday morning, it was no longer a Gen Z protest — people from different walks of life across age groups had joined in to support CJP and activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is on an

indefinite hunger strike, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak. On Sunday, Wangchuk, however, agreed to end his fast after the Parliament march only if the Centre accepts responsibility for the scandal, and the MPs assure him (and the CJP) that the matter will be raised in the Parliament monsoon session that commenced on Monday.Monday’s rally saw middle-aged men and women, including parents, aggrieved, yet unfettered by the blockade by the police, walk in solidarity towards the CJP’s cause. Standing behind the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel statue at Patel Chowk in Sansad Marg was a group of women who had travelled from Jhajjar in Haryana in the morning to extend support to the CJP-led movement. “We are for our kids’ future, and are ready to wait for how long it takes,” they said.

However, youngsters formed a substantial chunk. They made sure they were both heard and seen. Among many, one held a placard that read: ‘Tax do, chanda do, aur failed education system ki baat par chup raho (Pay taxes, pay donations, yet don’t talk about a failed corruption system.)’The march faced multiple hindrances as the police blocked them at several intersections since morning. As the day advanced, the crowd swelled, and so did the rain. At some point, the protesters clashed with the police, and tear gas shells were fired. One of the protesters said the authorities were trying to wear out the protesters who have been sequestered in different parts between Jantar Mantar and Parliament, divided by rows of barricades. Double barricades were put up on either side of roads abutting government buildings. Multiple rows of Delhi police and a few riot control vehicles lined up on the street.At a point, a few people with placards seeking full statehood for Jammu and Kashmir, too, could be seen near the Central Bank of India, Jeevan Bima Nigam. Their voices chanting ‘Haq hamara statehood, chheen ke lenge apna haq’ (Statehood is our right, will snatch our right) only fizzle out soon, as drumbeats grew louder along with the rallying cries supporting the core cause of the CJP protest that completed one month on Monday.

CJP protest row: Mumbai Police book Shivaji Park organisers for unlawful assembly

GNS News Agency, July 23

The Mumbai Police has registered an FIR against the organisers of the protest held at Shivaji Park in Mumbai held on Sunday for ‘unlawful assembly’ as, it said, no permission was granted to carry out the demonstration which also saw participation of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray.A senior officer said, “While the protest was carried out at Shivaji Park, no permission had been granted for the same. In spite of that, since they went ahead with it, an FIR has been registered against the organisers of the protest.”

While the police have moved to register an FIR against the Shivaji Park protest organisers, a similar protest which was planned at Chaityabhoomi in Dadar on Monday, July 20, too has been denied permission.The police have also warned the Chaityabhoomi protest organisers against holding the demonstration on the grounds, saying an FIR would be registered against them too.Shivaji Park protest: Hundreds gathered, war cry sounded

Hundreds gathered at the Shivaji Park ground in central Mumbai on Sunday, July 19, over Sonam Wangchuk’s transfer to Safdarjung Hospital from the Jantar Mantar protest site. Uddhav Thackeray, who also joined the protest, called for a bigger agitation against the Centre.Earlier, the Mumbai Police had registered two FIRs in connection with



the protests that were carried out in south Mumbai on Saturday in support of Sonam Wangchuk.The first FIR was registered at the Marine Drive police station against the NCP (Sharad Pawar) faction party workers for protesting near Mantralaya, and the second against left party organisations for protesting near the Press Club. The seven people booked include Sudhir Dhawale, an accused in the Elgar Parishad case who received bail last year.The accused in both cases were booked on charges of disobedience to an order issued by a public servant, wrongful restraint, unlawful assembly among other charges. The accused in both cases were issued notices and allowed to go.

Death toll in Ahmedabad firecracker factory blast rises to 10



GNS News Agency, July 23

Ahmedabad fireworks factory blast, Ahmedabad blast death toll, Ramol fireworks factory explosion, illegal fireworks factory Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, Gujarat explosion news, fireworks factory accident, Ahmedabad latest news, burn victims Ahmedabad, Gujarat crime newsThe three owners of the factory have been booked for culpable homicide not amounting to murder at the Ramol Police Station and were arrested.A 48-year-old man undergoing treatment for severe burn injuries sustained

in the July 18 explosion at an illegal fireworks factory in Ahmedabad’s Ramol area died early Monday, taking the death toll in the accident to 10.

Govind Damor, whose time of death was recorded as 2.15 am, was among the four men and one woman who were under treatment at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital after the accident.Dr Rakesh Joshi, Medical Superintendent, Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, said Damor had over 95 per cent burns on his body and had been in critical condition in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) since being admitted Saturday afternoon.Of the four survivors still admitted at the hospital, Payal Ajay Damor, who has over 75 per cent burns, remains in critical condition in the ICU, said Dr Joshi.Of the three men, two have burn injuries, and one has a smoke inhalation injury. The man with more than 40 per cent burns received skin grafts over 28 per cent of his body, and the other injured, who has 20 per cent burns, received 15 per cent grafts, with donated skin.A massive explosion ripped through New Gujarat Fireworks on the Ramol-Gatrad road in Ahmedabad, killing nine, including three children, at 3.30 pm on July 18. The three owners of the factory, Mehul Bhailal Dodiya, his mother Ramila Dodiya, and partner Sadiq Saiyyed, were booked for culpable homicide not amounting to murder at the Ramol Police Station and arrested.

Pradhan meets Shah as CJP’s ‘Chalo Sansad’ protest rocks Delhi

GNS News Agency, July 23

New Delhi: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday, as thousands tried to march to Parliament as part of the Cockroach Janta Party’s (CJP) protest call to demand the former’s resignation over alleged examination irregularities.Officials said Pradhan met Shah at his office in the Parliament House complex. It was not immediately known what transpired in the meeting. The CJP, led by its founder Abhijeet Dipke, has been protesting at Jantar Mantar since June 20, demanding Pradhan’s resignation over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination, reforms in the examination system and justice for the affected students.

The outfit had given the call for the “Chalo Sansad” march on Monday, the opening day of Parliament’s Monsoon session. Thousands converged at Jantar Mantar on Monday morning and tried to march towards Parliament, pushing through barricades and braving police batons and tear gas.Security has been tightened across New Delhi dis-



trict, with additional companies of paramilitary forces and police personnel from adjoining districts deployed to maintain law and order. The CJP said earlier in the day that the government had reached out to them for talks and two of its spokespersons would meet Union minister J P Nadda.

Sanjay Raut dares PM Modi ahead of Bill introduction: ‘Recite Vande Mataram without teleprompter’



Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) MP Sanjay Raut has dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to recite Vande Mataram without using a teleprompter, as he attacked the Central government over its proposed amendment to Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act to make obstruction or insult to the national song a criminal offence.Speaking outside Parliament, Sanjay Raut said, “I challenge Prime Minister Modi and Amit Shah to recite Vande Mataram without a teleprompter.”Sanjay Raut’s remarks challenging PM Modi and Amit Shah came as the Union Home Minister is set to introduce the Prevention of Insults to National Honour

(Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Rajya Sabha on the opening day of the Monsoon Session.

What does the Bill propose?

The Bill seeks to place Vande Mataram on par with the national anthem, Jana Gana Mana, by extending it the same statutory protection under the 1971 Act. It is listed for introduction on the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament.If passed, intentionally preventing the singing of Vande Mataram or causing a disturbance to an assembly singing the national song, would become a criminal offence. Obstruction or insult to Vande Mataram would be punishable with up to three years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both.

Sanjay Raut supports CJP protest: ‘Thought they could finish us like insects’Sanjay Raut also extended support to the ongoing agitation led by activist Sonam Wangchuk and the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) in Delhi’s Jantar Mantar, claiming the government had underestimated the scale of the protests.Speaking on the proposed ‘Sansad March’, Raut alleged that the government had underestimated the scale of the movement.“They did not understand what was going to happen, what is happening, and what is going to happen next. They thought they could finish us off like insects. But no, this ‘Cockroach Janta Party’ has turned up at Jantar Mantar in the thousands and lakhs. Across the country, in major cities, this movement is receiving support,” he said.

Bengali must for all government work from September: CM Suwendu Adhikari

GNS News Agency, July 23

CM Adhikari informed the Assembly that Bengali will be the primary medium for all state government communications, and all internal official correspondence must be written and exchanged in the language. He added that official correspondence directed to the Central Government will be maintained in both Bengali and Hindi.The Chief Minister made public a letter sent to him on Sunday by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, wherein the Centre emphasised the importance of the Bengali language. In the letter, Shah advised that Bengali should be accorded greater prominence and recommended its active deployment in administrative and official frameworks. Shah stressed the importance of increasing the use of Hindi for interstate administrative channels between the Central and state governments.

CM Adhikari said, “This decision has been taken to strengthen further the use of the Bengali language in the state’s official system.” According to Adhikari, special emphasis will be placed on standardising official communication in Bengali across all state government departments, autonomous agencies, and administrative tiers.Report on 1993 police firing

Stepping up his political offensive against the Opposition just a day before the annual Martyrs’ Day rally on July 21, CM Adhikari also announced that he will release the long-awaited full report of the July 21 Commission on Mon-



day evening.The inquiry commission was originally constituted when Mamata Banerjee first assumed office as Chief Minister in 2011 to investigate the Kolkata police firing on July 21, 1993, that killed 13 youth Congress workers during a protest against the Left Front government. The Commission submitted its final report in December 2014, concluding that no senior leaders of the Left Front or police officers were responsible for the deaths.The incident and the Commission’s findings have recently come back into the spotlight as a significant political issue. BJP leaders and dissenting members of the Trinamool Congress have criticised the previous administration under Mamata Banerjee for allegedly failing to release the full report. They are calling for a new investigation into the incident.

Gujarat rape-murder accused shot dead in police ‘encounter’ after bid to escape

GNS News Agency, July 23

Gujarat child murder case, Anand child murder, Gujarat police encounter, Vasad railway station case, Gujarat rape and murder case, Anand police news, child abduction Gujarat, Gujarat crime news, Vasad station incident, latest Gujarat newsAccording to the Vasad police, the accused asked the driver to stop the vehicle, saying he was feeling unwell.

A man arrested for the alleged abduction and murder of a four-year-old girl from the railway station at Vasad in Gujarat’s Anand district was shot dead in an alleged encounter Monday morning after he allegedly tried to escape from police custody.The accused, 25, was shot after he allegedly assaulted two constables with a knife while being taken from Borsad, where he was apprehended, to Anand.According to the police, he asked the driver to stop the vehicle, saying he was feeling unwell. When the vehicle stopped, he allegedly suddenly attacked the constables with a knife, leaving both injured.

As the situation escalated, the police repeatedly warned him to surrender, but he allegedly continued the assault. A senior police officer told The Indian Express that the firing was “necessitated by the accused’s attack on the policemen escorting him and was an act of self-defence.”The officer said he was hit with two bullets and was rushed to Shri Krishna Medical Hospital in Karamsad, where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment.His body has been

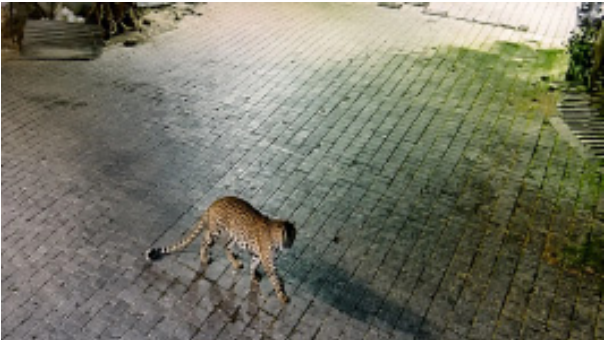


sent for a post-mortem, while legal formalities are underway.The accused was arrested on June 19, hours after the police traced him through CCTV footage at the Vasad Railway Station, which allegedly showed him taking the girl away.She disappeared from Platform No 1 at around 9.15 pm on July 18, and her body was found the following morning, about 200 metres at the end of the platform on the railway tracks.The police suspect that the child was sexually assaulted before being killed, with her body allegedly thrown onto the tracks in an attempt to destroy evidence.Her clothes were recovered separately from the scene, prompting the police to register a preliminary case of rape and murder while awaiting the findings of the post-mortem examination and forensic analysis.

Leopard spotted inside Ahmedabad housing society, rescue operation underway

Panic struck a residential neighbourhood in the Ghuma area of Ahmedabad early Monday morning after a leopard was spotted roaming inside a housing society. Following the sighting of the big cat, emergency teams from the Gujarat forest department and Kankaria Zoo rushed to the spot to launch a massive rescue and capture operation.Confirming the development, Ahmedabad Mayor Hitesh Barot said the sighting occurred at Sharandeep Society in Ghuma at the dead end of VIP Road.Speaking with The Indian Express, Barot said, “The leopard sneaked into the society late in the night. A girl from the society saw the leopard around 1 pm. After that, all the members of the society gathered. And eventually, the leopard was spotted in the CCTV of the society at around 2.45 pm.”“A team each from Kankaria Zoo and the state forest department rushed to the spot to carry out the search and rescue operation,” Barot added. “The leopard was recently sighted near House No. 20 of the society. The operation to safely trap and relocate it is currently underway and should be completed shortly.”The mayor confirmed that no injuries to residents or domestic animals have been reported so far.

Ghuma is a rapidly developing residential hub of southwestern Ahmedabad adjacent to the Sanand town of Ahmedabad district which is emerging as auto and semi-



conductor hub of Gujarat.Rise in human-leopard conflictsThe sighting of the big cat comes at a time when instances of human-leopard conflict are increasing in Gujarat.In April, a man from a village in Chhota Udepur district wrestled a leopard with his bare hands, forcing open its jaws, and rescuing his four-year-old daughter from death.In January, a four-year-old girl was attacked by a leopard near her house in Dang district’s Daher village, and she died during treatment at the Valsad Civil Hospital later.In February, The Indian Express covered the issue of leopards on the prowl in detail, talking to several experts

India, Maldives sign MoUs to set up fitness centres on 42 islands



GNS News Agency, July 23

Male: India and the Maldives have signed agreements under which New Delhi will provide equipment support for fitness and recreation centres in 42 islands, further expanding bilateral development cooperation, according to the Maldives' foreign ministry. The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed on Sunday by Maldivian Foreign Minister Iruthisham Adam, Indian High Commissioner G Balasubramanian and Maldives' Youth Empowerment, Sports and Fitness Minister Abdulla Rafiu at a ceremony in Male, the ministry said in a press statement.

The agreements are aimed at improving access to fit-

ness facilities across island communities, with a special focus on women, girls and youth, while promoting healthier lifestyles and community well-being, it said. The project is part of India's grant assistance under the High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP), whose total outlay has been enhanced over the years to MVR 355 million (USD 22.9 million), it said.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Maldivian foreign minister said the initiative represented "a meaningful investment in the health and well-being of island communities" and would contribute to women's empowerment, equality and social inclusion. She also thanked India's government and its people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for their continued support in strengthening bilateral ties. Launched in 2019, the HICDP supports community-driven projects implemented by local councils and institutions across the Maldives. As many as 56 projects have been approved under the scheme across the Maldives, of which 24 have been completed and inaugurated. India has been one of the Maldives' principal development partners, supporting projects across healthcare, housing, transport, connectivity, education and infrastructure. Major Indian-assisted initiatives include the Greater Male Connectivity Project, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, the National College for Police and Law Enforcement, water and sanitation projects, airport redevelopment, and the construction of 4,000 social housing units.

Congo reports 930 Ebola deaths amid worsening outbreak



Bunia (Congo): At least 930 people have died in Congo's Ebola outbreak, the country's Ministry of Health said Monday, with 37 new deaths recorded in a 24-hour span Friday into Saturday, one of the highest totals. The deaths were recorded out of the 2,344 cases confirmed as of Saturday, the health ministry said. The Ebola outbreak that was declared in eastern Congo on May 15 is the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak on record. The Bundibugyo virus responsible for the outbreak is less common than others that cause Ebola disease, and there is no approved vaccine or treatment.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be transmitted to people from wild animals. It spreads in the human population through contact with bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen, and with contaminated surfaces and materials such as bedding and clothing. The disease is rare but severe and often fatal. The surge in deaths comes as safety fears have restricted the response in the worst-affected province of Ituri. A total of five provinces have been affected, all in the eastern region where rebel violence is rampant.

At least 12 attacks – mostly fuelled by scepticism and rumours – have been recorded against health facilities and teams since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, authorities said Saturday. Many health workers meanwhile have walked off their jobs as they protest lack of payment. At least 36 health workers infected with the virus have died. The World Health Organization last week expressed concerns that 80 per cent of new Ebola cases were emerging from unknown chains of transmission, a sign the outbreak is spreading faster than health officials can track despite an expanding response. Congo's Health Ministry said in its latest update that 724 patients are currently in isolation and in hospitals, and that it is intensifying response efforts in affected health zones. "Patient care and support capacities are consolidating, with 22 new recoveries recorded in 24 hours," the ministry said.

US student visa rule may disrupt degrees

GNS News Agency, July 23

Washington: A new four-year limit on F-1 and J-1 visas could push international students out of the United States midway through their degrees or research, an Indian diaspora policy group has warned. The Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) urged elected officials and US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to halt the immediate implementation of the Department of Homeland Security rule. According to FIIDS, the measure was finalised on July 16-17 and is set to take effect in mid-September. The organisation said the rule ends the decades-old "duration of status" policy and imposes a maximum stay of four years. It also counts Optional Practical Training and STEM OPT towards that limit.

The rule cuts the grace period after completion of studies from 60 days to 30 days and requires students to obtain USCIS approval through Form I-539 for any extension, FIIDS said. "This is a self-inflicted wound on US competitiveness," said Khanderao Kand, chief of policy and strategy at FIIDS. "A 4-year cap misaligns with how modern degrees actually work—median time to a bachelor's is about 52 months and to a PhD about 5.7 years—while USCIS is already sitting on more than 11 million cases with roughly year-long processing times." "Students will be forced out mid-program or mid-research, labs will lose critical talent, and America will hand its innovation pipeline to competitors," he said.

FIIDS said many research-intensive programmes, particularly doctoral courses and medical training, routinely extend beyond four years. J-1 research scholars and physicians also often require between five and seven years to complete their programmes, it said. Uncertainty surrounding extensions could disrupt laboratories, delay graduations and destabilise faculty recruitment plans tied to international



talent, the group warned. "Delay implementation, protect students, and safeguard U.S. research and innovation," Kand said. "If the goal is integrity, do it without blowing up degree pathways that power American labs and startups." In a statement, FIIDS called on Congress to restore duration-of-status protection for F-1 and J-1 visa holders. It also proposed statutory exemptions for graduate and STEM programmes whose median completion periods exceed 48 months, subject to a 64-month limit with automatic extensions.

The group asked USCIS and the Department of Homeland Security to provide administrative relief before the rule takes effect. Its proposals include automatic extensions for students in good standing, exclusion of OPT and STEM OPT from the four-year calculation, faster processing of Form I-539 applications and restoration of the 60-day grace period. FIIDS said new international enrolments fell 17 per cent in autumn 2025, the steepest drop since the pandemic. It estimated that the decline resulted in more than \$1.1 billion in lost revenue and nearly 23,000 fewer jobs.

US Secretary of State Rubio travels to Philippines for ASEAN, Quad meetings

GNS News Agency, July 23

Washington: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has left for the Philippines for ASEAN meetings, where he will also hold discussions with ministers from the Quad group.

The last Quad ministerial meeting was held in New Delhi in May and was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Rubio. Rubio departed for Manila from the Joint Base Andrews in Maryland near here on Sunday evening. "Looking forward to joining @SecRubio this week in the Philippines for our second Ministerial Quad meeting of the year. The United States is committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific, our Quad partners are essential," US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said.

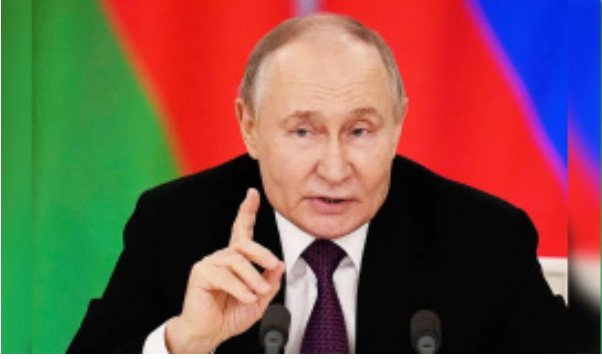
Last week, State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said Rubio will travel to Manila from July 19-23 to attend the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and the ASEAN Regional Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The Secretary of State will also meet with senior government officials from Indo-Pacific countries, he said. Rubio's visit advances a clear US priority: a free and open Indo-Pacific that delivers safety, security, and prosperity for the region



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio travelled to the Philippines for ASEAN meetings and the Quad ministerial, focusing on Indo-Pacific security and partnerships. The visit aims to strengthen US ties with ASEAN nations and deepen cooperation with Quad allies India, Japan and Australia

and for the American people, Pigott said. "Secretary Rubio will use this trip to demonstrate the tangible results of the US-ASEAN partnership and to deepen the United States' comprehensive partnership with the Philippines," the State Department spokesman said

Russian President Putin meets with North Korean foreign minister in latest high-level diplomacy



Seoul: Russian President Vladimir Putin met with North Korea's foreign minister and thanked Pyongyang for supporting his war against Ukraine, in the latest high-level diplomacy between the countries, Russian state media reported. The visit by North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui comes without an obvious occasion, such as a multilateral diplomatic event or state anniversary, and has raised speculation that she may be coordinating a possible visit to Russia by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. North Korean state media said Choe departed for Russia on Saturday at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov but has yet to comment on the purpose of her visit.

Yoon Min Ho, spokesperson for South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles affairs related to North Korea, said Monday that Seoul was closely monitoring the meetings but declined to assess whether Moscow and Pyongyang were discussing another summit between their leaders. Russia's Tass news agency said Putin during his meeting with Choe at the Kremlin on Sunday praised the

countries' bilateral relations and reiterated his "gratitude to the North Korean leadership and people" for supporting his military operations against Ukraine. Choe told Putin that Kim remains committed to the "comprehensive development" of relations with Russia, Tass said.

Kim travelled to Russia's Far East for summits with Putin in 2019 and 2023. Putin invited Kim to visit Russia again during their summit in Pyongyang in June 2024, where the leaders signed a strategic partnership agreement pledging mutual aid if either country faces aggression. Kim in recent years has made Russia the priority of his foreign policy, sending thousands of troops and huge supplies of weapons to support Putin's war in Ukraine, possibly in exchange for economic aid and technology transfers that some experts say are helping advance North Korea's military capabilities. Kim has also been seeking stronger ties with China, including hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping for a June summit in Pyongyang, as he embraces the idea of a "new Cold War" and projecting Pyongyang as part of a united front against Washington. Choe's visit to Moscow came shortly after North Korea and China exchanged high-level visits, with North Korean Cabinet premier, Pak Thae Song, Kim's top economic official, meeting Xi in Beijing and Wang Huning, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's powerful Politburo Standing Committee, visiting Kim in Pyongyang this month. Kim has suspended all meaningful dialogue with the United States and South Korea since the collapse of his nuclear diplomacy with U.S. President Donald Trump in 2019. He has used Russia's war on Ukraine as a distraction to accelerate the advancement of his nuclear weapons and missile program, while demanding that Washington abandon its calls for North Korea's nuclear disarmament as a precondition for talks.

Andy Burnham will become UK prime minister after a meeting with King Charles III

GNS News Agency, July 23

London: The moment for Andy Burnham has finally come. After weeks as UK prime minister-in-waiting, Burnham will take office on Monday, succeeding the departing Keir Starmer, and Britain's political turbulence will give way, at least temporarily, to smooth choreography. Burnham will become the seventh UK prime minister since 2016 in a now well-rehearsed handover after replacing Starmer as leader of the centre-left governing Labour Party on Friday.

A spokesperson said Burnham will say in his first speech as prime minister he's "acutely aware" of how many changes of leader the country has been through in the past decade, and will pledge to restore stability. Starmer said much the same when he took office two years ago. Last month he announced he would resign after missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with his party and the public. Burnham was the only candidate in a contest to become the party's new leader, securing nominations from 379 of the 403 Labour lawmakers in the House of Commons.

On Monday morning Starmer will travel the mile from Downing Street to Buckingham Palace to formally tell King Charles III that he's resigning. Soon after, Burnham will go to the palace and Charles will ask him to form a government. He will officially become prime minister in a ceremony known as "kissing hands." The king's role harkens back to a time when the monarch exercised supreme power and chose a prime minister to run the government. Today, the king has no political power, but the monarch still officially offers the job to the leader of the party that can command a majority in the House of Commons. No hand-kissing is involved. Britain's parliamentary democracy allows governing parties to change leaders, and thus prime ministers, without the need for a general election. The next national poll doesn't have to be held until 2029, though Burnham can call one sooner if he wants.

Burnham will head from the palace to Downing Street, where it's customary for new prime ministers to make a short speech outside the prime minister's residence. The former mayor of Greater Manchester has pledged to make politics "less toxic," improve living standards across the



country and "bring back the hope we have all been missing." "I will work to build a new politics," he said after becoming Labour leader on Friday. "The country is crying out for it." Critics and supporters alike will soon be clamouring for details of how Burnham plans to fulfill his pledges.

"Fundamentally, it only will work if you can generate significant economic growth, because it's the lack of growth that's really holding the country back," said Joshi Herrmann, who has followed Burnham's career as founder of Manchester news site The Mill. Attention will quickly turn to who Burnham will appoint to his Cabinet. He's expected to make changes to Starmer's top team, especially to the biggest jobs of Treasury chief, foreign secretary and home secretary. He said Friday that he hadn't made a final decision about who to install in his Cabinet. In his first speech as Labour leader, Burnham praised Starmer's achievements, saying he would "build on the foundation laid" by his predecessor. Starmer became Labour leader in 2020 after the party's worst-ever election loss, and led it to a landslide victory four years later. But he was soon defeated by the challenges of governing. At his final Prime Minister's Questions session in Parliament on Wednesday, Starmer defended his government's record on the international stage – especially its support for Ukraine – and its domestic policy achievements. He mentioned stronger protections for working people, a reduction in child poverty, a law designed to stop official cover-ups after tragedies, and higher defense spending.

Andy Burnham, 'King of the North', to become Britain's prime minister

LONDON, GNS News Agency, July 23- After enduring one of the worst moments of his career when he lost his second bid for the Labour leadership in 2015, Andy Burnham spoke of the pain of being "rejected by people you know" and left for Manchester to escape London politics. Just over a decade later, the man whose stint as Greater Manchester mayor saw him dubbed "the King of the North" has taken over as Labour leader unopposed and, next week, will become Britain's seventh prime minister in that period.

Get a look at the day ahead in European and global markets with the Morning Bid Europe newsletter. Sign up here. The defeat and self-imposed exile that appeared to end his chances of ever becoming prime minister instead helped propel him to the most powerful job in Britain. After being elected Labour leader on Friday, Burnham promised the biggest change in four decades to the way Britain was governed, arguing that centralised government in London had ignored the needs of local communities. "I will work to build a new politics. The country is crying out for it," Burnham said. "People are looking for us to deliver, and we will." Known for his easy-going manner and natural optimism, Burnham, 56, offers a marked contrast to the more restrained and stilted style of his predecessor, Keir Starmer.

Over nine years as Greater Manchester mayor, Burnham earned a reputation as a skilled communicator prepared to take on central government in pursuit of a better deal for his area of northwestern England. Burnham's pitch to his party is that he has the experience and vision to connect with voters and defeat the populist anti-immigration Reform UK party, led by veteran Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage, which has topped the opinion polls for months. One Labour lawmaker said Burnham's victory had transformed the mood among colleagues, convincing many that the party had finally found a leader capable of taking on — and defeating — Reform before the next national election in 2029. "It feels like the dark clouds that had been sitting over the party have been lifted," the lawmaker said, on condition of anonymity. "There is an element of hope again." Yet despite the enthusiasm surrounding Burnham, there is anxiety from some in his party about what his government will actually look like. In his only speech since

returning to parliament three weeks ago, Burnham said his main theme would be shifting power from central government towards regional leaders, something he called the "biggest rebalancing of power" in recent British history. That ambition sits alongside his belief in "business-friendly socialism", a philosophy that seeks to combine greater state control of essential services such as energy and transport with close cooperation between government and business. The approach has left investors unsure how much he will prioritise either state intervention or market forces.

Even senior ministers do not know what Burnham's cabinet team will look like, according to their aides, making it difficult to gauge his government's priorities. Those who worked with him in Manchester say this is the way Burnham likes to work: by listening, and testing ideas. "He would spend the day out and about talking to people rather than ... writing reports," said Rose Marley, a mayoral adviser in Manchester and the head of Co-operatives UK, a not-for-profit body that supports member-owned businesses. ROSE THROUGH RANKS UNDER TONY BLAIR AND GORDON BROWN Burnham was born in Liverpool, where his father worked as a telephone engineer and his mother as a receptionist. He graduated in English from Cambridge and then followed a familiar route into politics, working first as a researcher and then as an adviser in parliament. He first served as a junior minister under then-prime minister Tony Blair, and later as culture and then health minister under Blair's successor, Gordon Brown. He mounted his first unsuccessful bid for the Labour leadership in 2010, his second five years later. Some Labour critics accuse Burnham of repeatedly changing priorities during his career. In the last year, Burnham has criticised the government for "being in hock to the bond markets" with its fiscal conservatism. He has called for nationalisation of key industries and for Britain to rejoin the European Union. But in recent weeks, he has modified his message. He said his "bond markets" comment had been misrepresented; that the nation's finances were too constrained for large-scale nationalisations; and that Britain was not going to rejoin the EU any time soon. In 2022, after the last soccer World Cup, Starmer as opposition leader poked fun at Burnham,

Elusive peace



In an age marked by rapid technological progress and instant global communication, the world paradoxically appears more fragile than ever. The dream of peaceful coexistence — once considered humanity’s natural aspiration — now stands overshadowed by conflict, fear, and a disturbing decline in empathy. From rising intolerance to the spread of destructive technologies, the question looms large: will we ever return to a peaceful world? And most important, have we lost our concern for human lives?Never before have people been so interconnected. Yet beneath this digital closeness lies an emotional distance. Tragedies unfold before our eyes every day — wars, bombings, mass shootings, displacement, and suffering. This constant exposure has created a strange paradox: we see more, but we feel less. Compassion fatigue is real, and many find themselves desensitised by the overwhelming frequency of human tragedy. But beyond emotional numbness lies another growing crisis: the silent suffering of millions caught in poverty and hunger due to prolonged conflicts.

Entire communities across most continents are trapped in cycles of violence that destroy crops, disrupt supply chains, wipe out livelihoods, and force families into starvation. Children go to bed hungry, parents struggle to find clean water, and humanitarian aid becomes a lifeline that is often blocked, delayed, or politicised. Hunger — once a purely economic issue — has increasingly become a weapon of war.Darkest shadow

Among the many threats to global harmony, terrorism remains one of the most brutal and disruptive forces. Its impact goes far beyond immediate destruction. Terrorism thrives on fear. Unlike traditional warfare, it targets the most vulnerable — ordinary citizens going about their daily lives. Train stations, schools, markets, temples, airports — no place is immune. The randomness of these attacks creates a climate where safety feels like a distant luxury. The psychological impact is immense. Survivors battle trauma, families grapple with grief, and entire communities live under a cloud of anxiety. Children raised in conflict-hit regions grow up scarred, their innocence stolen by violence they do not understand. The social consequences are equally damaging. Terrorism intentionally fractures societies, creating suspicion between communities and widening religious and ethnic divides. Economically, nations bleed. Tourism collapses, industries suffer, and governments divert enor-

mous funds to security. Hard-earned freedoms — movement, privacy, expression — come under pressure as states tighten surveillance. In many parts of the world, terrorism forces millions from their homes, creating refugee crises that strain already fragile global resources. Displacement fuels poverty and hunger, turning once-thriving towns and villages into zones of scarcity.

Nuclear and biological warfareIf terrorism tears communities apart, nuclear and biological weapons threaten humanity at its core. A single nuclear explosion can flatten cities, destroy ecosystems, and leave a legacy of radiation that lasts for centuries. Even the possibility of nuclear confrontation keeps global tensions alive. Biological weapons are even more sinister. Invisible, contagious, and uncontrollable, they can spread across continents before they are detected. The COVID-19 pandemic showed how vulnerable the world is to microscopic threats; a deliberate biological attack could be unimaginably catastrophic. These weapons do not just kill — they destabilise societies, cripple economies, and push vulnerable populations deeper into hunger and poverty as supply chains collapse and governments struggle to cope.

Technology has entered the battlefield in ways once confined to science fiction. AI-guided smart weapons and autonomous drones can strike with precision, often without warning. While these devices claim to reduce “human error”, they also remove human conscience from the decision-making process. Warfare becomes easier to wage, less personal, and dangerously unrestrained. Cyberattacks can shut down hospitals, power grids, banking systems, and essential services without firing a single bullet, paralysing societies and often cutting off access to food, water, and life-saving medical care.Despite these dark realities, it would be unfair to conclude that humanity has lost its soul. In every crisis, acts of extraordinary courage and kindness emerge. Volunteers rush to disaster zones, strangers shelter refugees and Doctors work tirelessly in war-torn regions. Human compassion is not gone — it is simply overshadowed by the noise of violence. And yet, the world must acknowledge a harsh truth: the suffering of the poor, the hungry, and the displaced rarely receives the urgency it deserves. Their struggles are often reduced to statistics rather than treated as human tragedies.Peace is not a distant dream; it is a collective responsibility. A safer world demands global cooperation to control dangerous technologies; leadership that values life over power; investment in education that teaches empathy; policies that ensure food security and protect vulnerable communities; and societies that choose dialogue over division. Technology must be guided by ethics, not ambition. Nations must choose negotiation over aggression. Individuals must choose understanding over hate.History shows that humanity often finds its greatest strength in times of darkness. The desire for harmony, though shaken, remains alive in millions of hearts. Peace is not something we return to; it is something we must build anew. As long as compassion, courage, and hope endure — even quietly — the possibility of a peaceful world will never disappear.

How are students reshaping the politics in Bangladesh?

On August 5, 2024, the Sheikh Hasina government, which had ruled Bangladesh with an iron fist for nearly sixteen years, collapsed following the quota reform movement led by students and political parties. Over the course of the July-August uprising, a few incidents stand out.First, is the role of the private universities, which had largely stayed away from political movements till then. Second, is the part played by the ‘study circles’, formed three years before the collapse of the government to escape government surveillance. Third, is the prominence of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and its student cadres. Fourth is the disappearance of the Bangladesh Chhatra League — the student wing of Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League (AL) — a day prior to the students’ march to Dhaka.

Historically, students have been at the forefront of various political movements in Bangladesh. Be it the language movement that saw the students of the Dhaka University (DU) demand the recognition of Bangla as the national language, or the students handing over the flag of the independent Bangladesh to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman prior to the Liberation War of 1971, or the anti-Ershad movement of the 1990s, or the latest July revolution of 2024, students have played an important role in shaping the politics of the country.A remarkable factor of these protests has been the students’ capacity to transform their causes into broad-based movements. In the 2024 July -August uprising that ultimately overthrew Ms. Hasina, not only the teachers, but the parents of the students too became part of the movement. “It was impossible to keep the children at home. As they moved to the streets, the parents joined them,” a witness said. What began as a students’ movement effectively became a Chhatro-Janata (student-people) movement eventually. The 2024 protests also saw political actors and cadres play a significant role, organising and implementing the agenda of the students. This was evident from the fact that the students, who wanted a reversal of the quota system, were unwilling to renounce their protests even after the Supreme Court scrapped the High Court decision. It is likely that the Opposition political parties, which had a vested interest in removing Ms. Hasina, took the centrestage, effectively transforming the objectives of the original movement that focused on quota reforms.Also, Ms. Hasina’s government, that had conducted three flawed elections, lost touch with the ground. The dissatisfaction and discontent among the people were apparent as corruption had seeped into the system. Ruthless repression was unleashed by a politicised law-and-order machinery that saw its interests entrenched with the survival of the government.The Hasina government’s labelling of the students as razakars (a name used to refer to those who collaborated with the Pakistan Army in 1971) not only incensed them but also showed the government’s efforts at delegitimising the protesters’ demands. The students, however, turned the slogan to their advantage and made it a ‘counter-hegemonic’ line, managing to hijack the narrative-building from the hands of the government.Affluent students from private universities in Dhaka, who had earlier remained aloof during the quota reform movement, also joined the protests, changing the character of the movement. The protests were, as Bangladeshi academic Navine Murshid described, “organised mobilisations against the repressive state apparatus”.Organising the movement

Several study circles or Patho chakros were established by the students prior to the July upheaval to discuss the political, ideological and social issues confronting Bangladesh. These small groups included intellectuals with whom students could discuss issues that affected Bangladesh politics and share their thoughts on the way forward. One such group was also linked to author and Awami League critic Farhad Mazhar, whose ideas on revolution, especially his book Gono-Obhyuthan O Gother:

Bangladeshe Gonorajnoitik Dharar Bikash Proshongo, were discussed by the students.The formation of these groups was important given the political context. There had been no avenues for students to conduct their activities, share their thoughts or openly criticise the government, due to the draconian Digital Security Act, and a pervasive culture of fear.Groups such as the Bodhi Chakra, the Bhabo Boithak and the Gururab Adda etc. came into being as discussion forums for politics. These forums created unity among the students, breaching ideological barriers. As Sohul Ahmed, a Dhaka-based political analyst said, “the Shahbag group and the Shapla Chatter group, who stood at the extreme ends of two ideologies, came together in these study circles by bridging the political distance that existed between them since 2013”. The students, without creating a new organisation, took help from existing ones to put forward their ideas.Magazines such as Rashtro Chinta focused on political issues while Purbo Pakho and Ronoppa were cultural journals.Many artists also joined the protest. Not only did they draw posters but they also sang songs of the protests. Some of the participants included the Sangeet and the Anti-Oppression Artists’ Association, visual artist Debashis Chakraborty, artists Sayan and Mousumi, cartoonists Ahmed Kabir Kishore and Mehedi Haque, rapper Hannan, and the University Teachers Network. As the anti-quota movement mobilised, the students also tried to bring the Gen Z and the middle class into its fold. The turning point proved to be when the private university students and madrasa students, who have generally refrained from joining protests of the students at public universities, joined the ‘Students Against Discrimination’ movement.

The students who came together to demonstrate against Ms. Hasina included not just the ones belonging to the student-wings of political actors but also the regular students who were concerned about their jobs due to the quota system. Despite lacking ideological coherence, they stood united against the Awami League and the Chhatra League.

Political messaging through graffitiNot just the posters and placards carried by the students, but the walls of Dhaka too were used for political messaging, as the Hasina government controlled the media and shut down the Internet for eleven days. As the government and the Chhatra League’s repression intensified, the students, who had mobilised under the name ‘Students Against Discrimination’ (SAD), gave a call for online and offline graffiti on July 18. Ms. Murshid mentions that the Chika Mara (a form of graffiti made popular during the Language Movement of 1952 and the Liberation War of 1971) wall writings, which were deemed ‘vulgar’, were ‘replaced by endless walls of art’. She describes how this wall art now featured detailed Islamic calligraphy since the fall of Ms. Hasina. “What was called graffiti had become politicised in a different way: co-opted to demonstrate the ideals of a “new Bangladesh” after the “revolution” and repurposed to create a certain narrative. It was less about religious messaging and more of an expression of anger conveyed in a beautiful way.A rickshaw passes by graffiti depicting a rickshaw carrying a student’s body during a protest at the University of Dhaka area in Dhaka, Bangladesh, September 3, 2024.A rickshaw passes by graffiti depicting a rickshaw carrying a student’s body during a protest at the University of Dhaka area in Dhaka, Bangladesh, September 3, 2024. | Photo Credit: ReutersNo one knows why they were erased or who gave the instructions (though such graffiti have always given way to new ones). There was also a debate on what to be retained and erased from the walls. The use of inappropriate language in political sloganeering was removed as some argued that ‘profanities did not belong in areas where children and elderly parents could read them’.Some believed that the use of inappropriate language through ‘spray painted scrawls.

Bangladesh at a critical juncture



Bangladesh. A nation-state born out of the faultiness of a discriminatory political fabric woven by the Pakistani military and political establishment amid Cold War tensions never embodied real hope for political pundits closely observing its violent birth. Cramped with more than 70 million people deeply entrenched in poverty within a deltaic region vulnerable to environmental disasters, its blood-soaked political independence in 1971 raised more questions than answers. Would this war-torn polity survive and prosper? Could it evolve into the liberal democracy as many aspired? Or would it join the list of newly independent nation-states which remained perpetually drowned in political and social conflict metamorphosing into a failed state? It was a difficult academic inquiry with no solid analytical foundation to guide it.

Moreover, while one might be tempted to think that what has been collectively attained or lost over the past five decades was inevitable, it is certainly not the case. History has walked a very specific path for us to stand on the existing pedestal we occupy today, and there is nothing preordained about it. The present state that we experience is one of the many possibilities that this nation-state could have attained. Bangladesh could have easily become a contested land and a dysfunctional disputed polity between India and Pakistan if our war of independence had taken a few wrong turns. Furthermore, even if we had achieved our independence, there was no certainty that this fragile war-torn polity could emerge into a nation-state that would attain meaningful socio-economic transformation, despite many obvious political failures.Thus, Bangladesh’s chaotic developmental and political transformation and the critical juncture it has reached following the political transition on August 5, 2024 necessitate both an institutional and historical diagnosis to understand the forces at play, their evolution before and after independence, the political and economic choices that were made and their intended and unintended consequences. In effect, we need an approximate explanation of what went right and where things went wrong for us to comprehend the stakes for the country’s political and economic actors.

In this context, three key political and institutional issues require both reflection and scrutiny to gauge out a useful understanding of Bangladesh’s journey so far. These are: The Identity of the Post-Independence Political Class: Who assumed political leadership after 1971, and how did their social identity, ideological orientation, political incentives, and organisational structures shape state priorities and national narratives? The consolidation of political authority within a particular social class in the formative years significantly influenced the nature of political competition and the trajectory of institutional development.

The Character of the Inherited State Apparatus: What kind of bureaucratic and coercive institutions were inherited from the colonial and Pakistani eras? How did these structures mediate economic policymaking and basic service delivery concerning health and education in the early decades? The design, capacity, and ethos of the state machinery not only conditioned development outcomes but also reinforced certain path dependencies, particularly in resource distribution and governance modalities. The constitutional and political settlement: What were the foundational agreements, both formal and informal, that shaped the allocation of power, rights, and public resources across political and social actors? How did these arrangements evolve over time, and what implications did they have for democratic transitions, concentration of political power, political inclusivity, and institutional resilience? The political economy dynamics before and after Independence

The political, social and economic marginalisation that the Bengali population was subjected to in East Pakistan is a well-documented phenomenon in modern South Asian history. The political collusion between the military and bureaucratic establishment of West Pakistan with the Zaminadri class-dominated Muslim League party in East Pakistan meant that the disparities and discriminations that were experienced by the Bengali population, especially the middle class, were neither administratively recognised nor politically voiced. Yet, this ignorance was not universal. Academicians and political thinkers within East Pakistan started documenting this emerging phenomenon of how one nation hosted two unequal economies and how economic resources experienced substantial extraction and transfer from the Eastern to the Western wing, culminating in the economic impoverishment of the Bengali population.This also provided an economic basis for Bengali Nationalism that was increasingly championed by the newly formed middle-class-dominated political outfits such as the Awami League and the National Awami Party (NAP). Of course, the political climax was reached in 1970 when the military and political establishments of West Pakistan refused to respect the democratic verdict of the national election that gave the Bengali population a mandate to finally have serious decision-making authority, resulting in a painful civil war and ultimately political independence.

Consequently, in the aftermath of our political independence, three distinct forces were at play which intertwined to shape the political economy process guiding our developmental transformation.First, the violent independence movement not only dismantled Pakistan’s centralised authority but also delegitimised the traditional Zamindari class, which had largely clustered around the Muslim League and derived its standing from residual feudal norms embedded within the social fabric. In the aftermath, a new generation of non-elitist political actors emerged to define the post-independence polity, spanning both the Centre-Left and, in part, the Centre-Right spectrum. Unlike the landed aristocracy, this group was more socially rooted, drawing its legitimacy from popular mobilisation rather than inherited privilege. They also recognised early on that sustaining political credibility required a problem-solving orientation, one that prioritised the tangible improvement of people’s lives over symbolic or hereditary authority. This mindset fostered a willingness to engage in policy experimentation and to confront core developmental challenges, such as reducing infant mortality, expanding access to clean water and sanitation, promoting vaccination programs, universalizing schooling, and driving local-level development initiatives.Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world (less than 7%) — underscoring its fiscal weakness, which manifests in minimal public investment in critical sectors such as healthcare and education. Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world (less than 7%) — underscoring its fiscal weakness, which manifests in minimal public investment in critical sectors such as healthcare and education. | Photo Credit: AFP

Second, the weak and extractive state structure inherited by the newly independent Bangladesh offered limited scope and capacity for economic and political decision-makers to effectively address the pressing developmental problem. This weakness also gave traction to public policy experimentation and developmental solutions that were aligned with the growing neo-liberal prescription that the state should limit its role and provide more room and space for the private sector to drive growth and employment, while a growing NGO ecosystem focused on poverty alleviation and core developmental deprivations. Consequently, from the 1980s, Bangladesh witnessed the gradual rise of both the private sector and the NGOs as dominant actors shaping the country’s economic growth and human development. Moreover, while this dual-track or hybrid developmental model (where the private sector became the principal engine of economic growth and employment generation, while the NGOs emerged as a key factor in addressing human development deficits) did facilitate incremental growth and extreme poverty alleviation for good three decades, this strategic and convenient withdrawal of the state apparatus also led to unintended consequences.

Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world (less than 7%) — underscoring its fiscal weakness, which manifests in minimal public investment in critical sectors such as healthcare and education. In addition, this overall developmental approach, where the state retreated from its redistributive roles also amplified acute inequality and created deep frustrations, especially within a growing impatient young generation. Thus, it was no accident that, over the last decade, young people were increasingly taking to the streets over social and economic issues.Third, Bangladeshi political decision-makers over time increasingly crafted an absolute winner takes-all constitutional and institutional arrangement that acutely concentrated political power within the executive branch. This not only weakened the judicial and legislative institutions from holding the executive accountable for abusing political and administrative power, but it intensively amplified the cost of losing political power. It created a confrontational political ecosystem where the art of coexisting and developing working relationships across the political aisle was not learned as dominant political parties competing for power lacked the appetite for dialogue or discussion.

For the past five decades, the political game plan has remained cold and brutal: crush your opponent when you gain an upper hand in power — and remain perpetually interlocked in a never-ending existential battle. This persistent political hostility has entrenched a culture of one-sided or rigged elections in Bangladesh, fostering a political environment increasingly shaped by crony capitalism and policy capture, authoritarian tendencies, and violence-driven mobilisation. As a result, the political process has become tribalised; devoid of meaningful commitment to principles such as democratic coexistence, institutional governance, or substantive democratic deepening. This antagonistic political ecosystem has also severely undermined investor confidence, leading to a persistently low inflow of foreign direct investment and limited technology transfer, especially when compared to regional peers such as Vietnam.One of the most enduring axioms in the political economy of development is that sustained political and economic modernisation is only possible when competing political factions within a polity do not perceive violence as a legitimate or rewarding means of resolving political conflict. In essence, democratic transitions and institutional-deepening become feasible only when political actors reject the exercise of de facto power through coercion and instead commit to rules-based competition. Societies that fail to achieve this threshold remain trapped in cycles of violence, mistrust, and authoritarian drift, undermining both democratic consolidation and developmental outcomes. Unfortunately, Bangladesh exemplifies a case where political change has rarely translated into democratic progress, as successive political transitions have often been accompanied by confrontational politics, intolerance, and the normalisation of violence as a political tool.These broader political dynamics also meant that the growing middle-class felt increasingly alienated and marginalised from experiencing a political space that is accountable and inclusive — and the growing economic inequality and limited economic opportunities for the young generation meant that the distrust with the political system reached a tipping point when the previous government under Sheikh Hasina grossly mishandled a legitimate demand for reforming a very unpopular quota system for employment in public services in July 2024. The political package that somewhat worked in the past by offering unequal economic opportunities with political exclusion was no longer acceptable. The yearning for a new social and political contract erupted into a social scream. The rest remains a known history.

Possibilities and pitfallsBangladesh currently stands at a critical inflection point - one that offers a historic opportunity for political and economic decision-makers to initiate comprehensive constitutional and institutional reforms. These reforms are essential to prevent any single political force from exercising absolute and unaccountable power, an affliction that has long undermined democratic consolidation, fostered political polarisation, and enabled the entrenchment of crony capitalism and policy capture. The prevailing “winner-takes-all” framework has institutionalised cycles of confrontation, eroded political pluralism, and reinforced authoritarian tendencies across the polity.To break from this entrenched trajectory, Bangladesh must undertake a fundamental reimagining of its constitutional architecture for effectively forging a new social and political contract grounded in accountability, representation, and institutional restraint. This would require embedding stronger political constraints on executive authority through structural reforms, including the introduction of a mixed electoral system that combines proportional representation with first-past-the-post mechanisms within a bicameral legislative framework. Equally essential are the enforcement of term limits for both the Prime Minister and the President, and a clearer separation of powers between the ceremonial and executive functions of the head of state and head of government. Without such institutional safeguards and in the absence of a credible, transparent, and inclusive electoral process, no volume of technocratic policy reforms or bureaucratic recalibration will suffice to remedy the systemic political dysfunction that continues to erode Bangladesh’s democratic foundations.Yet institutional reform, while necessary, is not sufficient. Revitalising Bangladesh’s developmental momentum will require more than technocratic adjustments; it demands a fundamental reconfiguration of the political ecosystem. Over time, the entrenched antagonism between the Centre-Left and Centre-Right has rendered politics an existential, zero-sum contest, where the imperative to dominate, eclipses the need to govern. This adversarial logic has hollowed out the political centre, creating a vacuum increasingly exploited by extremist forces with alarming regularity.What is perhaps most disheartening is the inability of the dominant political blocs to evolve in step with the country’s changing socio-political fabric. Despite a citizenry increasingly shaped by urbanisation, civic consciousness, and democratic aspirations, both political camps remain shackled to the antagonisms of the past. i

61.6% schools in India offer three languages, only 3.2% in Tamil Nadu



Story so far: Firmly opposed to the ‘three language’ clause in the Centre’s National Education Policy, Tamil Nadu ranks the lowest among India’s large States in implementing it in schools. Only 1905 (3.2%) schools in Tamil Nadu offered three languages, while 35,092 (59.8%) schools offered two languages and 21,725 (37%) schools offered a single language, revealed Centre in reply to a query by DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi in Lok Sabha on March 24, 2025.

Overall, 9,06,225 (61.6%) schools in India offer three languages, 4,16,601(28.3%) schools offer two and 1,49,065 (10.1%) schools offer only one language. Among the populous States, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of schools offering three languages - 82.8% (2,11,114), followed by Maharashtra 68.7% (74,342), Rajasthan 65.1% (70,148), Madhya Pradesh 55.4% (68,388), Karnataka 76.4% (57,950) and Gujarat 97.6% (52,357). In the southern States, Kerala has 11,367 (71.7%) schools offering three languages, Andhra Pradesh has 26,696 (43.5%) schools while Telangana has 26,828 (62.5%) schools.In another reply, the Centre revealed that school enrollment in three-language schools stood at 74.7%. Large States having highest enrollment in these schools are Gujarat (97.6%), Karnataka (89.5%), Telangana (89.3%), Maharashtra (87%) and Uttar Pradesh (81%). The lowest among the large States is Tamil Nadu (10.8%), followed by Bihar (58%), Assam (58.6%), Jharkhand (59%).The reply comes amid a raging debate between the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government, which has vehemently refused to implement the three-language policy. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had accused his Tamil Nadu counterpart M.K. Stalin of trying to create divisions based on region and language for votebank.“The country should not be divided on the basis of language or region. Every Indian has respect and reverence for Tamil because many elements of Indian heritage are still alive in the language. So, why should we hate Hindi,” asked Mr. Adityanath in an ANI interview.In response, Mr. Stalin said, "We don't oppose any language; we oppose imposition and chauvinism. This is a battle for dignity and justice."Three language policy in schools

Centre’s reply also revealed that States with more number of schools teaching languages are not concentrated to one particular region. Northeastern States like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Southern States like Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry have a substantially larger number of schools teaching two languages rather than three.Data also revealed that, correspondingly, student enrollment in three-language schools was much higher than those teaching two. Overall, three-language schools have a 74.7% enrollment across India, compared to 16.8% in two-language schools. In the above mentioned States, which preferred two-language schools, the student enrollment was - Arunachal Pradesh (94.8%), Assam (36.4%), Meghalaya (57.1%), Nagaland (36.1%), Tamil Nadu (57.8%) and Puducherry (32.2%). Curiously in Assam and Puducherry enrollment in three-language schools was higher (58.6% and 65.6% respectively) inspite of less number of schools available. Another anomaly is

Nagaland, which has a 91% student enrollment in schools, offering a single language.Inspite of the politics over languages, data has revealed that most Indian schools offer three languages and enrollment in such schools are higher. However, the choice of the third language offered by States varies across regions.

Another parliamentary query into the three-language policy issue revealed that Hindi-speaking States such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar offered Urdu, Sanskrit, Punjabi or Marathi as its third language – not a language spoken in southern India. In contrast all southern States offering three languages – Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana have Hindi as a third option, while their State languages are mandatory first or second languages. Eastern and western States too follow a similar pattern offering Hindi as a third option, apart from their State languages.

What does NEP say on three-language policy?

The National Education policy, 2020 states that for students in both public and private schools, until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8, the medium of instruction will be in the home language or the mother tongue, citing research the benefits of multilingualism on cognitive benefits to young students. Unlike the 1968 policy, which emphasised study of Hindi, English and regional language, NEP 2020 provides greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and that no language will be imposed on any State. However, it encourages certain languages like Sanskrit and classical languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia and additionally Pali, Persian, and Prakrit.This flexibility is not implemented across all schools. Centre’s reply to Ms. Kanimozhi’s query also stated that Kendriya Vidyalayas – which teach children of transferrable Central government employees including defence and para-military officers – have a uniform language policy of Hindi, English and Sanskrit. However, it does allow teaching of other languages for willing students between classes VI to VIII.

Why the opposition to NEP, specifically in Tamil Nadu?

A recent study by The Hindu’s data team revealed that non-Hindi speakers are generally more open to learning new languages, whereas Hindi speakers exhibit lower multilingualism. Based on data from the 1991 and 2011 Language Census, States like Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, the percentage of people speaking only the local language has increased to current levels between 80 to 95%. In contrast, southern States like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala have seen a decrease in percentage of people speaking only their native language. States in both coasts of India too have gradually become more multilingual and have uniformly preferred a tri-lingual policy.This trend has arisen the debate over ‘Hindi imposition’. Tamil Nadu, which has historically opposed adopting Hindi as a compulsory subject in schools since 1937, has seen violent protests resulting in deaths through the years. It has opposed adopting Hindi as the sole official language in 1965 and the Official Language Resolution, 1968, which mandated teaching Hindi in schools. Since then, Tamil Nadu has followed a two-language policy in schools, higher education institutes and offices.The most recent opposition to NEP, 2020 has escalated to hostile levels as Centre has withheld funds for the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) amounting to ₹2,152 crore. While Tamil Nadu has signed a memorandum of understanding to introduce the PM Schools for Rising India schools in the State, it did not accept to enforce the provisions of the NEP. Under SSA, atleast 20,000 personnel are yet to receive salary due to the delay in fund disbursal.Recently, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan refused any concessions to Tamil Nadu, insisting the State must align “with the Constitution”. In reply, Mr. Stalin declared that the State will not submit to “blackmail” or abandon its historically adopted two-language policy.

The story behind Nita Ambani’s Kanjeevaram sari: ‘Woven in pure gold zari’

Nita Ambani was recently honoured with the AAPI Humanitarian Award in Florida, and for the special occasion, the Chairperson of Reliance Industries chose a classic Kanjeevaram sari from Swadesh, elevated through the artistry of hand-painted Tanjore saree and blouse by Manish Malhotra.

Meticulously handcrafted by master artisan and National Award winner Shri B. Krishnamurthy, the sari is a testament to Indian craftsmanship and a tribute to our rich textile heritage.Taking to Instagram, the designer shared details of Ambani’s look: “The timeless royal purple silk is adorned with exquisite Tanjore-inspired motifs –bringing together two of South India’s most revered artistic traditions. A craft that began on temple walls, now woven into the border of one of India’s finest weaves.”The body of the fabric is adorned with an all-over repeat of the Mayil, where the peacock symbolises grace and prosperity, and the Chakram represents eternity and cosmic balance — both intricately woven in pure gold zari.“The traditional Korvai technique interlocks the striking pink and black border with the body during weaving itself, a mark of Kanchipuram’s most skilled craftsmen,” Malhotra further added.

Binal Patel, founder of brand Binal Patel, told indianexpress.com that the Kanjeevaram sari finds its origins, and name, in Tamil Nadu’s Kanchipuram, a temple town famous for silk weaving.“Legend has it that the Kanchi silk weaver behind these saris is a descendant of Sage Markanda — Gods’ master weaver — known to craft exquisite pieces from delicate lotus fibres,” she shared, adding that originally nine yards in length, Kanjeevaram saris



evolved over time into the iconic six-yard versions. The craft of Kanjeevaram sari weaving spans 400 years, and is traditionally practised within temple confines by dedicated artisans, she explained.

“In South Indian weddings, Kanjeevaram silk saris, representing purity, elegance and prosperity, hold a place of honour,” said Varghese. Bharatanatyam dancers, too, embrace these silks saris to enhance grace and grandeur of their performance through its rich textures and vibrant colours.John Varghese, professor at the School of Fashion, World University of Design, further explained that the border, body, and pallu of Kanjeevaram saris are woven simultaneously as three distinct components, directly on the loom, without any attachment or stitching later. This technique results in three vibrant and solid colour ground areas—one each for the body, border, and pallu—made possible by combining the Korvai and Petni techniques.

Indian-American named to leadership role at Wharton

New York: An Indian-American executive has been named to a leadership role at an inaugural programme at the prestigious Wharton School, bringing his industry-leading expertise to advise faculty and mentor students in the field of Artificial Intelligence and analytics.Ajay Anand, Senior Vice President, Global Services, Strategy and Business Services, at Johnson & Johnson, has been named as the inaugural Executive in Residence at the Wharton AI & Analytics Initiative (WAIAl), a statement issued here said.The statement added that the Wharton AI & Analytics Initiative is launching the exclusive Executive in Residence programme to bring industry-leading expertise into the heart of Wharton’s AI research and student initiatives.Each year, select executives from top organisations will work alongside faculty and students to bridge the gap between cutting-edge AI research and real-world industry

challenges.Anand and Senior Director ERP, Digital & IT Strategy, The Hershey Company Achim Welter have been named the inaugural Executives in Residence. As Executives in Residence, the leaders will advise the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton faculty, helping shape AI research to align with business needs; mentor students, and guide future AI innovators in WAIAl-sponsored projects like the Wharton AI & Analytics Accelerator.Share insights at premier conferences, contributing as keynote speakers and expert panellists and judge high-stakes AI competitions, including WAIAl Hack-AI-thons and the Venture Lab Startup Challenge.The statement on Thursday from Wharton noted that Anand brings more than 26 years of “transformational leadership, driving strategic impact across consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and telecommunications.

Household nutritional support can avert 0.36 million TB deaths



That targeted nutritional support to TB patients and household contacts can improve TB treatment outcomes, reduce the number of new cases and deaths is now well known, particularly after the RATIONS trial carried out in between August 2019 and August 2022 in four districts of Jharkhand among 2,800 pulmonary TB patients and 10,345 household contacts. The trial found that nutritional support provided to household contacts for the duration of treatment reduced the number of new pulmonary TB cases by 48%, and deaths among those under 35 kg body weight (severely underweight) was only 7%.Now a modelling study has estimated the epidemiological and economic benefits of providing nutritional support for the duration of treatment to both adult TB patients and household contacts. At 50% coverage, providing nutritional care to adult TB patients and household contacts for the duration of treatment could help avert over 361,000 deaths and over 880,000 new TB cases by 2035 at a cost of \$167 per disability-adjusted life-year, suggests the study from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, and Yenepoya Medical College, Mangalore.

This would be equivalent to averting approximately 4.6% TB deaths and 2.2% TB cases, the study notes. It also found that the median number of households needed to treat to prevent one TB death was 24.4 and to prevent one TB case was 10. It also estimates that provision of this support is very likely to be cost-effective. The number of TB deaths prevented and new cases averted will be even bigger if child and adolescent TB patients and their household contacts too are provided nutritional support. The study was published recently in the journal The Lancet Global Health.

The researchers used previously published, age-stratified, compartmental transmission models of TB in India, and incorporated explicit BMI strata linked to disease progression and treatment outcomes, and used the results of the RATIONS trial to estimate the impact and costs of nu-

Indian Institute of Science researchers highlight India’s need for national dementia policy with focus on cultural factors

GNS News Agency, July 23

A recent paper by researchers from the Centre for Brain Research at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has highlighted the need for a comprehensive dementia policy in India to address the needs of the older population and their caregivers on a national scale. This policy should prioritise effective dementia prevention strategies and equitable allocation of resources, incorporating evidence-based approaches. The policy should integrate dementia care into both geriatric and mental health plans, stated the paper published in The Lancet Psychiatry on January 23. India is expected to have 340 million older adults (aged 60 and older) by 2050, of whom 5.3 million will have been living with dementia since 2020. In the paper, the team of researchers from the Centre for Brain Research reviewed various reports that highlighted the disease’s degenerative character, reducing memory, cognition, and the ability to perform daily living activities. Need to expand healthcare infrastructureAsserting the importance of early detection, awareness and effective care systems, Thomas Gregor Issac, associate professor at the centre, who is the corresponding author of the paper, told The Hindu that there is a need for expanded healthcare infrastructure, professional training, and a national dementia policy. This will help address India’s growing dementia challenge, which includes early diagnosis and treatment gaps, he said.“As of 2023–2024, the health expenditure of India amounts to 1.9% of its gross domestic product, with ₹16.14 billion (0.033% of total ₹48.21 trillion budget) allocated for mental health and older population care. In 2023, The Longitudinal Aging Study in India (LASI) and LASI-Diagnostic Assessment for Dementia reported that the prevalence of dementia in India among individuals aged 60 and older was 7.4%, with higher rates in women and in rural regions, and estimated that by 2036, the number of cases would quadruple,” the doctor explained.

Pointing out that dementia is often misunderstood in India, he said this is owing to a lack of awareness and cultural misconceptions, which lead to delayed evaluation and diagnosis. This in turn considerably impairs the quality of care, he said.“In a value-driven society such as India, where inter-generational support and family ties are strongly embedded in cultural norms, help seeking behaviour for dementia remains low. The idea of using care facilities or depending on care homes is often perceived as a failure to fulfil familial responsibilities and is associated with stigma.

tritional support. Based on the modelling study the authors write: “A nutritional intervention for tuberculosis-affected households could avert a substantial amount of tuberculosis disease and death in India, and would be highly likely to be cost-effective on the basis of the tuberculosis-specific benefits alone.”Compared with a population-level intervention to improve nutrition, which could have a substantially larger effect size, an intervention targeting only those on TB treatment and their households is able to avert a relatively low proportion of TB incidence and mortality, they say. However, in a resource-constrained setting such as India, targeting the intervention to high-risk household contacts offers the opportunity to maximise cost effectiveness within a feasible budget, they say.

To understand the impact of nutritional support in preventing deaths and new cases, the authors compared the outcomes when nutrition is provided only to adult TB patients, only to household contacts but not to adult TB patients, and finally to both adult TB patients and household contacts. While nutritional support to adult TB patients alone reduced the number of new cases by 46,700, and deaths by 234,300, nutritional support to household contacts alone (excluding adult TB patients) led to a larger drop in new cases (833,700) and deaths (129,200) but still far less than when both adult TB patients and household contacts were provided nutritional support.“When we say nutritional support is given to household contacts, we mean just that — not given to people on TB treatment but only to their household contacts. This obviously would not happen in practice, but is a way for us to tell where the intervention effect is coming from,” Dr. Christopher Finn McQuaid from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and the corresponding author of the paper explains in an email The study found that nutritional support provided to adult TB patients averts deaths due to improved treatment outcomes. Importantly, it also averts new cases in these people. “These individuals [TB patients] see an increase in their BMI, which leads to reduced reactivation or progression to disease if they are reinfectd,” Dr. McQuaid says.Dr McQuaid says: “This paper could provide guidance for policymakers selecting TB interventions, highlighting the importance of nutritional support in addressing the TB epidemic, and the real benefits this is likely to provide not just to affected households but at a national level.”Dr Rebecca Clark, a Research Fellow at The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and a co-author of the paper adds: “International and national decision-makers could use our findings to advocate for better, as well as more targeted and relevant, interventions when it comes to support for TB patients and their families.”



The absence of proper support networks for caregivers greatly increases the financial, emotional, and physical strain, which frequently results in stress, burnout, and weakened health, all of which influence the standard of care given to people with disabilities or chronic illnesses,” the doctor explained.The paper also reviewed various State-level dementia plans and strategies. “The Kerala State Initiative on Dementia that began in 2014 is a comprehensive dementia care model providing dementia awareness programmes, caregiver training, memory clinics, and residential care facilities,” it said.

In 2015, the Longitudinal Cognition and Aging Research on Population of the National Capital Region was initiated for population-based prospective cohort research in South Delhi, focusing on middle-aged and older individuals to evaluate the prevalence of stroke and dementia. “The major goal of the study was to create risk prediction models and discover new biomarkers for the early identification and prevention of cognitive diseases. While the study’s findings were expected to be applicable to people living in urban areas in northern India, the study faced challenges during the investigation, which led to unclear results,” the paper stated.The paper also put on record the Karnataka Brain Health Initiative that was launched in 2023 in partnership with NIMHANS and Niti Aayog.“This effort intends to build specialist clinics for brain illnesses in the community. The Centre for Brain Research is performing breakthrough research with projects such as the Tata Longitudinal Study of Aging and the Srinivasapura Aging, Neuro Senescence, and COgnition study, which includes urban and rural participants. These efforts, while not complete, represent important strides forward for improving neurological treatment and assistance for older people in India,” stated the paper.

Sudan’s largest oil refinery on fire amid civil war, satellite photos show

Fighting around Sudan’s largest oil refinery set the sprawling complex ablaze, satellite data analyzed by The Associated Press on Saturday (January 25, 2025) shows, sending thick, black polluted smoke over the country’s capital.The attacks around the refinery, owned by Sudan’s government and the state-run China National Petroleum Corp., represent the latest woe in a civil war between the rebel Rapid Support Force (RSF) and Sudan’s military, who blamed each other for the blaze.This Planet Labs PBC satellite image shows Sudan's largest oil refinery north of Khartoum, Sudan as of October 2024.International mediation attempts and pressure tactics, including a U.S. assessment that the RSF and its proxies are committing genocide, have not halted the fighting.The al-Jaili refinery sits some 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of Khartoum, the capital. The refinery has been subject to previous attacks as the RSF has claimed control of the facility since April 2023, as their forces had been guarding it. Local Sudanese me-

dia report the RSF also surrounded the refinery with fields of landmines to slow any advance.An attack on Thursday (January 23, 2025) at the oil field set fires across the complex, according to satellite data from NASA satellites that track wildfires worldwide.Satellite images taken by Planet Labs PBC on Friday (January 24, 2025) for the AP showed vast areas of the refinery ablaze. The images, shot just after 12:00 GMT, showed flames shooting up into the sky in several spots. Oil tanks at the facility stood burned, covered in soot.

Thick plumes of black smoke towered over the site, carried south toward Khartoum by the wind. Exposure to that smoke can exacerbate respiratory problems and raise cancer risks.In a statement released Thursday (January 23, 2025), the Sudanese military alleged the RSF was responsible for the fire at the refinery.The RSF “deliberately set fire to the Khartoum refinery in al-Jaili this morning in a desperate attempt to destroy the infrastructures of this country,” the statement read “

Consumer brands eye rural growth as quick-commerce reshapes urban demand



Trent highlights a "micro-market" strategy in its 2025-26 annual report, focusing Zudio's expansion on untapped pockets over traditional store performance. These micro-markets, which vary across companies, refer to highly segmented, untapped regions that make it easier for companies to focus their efforts. As consumer companies look beyond crowded urban markets for growth, "micro-markets" have emerged as a key strategy. Tata Group-backed Trent, which operates the Zudio brand, highlighted this approach in its annual report for 2025-26, pointing to its focus on expanding across micro-markets rather than focusing only on comparative store performance.

These micro-markets, which vary across companies, refer to highly segmented, untapped regions that make it easier for companies to focus their efforts. Tier-1 and tier-2 cities, which have a population with increasing wage growth and aspirational demand, form a large part of the micro-markets for most consumer companies. Like Trent, many other consumer brands have started shifting their focus towards the hinterlands for growth, as rural demand continues to outpace urban demand, while digitalisation has led to the rapid growth of new-age platforms in bigger cities, saturating the space for traditional players.

Rural demand growth has continued to outpace urban demand, led by higher agricultural wages, favourable monsoons over the past couple of years that boosted crops, and growth in the rural non-farm economy. This has shifted consumption patterns in these regions, with rural consumers becoming increasingly aspirational. While the El Niño forecast later in the year could affect rainfall and temporarily hamper the momentum, analysts expect rural demand to remain strong going forward. Many consumer brands have acknowledged this shift and made efforts to expand into tier-2 and tier-3 cities, a trend also reflected in their earnings. Non-metro stores drive growth expansion beyond urban markets

In their earnings announcement on July 11, Avenue Supermarts, which operates the retail chain D-Mart, noted that its stores in non-metro cities performed much better than the older stores in bigger cities in the April-June quarter. "In large metros, growth in older stores, which have

significantly higher revenue per square foot, was flat this quarter. While stores in non-metros continue to grow well," said Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Anshul Asawa. These stores played a major part in the company's 15% revenue growth during the quarter, the management said. Other retail conglomerates such as Tata Group's Titan and Reliance Group's retail ventures have also expanded to the hinterlands, with a large chunk of the new stores added every quarter placed in regional hubs and smaller locations. The same is true for quick-service restaurant companies like Jubilant Foodworks and Devyani International, which run the Indian outlets for international brands such as Domino's, KFC, and Pizza Hut. These companies had earlier focused on increasing their store density across urban hubs so that a Domino's or a Pizza Hut is present in every locality in a big city. Traditional FMCG players, which earlier focused on specific rural hubs with dense populations, have expanded further into the hinterlands on the back of digitalisation and improving trade channels. After the Covid-19 pandemic, companies such as Hindustan Unilever (HUL) and Nestle India have launched and optimised specialised programmes to aid this. "If we look at any FMCG company pre-Covid, a large part of the focus was on the urban markets. A lot of the big names such as HUL and Nestle already have almost 100% coverage in the urban market. Thus, penetration into tier-2, tier-3, and rural markets becomes important from an incremental growth perspective," said Ronak Shah, an analyst tracking the consumer sector at Equirus Securities. HUL has optimised Project Shakti — a programme running since the 2000s incentivising rural women to sell its products in their villages through the Shikhar app — with AI to optimise sales and restocking. Nestle's "RURban" strategy, launched in 2019 with a focus on specific semi-urban hubs, has now expanded to have a footprint across 216,000 villages, providing increased flexibility to cater to hyper-localised demographics in each micro-market. The shift in focus to smaller and untapped markets has been gradual and was driven by several factors. A major reason behind this shift is companies chasing incremental growth. Another key reason is the high competition provided by new-age quick commerce platforms such as Zepto, Swiggy's Instamart, and Zomato's Blinkit, with most of their sales coming from metropolitan cities. The dense population of cities also makes it viable for these platforms to efficiently open a vast network of dark stores, improving coverage. A large chunk of the sales of these players in top cities comes by eating into existing retail channels. Improving infrastructure and companies deepening their trade channels and supply chains also play a crucial role in the shift. "Earlier, things weren't so easy. We just visited the UP market, and one of the distributors highlighted that it was quite difficult to reach into the remote areas five years back, so they were not even able to cater to those markets. Now, with the van operations, electrification, and improved infrastructure, it is quite easy," said Shah of Equirus.

'A season on the cart': Why these Indian summer fruits are suddenly going viral



A walk through the weekly bazaar last week made me wonder about the summer jewels we relish, yet often fail to cherish amid constant rants about the relentless heat, humidity, and scanty rainfall. While mangoes steal the lime-light every year, this year even more so with the much-talked-about Miyazaki mangoes, the purplish-red luxury fruit from Japan, Instagram and social media reels are also making timeless favourites such as jamuns and karondas popular again. Jamun is one of the most indigenous fruits of Jambudvipa, as India has long been referred to. Celebrity chef Vikas Khanna was recently seen packing these anthocyanin-rich fruits, perhaps India's own answer to blueberries, all the way to New York. From the green avenues of Ashoka Road and the forests of the central Indian plains to urban forestry initiatives that embrace the planting of jamun and amla trees, the conversation around Indian berries is back, reminding us how far removed they are from our obsession with imported blueberries, blackberries, and raspberries. Meanwhile, litchi, another summer favourite, especially the GI-tagged Shahi litchi of Muzaffarpur, were reported to be unusually expensive this year owing to a poor harvest, prompting the Central Government to constitute an expert panel to examine the litchi crisis in the state. El Niño and the war

Amid all this clamour about El Niño, fruit and vegetable supplies, cooking oil becoming expensive because of the war, and the implications for the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers, I found myself observing the conversations around me in the weekly sabzi bazaar. As intermittent showers threatened the rhythm of the market for both vendors and customers, I could not help but notice the colourful diversity of local fruits and vegetables typical of the Indian summer. What a delight it was to see laal bhaji, or red amaranth, marking its seasonal cameo on vegetable carts. Summer also brings the arrival of kachri, also known as the wild melon or desert melon, grown across Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Haryana. This delectable, tangy fruit is enjoyed raw or made into chutneys. Many women-led self-help groups slice and sun-dry it to make crisp chips and wafers. Fried kachri is served as an accompaniment with dal chawal or simply enjoyed as a snack with tea. Phalsa, or the Indian sherbet berry, as usual, has been making waves on social media. Small-scale fruit and vegetable vendors briefly sell them during their harvest season in May and June. Phalsa sherbet continues to enjoy its reputation as a refreshing summer cooler, again rich in anthocyanins that give the fruit its deep purple colour. Kokum, or Malabar tamarind, native to the Western Ghats, is another refreshing summer cooler harvested during May and June. It is celebrated as a local beverage in Maharashtra, while processed kokum sherbet syrups are now commonly available in northern India, with many restaurants serving the drink during the summer

months. Speaking of berries, a rare blueberry was recently rediscovered in the forests of Vijaynagar in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district, nearly 188 years after it was first recorded in 1836.

Tadgola, or ice apple, is another unique seasonal fruit from southern India that reportedly witnessed a surge in demand during this year's relentless heatwave. Across parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, people consume it as a natural way to beat the heat. India also happens to be one of the world's largest producers of ice apples giving the fruit tremendous potential in horticulture, food processing, and global fruit baskets. Then there are the white and red gulaab jamun fruits, better known as jamrul or rose apples, whose crisp, fragrant flesh offers welcome relief from the summer heat, giving stiff competition to both litchis and mangosteens, the latter now increasingly cultivated in parts of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Rambutan is another delight that makes its guest appearance in markets. Anyone travelling through southern India during the summer is likely to find it in abundance on roadside vendor carts and highway stalls. In states where jackfruit grows in abundance, one can enjoy it both as a vegetable and as a fruit, depending on its stage of ripeness. The raw fruit is transformed into delicious curries and stir-fries, with katha biryani becoming quite the feature on restaurant menus. Crop diversification efforts

These days, dragon fruit, though originally native to the Americas, is also found commonly in weekly bazaars. Farmers in several drought-prone regions, including those affected by agrarian distress, have increasingly adopted its cultivation as part of crop diversification efforts. Last year, I met a farmer growing dragon fruit in the Vidarbha region. Increasingly, as part of crop diversification, farmers in Odisha and Jharkhand are also cultivating yellow watermelons. Some fruit sellers stock fresh figs and green almonds, produce that often finds itself relegated to the "special" or "exotic" sections of online marketplaces despite being grown in parts of India. Alongside these fruits, the markets are replete with green verdancy, chlorophyll soothing to the eyes in the form of so many seasonal vegetables. Small batches of junclee karela, also known as kantola, kakora, or spiny gourd, make their appearance. Although covered with tiny spines, it is sweeter than the common bitter gourd, or karela, and remains a seasonal favourite until the onset of the monsoon. Purple banana flowers, too, are harvested during this time, pointing to the immense potential of India's edible flower economy. Mahua flowers from the central Indian plains and buransh blossoms from Uttarakhand further showcase how native flowers can contribute to local food systems, value addition and rural livelihoods.

Ker (desert berry) and sangri (desert bean), the seasonal royalty of Rajasthan's arid landscape, continue to be celebrated as the state's culinary specialties. There is gilki (sponge gourd), too, the local, sweeter and softer cousin of torai (ridge gourd) in the central Indian plains. And then there are countless other seasonal treasures: plums, peaches, pears, bel (wood apple), whose cooling sherbet has refreshed generations during blistering summers, even though the fruit is harvested twice a year; the tangy karonda, perfect for pickles and chutneys; the fleeting lasora (glue berry), which briefly appears in local markets before disappearing for another year; banana stem, bamboo shoots, pumpkin flowers, and even bilimbi (tree sorrel) in the southern states. Recently, the fourth Meghalaya Pineapple Festival at Dilli Haat brought farmers from the state to the national capital, where they sold nearly 30 tonnes of pineapples, boosting farm incomes while promoting seasonal regional produce and tourism to the Northeast. Seasonal food traditions All of this speaks to the extraordinary richness of India's bioeconomy and the seasonal food traditions that sustain its biodiversity.

Nutritionists continue to remind us that eating seasonal produce is healthier, more sustainable, and often more nutritious. While the globalisation of food has ensured year-round access to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables from across the world, eating in harmony with the seasons continues to benefit our health, ecology, and the local economy. So, while enjoying the last strolls beneath the gulmohar, jarul, and the season's fading amaltas, and fragrant mogra, we must rush to savour the seasonal specialties in our weekly bazaars while they last.

EPFO reform: Government works on new pension plan for all



The government is working on a new contributory pension scheme for unorganised and formal sector workers that would accumulate contributions over time, and be invested in long-term government-backed securities, with annual crediting of interest. At the age of 60 years, the scheme may allow the proposed "Target Retirement Sum (TRS)" to be converted into pension, based on prevailing annuity and interest rates, a senior government official told

The scheme, part of the 3.0 reforms phase of the retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), will cover existing members and those excluded from the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS). It is likely to adopt a defined contribution framework and allow contributions from multiple sources: workers themselves, employers, government co-contributions for workers in the lower wage segment, aggregators in the case of gig and platform workers, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) or third-party funds, the officials said. The EPFO proposes to give the flexibility to the worker at the age of 55 years to decide the purpose for his or her retirement savings. "Till that time, it will operate like PF, you keep on accumulating. At that stage when you are retiring, it converts into an annuity or a systematic withdrawal plan," the official said.

Under the proposed pension plan, each member will have an individual pension account. "The system will compute the proposed Target Retirement Sum (TRS) dynamically based on the member's chosen pension goal and expected retirement age. Members will have personalised dashboards showing total contributions, real-time corpus status, and progress towards the TRS for applicable schemes," another official said. The system will project the required contribution amount and frequency to achieve the declared TRS. "Adjustments to TRS will be allowed and contribution requirements could then be recomputed accordingly. The system will accept and categorise contributions from multiple sources such as members, employers, or third-parties and update the member's pension balance," the official said.

When asked if this would be along the lines of the National Pension System (NPS), one of the officials cited above said the NPS is "purely annuity based, while the proposed pension scheme will be more flexible, risk free and based on real and not notional returns". "We want to make it similar to the PF which continues with only the contributions being stopped because you are retired, so you will not have any contribution. It will then be a systematic withdrawal plan on the basis of your expected monthly pension payout. So, it can be equal to the interest that you want, in which case, the corpus will remain the same. For example, if 8% interest is declared and that 8% over Rs 1 crore is translating to Rs 8 lakh, so you divide it by 12 and that becomes your pension payout every month," the official explained. Elaborating further, the official said, "If you want higher in the initial stage, then it will be a drawdown from

your principal. So, based on your longevity, you estimate that in 20 years you want to have a good pension, you can increase your drawdown. At the same time, you can reduce your drawdown. If you reduce your drawdown, your interest will get added to your principal. So, towards the later part, it becomes almost like an inflation-linked plan where towards the later part, you can have a higher payout. This is what we are thinking about."

The flexibility to decide the amount for pension payouts or the drawdown will be given to the member. "The EPFO 3.0 system will allow users to simulate pension amounts based on parameters such as age, corpus, interest rate, and retirement age. It will also include additional input fields for voluntary contributions and contribution frequency. The system will provide inflation-adjusted projections as an optional feature. The estimated monthly pension, projected corpus at retirement, and comparative graphs will be displayed to the member, allowing multiple scenario comparisons for decision making taking into account variable contributions and multiple employment scenarios," the official said.

The scheme also proposes family and survivor pensions for spouse, children, and orphans funded through a pooled "Family Benefit Fund", managed on actuarial principles, the official said. Members of EPF, GPF, and other provident funds could also be allowed to transfer balances into the new pension initiative to enhance retirement savings, the official added. The EPFO 3.0 reforms will bring new tech features and an upgradation to the core banking solution (CBS), and pave the way for PF contributions for all unorganised sector workers and gig workers, in line with the Code on Social Security that brings gig and platform workers into the social security net for the first time. The Code mandates aggregator contributions of 1-2% of annual turnover for social security, with the total contribution not exceeding 5% of the amount payable by the aggregator.

The retirement fund models of other countries such as Singapore are being studied to incorporate the best practices, the official said. Singapore's social security scheme, Central Provident Fund (CPF), a deferred annuity scheme, sets aside savings not just for retirement but also for housing and healthcare. Singaporeans do not rely on individual CPF contributions alone for their retirement income as apart from a contribution of 20% of the salary to CPF, individual efforts are supplemented by employers, loved ones and the government, as per the information on the Singapore government website. Unlike pension schemes in other countries, CPF members earn an interest of up to 6% for those aged 55 and above, and 5% for those aged below 55.

While the new social security coverage scheme will make use of the EPFO's digital infrastructure, the nodal agency for the implementation of the social security scheme is yet to be finalised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The scheme will cover existing members and those excluded from the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS). A Target Retirement Sum will be dynamically fixed based on the member's chosen pension goal and expected retirement age. As the EPFO expects around 2.5 crore gig workers and building and other construction workers (BOCW) over the next five years, the scheme is also being designed keeping in mind their inclusion into social security coverage for the first time. The scheme will incorporate "one-to-many mapping" where one UAN (Universal Account Number) will be registered with multiple employers and aggregators, showing total PF and pension contributions from all sources for these workers while maintaining their employer-wise breakdowns.

Omicron RF.5 variant detected in Andhra Pradesh: what experts say about its risk

According to PTI, the Omicron RF.5 variant has been detected in four COVID-19-positive samples from Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh following genome sequencing at a virology laboratory in Pune. In an official press release, Andhra Pradesh Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav said, "Genome sequencing at a virology laboratory in Pune has confirmed the presence of the Omicron RF.5 variant in four COVID-19 positive samples from Kadapa district."

Following the findings, the minister reviewed the state's COVID-19 situation with senior health officials. The report also noted that 16 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Andhra Pradesh so far, with 12 recorded up to July 16. The state has said its hospitals are prepared, with special wards, beds, testing kits and other infrastructure being readied for COVID-19 detection and treatment. The detection of a new SARS-CoV-2 sub-lineage often raises questions about whether it behaves differently from earlier variants and whether it poses an increased health risk. While the virus continues to evolve, not every newly identified variant results in more severe illness or a major change in public health recommendations. As such, PTI, in its report, mentioned, "Director of Medical Education Vishnuvardhan said the RF.5 variant was being monitored as part of routine genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is also tracking the strain, which has been reported in higher numbers in Singapore and some countries in Southeast Asia. Citing scientific evidence currently available, he said there is no indication that RF.5 is more dangerous than other Omicron variants, and there is no need for the public to panic while only vigilance is required."

Understanding the Omicron RF.5 sub-lineage Dr Palleti Siva Karthik Reddy, MBBS, MD general medicine, FAIG, Consultant physician at Elite Care Clinic, tells indianexpress.com, "RF.5 is one of several recently identified recombinant Omicron strains being tracked through global genomic surveillance. From a public health perspective, its significance lies in its ability to accumulate genetic changes that may help the virus bypass some antibody responses generated through prior infection or vaccination. However, immune evasion should not be confused with complete immune escape. The broader immune response, particularly T-cell-mediated protection, continues to play an important role in limiting severe outcomes. At present, RF.5



appears to be another evolutionary step within the Omicron family rather than a fundamentally different variant."

Dr Jagadish Hiremth, Public Health Intellectual, adds that RF.5 is a recombinant Omicron sub-lineage, which means it has emerged through the genetic mixing of two related SARS-CoV-2 lineages. Such recombination events are a natural part of viral evolution and are monitored closely because they can sometimes alter transmission dynamics. "Current genomic analyses suggest that RF.5 carries mutations associated with improved immune escape compared to earlier variants, allowing it to infect individuals who have prior immunity from vaccination or previous infection. However, there is no clear evidence so far that it possesses a substantial transmission advantage over the dominant Omicron descendants already circulating globally." "The clinical picture associated with RF.5 remains broadly consistent with what healthcare professionals have observed during recent Omicron waves," says Dr Reddy, adding that symptoms are generally mild to moderate and often resemble common viral respiratory infections. What is important to understand is that population-level severity is influenced not only by the variant itself but also by existing immunity levels. In countries with substantial vaccination coverage and prior exposure to the virus, severe outcomes remain relatively uncommon. Dr Hiremth adds that, however, older adults, individuals with diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung conditions and those with compromised immunity continue to face a higher risk of complications if infected, regardless of the specific Omicron sub-lineage involved.

Spain didn’t just win the World Cup. They made an argument for greatness



GNS News Agency, July 23

With his headmaster-like demeanour, Spain’s manager Luis de la Fuente waited patiently to lay his hands on the most prized sporting trophy in the world. He was in no haste, perhaps because he knew the trophy would be his and the wondrous band he has assembled would remain in contention for the next four years; perhaps he is fascinated more by the journey than the destination, or maybe he knows his team is not yet finished piling trophies onto the federation’s mantlepiece. He, and the whole world, could see the tidings of a footballing dynasty that could rule the world for the next decade. The second Spanish dynasty of the century, and as artful and delightful as the previous iteration, the tiki-takians.

The route to the crown was flawless, steadily raising their tempo from a goalless draw against Cabo Verde to the remorseless annihilation of a magnificent France to gently dismembering the fight and bravado of Argentina, the defending champions, the men of moments. In the post-match presentation, de la Fuente stressed on “being faithful to our idea of football” without ever directly detailing what that idea was. There is no clearly defined or perceptible ideology here, the way there was with tiki-taka during their reign. Perhaps their idea is amorphous, too broad to pin down to a specific act. But their leitmotif is clear: to minimise the variables of knockout football and make themselves near-unbeatable, to wrap themselves in invincibility. To entirely suck the risk out of the game, not by refraining from attacking football and parking the bus, but by ensuring that everything is in order, the shape and structure, the creaks and crumples covered, like a freshly ironed suit. Spain’s leitmotif was clear: To entirely suck the risk out of the game, not by refraining from attacking football and parking the bus, but by ensuring that everything is in order. (AP Photo) Spain’s leitmotif was clear: To entirely suck the risk out of the game, not by refraining from attacking football and parking the bus, but by ensuring that everything is in order.

To kill teams softly, to marinate them on a slow fire, draining their hope drip by drip. It’s the most brutal murder, because they concede no chance of survival. They have not produced thrillers, because their game is fine-tuned to such precision that they avoid wild fluctuations. They have never been in a crisis, because their vision is not to wait for one but to avoid it altogether, through dynamism in pressing and clarity in thinking, passing and positioning. If their backline is impenetrable, the midfield is unbreakable, and the forward line uncontainable when in full flow. The level of sustained concentration required to defend against them,

‘What Spain do off the ball impresses me’: Thierry Henry on La Roja

With their 1-0 win over defending champions Argentina in the FIFA World Cup final in New Jersey on Sunday, Spain won their second World Cup to add another star to their jersey. With Ferran Torres scoring the solitary goal of the much-anticipated final in the 106th minute in extra time, Spain became the first nation to be the reigning World Cup champions in men’s and women’s football in the world. The Luis de la Fuente-coached side had started its World Cup campaign with a 0-0 draw against Cape Verde with Torres missing an easy chance in the match.

Former France striker and 1998 World Cup winner Thierry Henry has termed Spain’s belief in their playing style as the key for their World Cup triumph and shared how everyone had written Spain off after the draw against Cape Verde. Henry was initially asked about what other countries need to do to win the World Cup before he spoke about how Spain were good on the ball and went about their business in a different way. “Go to work. Think about all you want to go about it. At every level, they have played the same way. This is why Spain is dominating world football at every level. Men and women, it does not really matter as they go about it the same way. But I wanted to say something very important. We talked about Ferran Torres and before the game we talked about Lionel Messi. You know why? The World Cup for Spain started on a miss by Torres in the six-yard box against Cape Verde. Everyone killed him. Spain cannot score. Spain doesn’t have this. Spain doesn’t have that. I said be careful, stay quiet and calm because they don’t concede goals and they are good on the ball. They will go about it in a different way. Now who scores? That’s what I am saying. Never give up. They know what they are doing and they have been doing it for a very long time,” Henry said on FOX Sports.

Sunday’s win also meant that Spain has now won the European Championships and World Cup title in succes-

attack them, or overpower their midfield is almost indecent. Their defence wore down Cristiano Ronaldo, Kevin De Bruyne, Kylian Mbappe, Michael Olise and Lionel Messi. Only once has their backline been breached in the whole tournament. Only 43 shots have been attempted against them. The midfield outclassed all and sundry; the pack of forwards took turns to strike. Goals sprung from everywhere, they had seven different goalscorers. Every match had a different hero, yet there is little arrogance or ego. They can’t be conquered mentally, physically or tactically.

A flimsy argument could be raised that they don’t thrill, that their game is bereft of flourishes, more opera than heavy metal, even with a spirit as blithe as Yamal’s. The truth is they are so evolved that they need no theatrical embellishment or showmanship to assert their supremacy. They will be celebrated as a team that engaged the brain more than the soul, a connoisseur’s delight rather than a layman’s. Spain’s Pau Cubarsi heads the ball as Argentina’s Valentin Barco (8) defends during the World Cup final. (AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura) Spain’s Pau Cubarsi heads the ball as Argentina’s Valentin Barco (8) defends during the World Cup final. (AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura) Watch closer, and there is a contained beauty in every stride they take. The half-turns of Dani Olmo, the torqued first touches of Yamal, the gorgeous pass-reading of Pau Cubarsi, the svelte, slick passing patterns, their graceful control of emotions, the surreal serenity in times of crisis (if at all they face one), the geometric passing style has a Euclidean mastery to it. There could have been more entertaining teams, more romantic ones. But maybe not a more perfect one. As perfect as the tiki-taka era, when they collected three trophies in four years. De la Fuente’s group could match that, even surpass it, and transform into a footballing dynasty. The nucleus is still young, the average age is 26.2. The two most important cogs in the title triumph were 19-year-olds, Yamal and Cubarsi. They could rule football for a decade, with more talent still to spring from the vibrant youth academies of Barcelona, Atletico, Villarreal and Real Madrid (even though there was no Madrid player in the squad).

If the 2008-12 vintage, the team that post-modernised the game, had two pass-masters of virtuosic grandeur in Xavi Hernandez and Andres Iniesta, de la Fuente’s batch had the irresistible Rodri, the team’s ticking heartbeat. His stifling of Messi was a defensive masterclass. Messi turned him once early on, but thereafter Rodri pushed him into an airless chamber, suffocating him like a boa constrictor, tightening his grip over the greatest player ever and making it harder and harder for him to breathe. If Xavi and co. were pass-masters, Rodri and friends are space-masters. He is a role model in his words as much as his deeds. “I just want the new generations to see my example as an opportunity – when you go down you can rise again. This is my philosophy my entire life,” he said after the game. His advice to his players was simple: “We need to face them. We have to look into their eyes and see it. We win this game, and then life gives you the World Cup, or not.” In every sense, they could make a compelling case to be one of the greatest teams ever. The debates will no doubt escalate. The Brazil of 1970 is the romantic ideal. Or the French dazzlers led by Zinedine Zidane. Or Spain’s own golden generation. De la Fuente’s men belong rightly in that pantheon of greats, for the graceful efficiency with which they minimised the variables of knockout football and made themselves near-unbeatable. And their era is far from nearing its end.



sion for the second time in their history. The country had earlier achieved the feat with their 2008 Euros-winning campaign and 2010 World Cup title and it’s only the third time that a country has done it. West Germany had won the 1972 Euro followed by the 1974 World Cup. Spain’s title on Sunday also meant that the country became the seventh country to have won multiple World Cup titles. Henry also spoke about how Spain’s passing was the key to their World Cup campaign. “The best team won. What they do off the ball is what impresses me. You cannot almost put three passes together and when you stop to do that, they get the ball back. If you don’t have the ball ... you can’t score,” Henry added. Sunday’s title win also meant that the country now are on a 38-match unbeaten streak in all competitions. It meant that Spain has now broken the earlier record held by Italy for the longest winning streak by a country in world football. Spain has won 14 out of the last 15 matches across World Cup and Euros with their only draw coming against Cape Verde in their opening match in this World Cup. While their key forward Lamine Yamal only scored one goal this World Cup, the Rodri-led Spanish team displayed their dominance throughout the tournament.

you’re thinking of dropping him and then he produces anything like this – first time ever, it was a special innings,” said Shastri on Sky Sports at the conclusion of the series. He also noted that while the top-order fired, India’s bowling and fielding left a lot to be desired. “Absolutely – these guys (Rohit and Virat) are converters. Once they get 40-50, they smell the coffee. They know how to make that big score now for India to stay in the hunt.” They needed that 130-140 from someone – it came from Rohit, good support from Shubman and Virat kept them in the game. But 380 was always a little too much, but a lot of food for thought for India, especially when it comes to fielding and the bowling department. “Speaking for Kohli, who hit his first fifty in an international game at Lord’s, Shastri praised his sheer determination and the intangible value he brings to the squad. “He was looking to muscle the ball a little too much.” It wasn’t easy once the ball got a little older as we found out with the other batsmen.

Spain’s triumph, 48-team drama, and tech controversies



Atlanta: The World Cup final between Spain and defending champion Argentina marked the end of the biggest tournament in the competition’s history. At the final whistle in New Jersey on Sunday, a record 104 games had been played across almost six weeks and three countries. The supersized tournament delivered thrilling action on the field, with upsets, dramatic comebacks, spectacular goals and standout performances by the biggest stars of the game. It also generated controversy, from political tensions surrounding Iran’s participation to criticism against innovations such as hydration breaks, which were unpopular among many fans. Here are some key takeaways from the 2026 World Cup. More teams, more drama A newly expanded 48-team format raised concerns about lopsided matches and a lack of jeopardy in the group stage. Tell that to Cape Verde, Congo and even Curaçao, which all made history and won new fans. Cape Verde held eventual champion Spain to a draw in its opening game, advanced to the round of 32 and gave Argentina a scare before losing 3-2 in extra time in a World Cup classic. Cape Verde’s goalkeeper Vozinha became a breakout star at the age of 40, gaining millions of followers on social media. Congo also advanced beyond the group stage and pushed England before eventually losing, while Curaçao was still in with a chance of making the knock-outs going into its final group match. The race for the golden boot became a who’s who of the world’s top players with Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappé, Erling Haaland, Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham firing on all cylinders. Mbappé led the way with 10 goals in the tournament and a record 22 career World Cup goals. Messi had eight at this World Cup and 21 in total. Cristiano Ronaldo couldn’t lead Portugal to success in what he said was his last World Cup, while Spain’s teenage sensation Lamine Yamal — the star of the Euros two years ago — had to work his way into the tournament after overcoming injury.

Video reviews known as VAR were at the center of a number of contentious decisions, ruling out huge goals for Germany, Croatia and Egypt. Egypt coach Hossam Hassan launched a furious tirade after Argentina staged a spectacular comeback from 2-0 down to win 3-2 in the round of 16. “We have suffered injustice,” he said after Egypt had a goal over-

turned when the score was still 1-0. Fitted with sensors, the high-tech ball in use at the tournament cost Croatia a dramatic late equalizer against Portugal in the round of 32 when it detected the slightest of touches from Igor Mantanovic and ruled Josko Gvardiol’s goal offside. There were concerns going into the tournament that FIFA’s introduction of dynamic pricing would make game tickets unaffordable for average fans. Some critics accused FIFA of a “monumental betrayal.” Official ticket prices on general sale ranged from \$140 to \$2,735 for group stage matches and up to \$8,680 for the final, far beyond the prices at the previous World Cup in Qatar in 2022. After criticism FIFA said it would offer a selection of \$60 tickets for every game to the 48 national federations participating. FIFA’s resale market place allowed sellers to list tickets for massively more than face value, including ones for the final for just under \$2.3 million. FIFA didn’t control resale pricing, but took a cut from sales. For all the criticism, fans still turned up in big numbers, even for games that didn’t feature marquee teams or players. FIFA’s new hydration breaks midway through each half — a novelty for this World Cup — prompted loud jeers from fans inside the stadium, while former players were also critical. We’re in America, right? So, it’s like it is a timeout,” former Ireland international Roy Keane said on The Overlap podcast.

The breaks were introduced to help players deal with the summer heat, but FIFA stipulated they would occur regardless of the weather, venue or location. Coaches used them like timeouts to pass on in-game tactical instructions. Broadcasters, meanwhile, used them as an opportunity to take commercial breaks. It is unclear whether FIFA will implement hydration breaks at future World Cups, but the English Football Association said they were unlikely to be in place for the 2028 European Championship, co-hosted by England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It’s not unusual for politics and sport to intertwine at the World Cup. This time the biggest political tensions surrounded the national team of Iran. The war in the Middle East raised doubts about whether the Iranian team would show up at all. It did, but only after moving its base camp from Arizona to Mexico. Its participation was overshadowed by visa issues, with the U.S. refusing visas to several members of Iran’s delegation. The Iranians also complained about travel restrictions, including having to leave the U.S. immediately after each match.

While the Trump administration’s travel restrictions on a series of countries prevented some fans from traveling to the U.S., there were no reports of the aggressive immigration enforcement that some human rights groups had feared could take place around World Cup stadiums. Besides the final, Trump didn’t attend any World Cup games. However, his relationship with FIFA president Gianni Infantino came into sharp focus when U.S. striker Folarin Balogun’s one game ban for a red card was suspended ahead of the team’s round of 16 game against Belgium.

India name 36-member squad for ISSF World Cup in Hangzhou led by Manu Bhaker and Swapnil Kusale

GNS News Agency, July 23

New Delhi: India have named a strong 36-member squad for the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun in Hangzhou, China, with Olympic medalists Manu Bhaker and Swapnil Kusale leading the challenge in the prestigious competition scheduled from July 20 to 29

The Indian contingent features a blend of experienced Olympians and emerging talent across rifle, pistol, and shotgun disciplines, with athletes set to compete in both individual and mixed-team events. Joining Manu and Swapnil are established names such as Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Esha Singh, Suruchi, Elavenil Valarivan, Sift Kaur Samra, Sonam Uttam Maskar, Anish Bhanwala, Raiza Dhillon, Ganemat Sekhon and Olympian Anant Jeet Singh Naruka.

In the rifle events, Parth Rakesh Mane, Himanshu Dhillon, Shahu Tushar Mane and Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil will represent India in the men’s 10m Air Rifle, while Elavenil Valarivan, Sonam Uttam Maskar and Sakshi Sunil Padekar have been selected for the women’s competition. The men’s 50m Rifle 3 Positions squad comprises Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Niraj Kumar and Rudranksh Balasaheb Patil, while Ashi Chouksey, Vidarsa K. Vinod and Sift Kaur Samra will compete in the women’s event.

India’s pistol campaign will be spearheaded by Suruchi, Sainyam and Esha Singh in the women’s 10m Air Pistol, with Kedarling B. Uchaganve, Kamaljeet and Aakash Bhardwaj featuring in the men’s event. The women’s 25m Pistol team includes Manu Bhaker, Esha Singh and Rahi Sarnobat, while Anish Bhanwala, Omkar Singh and



Bhavesh Shekhawat have been named in the men’s 25m Rapid Fire Pistol squad. In the shotgun events, Udavir Singh Jajee, Bhowneesh Mendiratta and Vivaan Kapoor will compete in the men’s Trap, while Pragati Dubey, Kirti Gupta and Rajeshwari Kumari make up the women’s Trap team. The men’s Skeet squad consists of Gurjoat Singh Khangura, Parampal Singh Guron and Abhay Singh Sekhon, while Ganemat Sekhon, Darshna Rathore and Yashasvi Rathore will represent India in the women’s Skeet competition. India will also field teams in the 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team, 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team and Trap Mixed Team events. Competition begins on July 22, with the first medals to be decided in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team and the men’s 10m Air Rifle. The tournament will conclude on July 28 with the finals of the 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team and Trap Mixed Team events.

India women’s hockey team builds momentum ahead of 2026 FIH World Cup

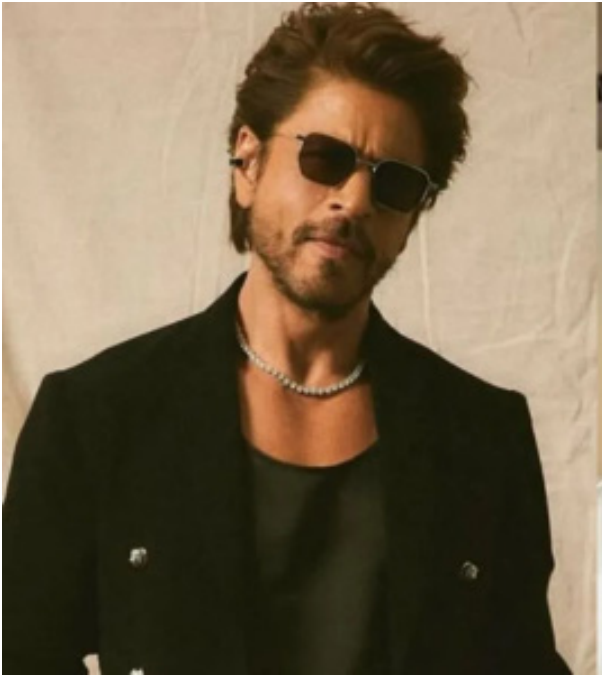
GNS News Agency, July 23

Hyderabad: The Indian women’s team’s journey to the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026 has been defined by resilience, determination and an unwavering belief in its abilities. From the disappointment of narrowly missing direct qualification at the Women’s Asia Cup 2025 to sealing a World Cup berth in the qualifiers on home soil before lifting the FIH Nations Cup title in New Zealand, the past year has showcased the character and steady progress of a squad that now heads to international hockey’s biggest stage with confidence and momentum.

The showpiece event, jointly hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands, will be held from 15 to 30 August 2026. Drawn in Pool D, India will face China, England and South Africa in the group stage. The team will play all its pool matches at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amstelveen, Netherlands, opening its campaign against China on 16 August, followed by South Africa on 18 August and England on 20 August. India came agonisingly close to securing direct qualification during the Asia Cup 2025. After an impressive run to the final, India fell short against hosts China, missing out on the automatic World Cup berth. While the defeat was a setback, it also became a turning point, as the squad used the experience as motivation to refine its preparations and focus on the next opportunity to keep its World Cup dream alive. The team regrouped at the FIH Hockey Women’s World Cup Qualifiers in Hyderabad in March 2026. Competing in front of home supporters under Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne, India remained unbeaten on their way to the final, sealing qualification for the World Cup with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Italy in the semi-final. Although England edged out India in the final, the silver medal capped

off a successful campaign as the team booked its place in the showpiece FIH event. Experienced forward Navneet Kaur was one of India’s standout performers during the qualifiers, finishing with four goals, including a hat-trick against Wales, and was deservedly named the ‘Player of the Tournament’. The team’s biggest statement came at the Nations Cup in New Zealand last month, where India remained unbeaten throughout the tournament to lift the title and secure promotion back to the FIH Pro League. India opened the tournament with a spirited 3-2 comeback victory over the United States after trailing by two goals before registering victories over Japan and Uruguay to top the group. The Salima Tete-led team then produced a commanding 6-0 win over Chile in the semi-final before overcoming New Zealand 2-0 in the title clash. Drag-flicker Deepika’s six-goal haul saw her finish as the joint top scorer of the tournament, underlining the attacking depth India will carry into the World Cup. The past year has also been marked by several significant individual milestones within the squad. Navneet Kaur completed 200 international caps during the Women’s Asia Cup 2025 before adding the ‘Player of the Tournament’ honour at the World Cup Qualifiers. Defender Nikki Pradhan also reached the landmark of 200 international appearances during the qualifiers in Hyderabad, while captain Salima celebrated her 150th international cap in the tournament’s final against England. With recent success and a squad that blends experience and youth, India will head to Belgium and the Netherlands carrying confidence, momentum and belief that they can compete with the very best. As the countdown to the World Cup enters its final stretch, the team will aim to translate its recent progress into a memorable campaign on the global stage.

Annu Kapoor disagrees Shah Rukh Khan is the ‘last superstar’: ‘Will he be relevant in 2045?’



More than a decade ago, when Shah Rukh Khan appeared on Anupam Kher's talk show Kuch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai, he made a statement that has often resurfaced over the years. "Main modest hoon, but I'll tell you honestly? I am the last of the stars," he had said. While many have echoed that sentiment, his Darr co-star Annu Kapoor doesn't agree. In a recent interview, Annu dismissed the idea that Shah Rukh would be the "last superstar." "I don't think so," he said. Explaining his point, Annu told Hindi Rush, "For years, the media has been creating this narrative that a particular person is the last superstar. Similar things were said during Rajesh Khanna's time. Looking back, nobody in this industry has come close to matching the kind of innings Amitabh Bachchan, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle have had. It has become very difficult for anyone to sustain such a long career."

Without directly naming Shah Rukh Khan, Annu continued, "The actor you're referring to started around 1992.

That makes it about 34 years. If you subtract 34 from Amitabh Bachchan's 53-year career, there are still 19 years left. Do you think it is possible for Shah Rukh Khan to remain equally relevant for another 19 years? I'm not taking his name on purpose. Will he still be relevant in 2045? I don't think so." He was quick to add, however, "But nobody can take away the fact that Shah Rukh Khan is the second-richest actor in the world." Asked about his experience of working with Shah Rukh in Darr, Annu initially said, "I have never worked with him." When reminded that the two had shared screen space in Yash Chopra's 1993 thriller, he responded, "I don't remember. He was extremely new then. I don't remember what we spoke about. You should ask him if he remembers working with me and whether he learnt something from me."

He added, "Yash Chopra had asked me to do the film. I had just three days of shooting and wasn't involved much. I have nothing to do with Shah Rukh Khan. And when I have nothing to do with someone, all I have for them are blessings and prayers." Despite disagreeing with the "last superstar" label, Annu had only good things to say about Shah Rukh as a person. "I have definitely heard that he is a very good father, husband and an excellent brother. That is what should be remembered. Superstars come and go, but a man who cares for his sister and his family—that is his biggest achievement," he said. Shah Rukh made the now-famous remark during his appearance on Anupam Kher's chat show Kuch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai in 2014. When Anupam asked whether he believed another actor could enjoy the same level of stardom in the future, Shah Rukh replied, "Nahi, aisa hoga nahi. Main modest hoon, but I'll tell you honestly? I am the last of the stars." The statement has since sparked frequent debate among fans and the film industry. Vivek Oberoi had a different take. Earlier, actor Vivek Oberoi had also questioned the permanence of stardom. In an interview with Pinkvilla, he said, "Which film starring an actor from the 1960s do people talk about today? Eventually, everyone becomes history. In 2050, people might ask, 'Who is Shah Rukh Khan?'" Drawing a comparison with Raj Kapoor, Vivek added, "You and I may call Raj Kapoor the god of cinema, but if you ask many youngsters who are fans of Ranbir Kapoor, they may not even know who Raj Kapoor was. That's how history works. Over time, even the biggest stars can fade from public memory."

Hema Malini breaks down, says daughters Esha, Ahana struggling after Dharmendra's death

Veteran actor and BJP MP Hema Malini turned emotional while speaking about her husband, legendary actor Dharmendra, who died last year after a long illness. Looking back at their decades-long journey together, she described him as her biggest supporter, saying his encouragement played a crucial role in shaping both her personal life and professional career. Speaking about Dharmendra's unwavering support, Hema shared with Republic World, "I feel very uncomfortable talking about that, but I am really grateful to the Almighty for giving me such a wonderful soulmate whose memories I will cherish till the end of my life. There cannot be anybody who can replace him. He was such a strong pillar of strength in my life, in my career, everything."

She went on to reveal that Dharmendra never expected her to step away from her career after marriage. Instead, he motivated her to continue doing what she loved. "He allowed me to do everything after marriage. He never said, 'Sit at home.' He knew that I am an artist, I am a dancer. He had seen my growth, so he always encouraged me to continue my films and my dance. He would always say, 'You must keep on doing it. Don't stop anything!'" shared Hema Malini. The veteran actor also spoke about Dharmendra's deep love for family and togetherness. "He was very fond of family, of all of us saying together. He always kept saying, 'Stay together. Never be alone. Always be with the children,'" she shared. While Hema expressed gratitude for the beautiful life they shared, she admitted that the emotional void remains, especially for their daughters, Esha and Ahana and said, "I am happy, but at the same time I feel very sad when I see both my daughters deeply hurt that Papa is not around. That void can never be fulfilled."

The veteran actor Hema Malini had an emotional moment when she was surprised with heartfelt messages from her daughters, Ahana Deol and Esha Deol. The touching tributes came after Hema reflected on her life with Dharmendra, making the conversation even more special. The first surprise was a letter penned by Ahana, who expressed admiration for her mother's resilience and lifelong dedication. Reading the letter aloud, the host shared Ahana's words: "It's almost impossible to keep anything from you because you're such a huge part of our lives. I want you to know that I'm not only proud of you but always amazed by how many feathers you have in your cap."

She went on to praise Hema's courage, writing, "You've shown me what it means to be truly resilient—facing challenges even when you've been really scared, and knowing that whatever happens, it's always enough just to be yourself. Your personality speaks volumes—pride with dignity,



genuineness with grace, and love without limits. These are the values you and Dad have given us." Ahana also reflected on the bond Hema shared with Dharmendra, saying, "Your bond is what has shaped us into who we are today. I cherish every moment of seeing you both together and every memory we've shared as a family." Calling her mother an inspiration, she added, "Your ambition and motivation are so youthful and inspiring. Whether it's your graceful dance performances, your incredible body of work, or your dedication to serving the community, you inspire us every single day. You're a powerhouse, but above all, you're the most wonderful mother and grandmother anyone could ask for. I love you immensely." The surprises continued with a voice message from Esha Deol, who spoke candidly about her admiration for both her parents and her mother's strength. Hema Malini was seen wiping off tears during the recording.

In the emotional recording, Esha said, "I admire you so much and I love you deeply. Every phase of life has brought us closer as mother and daughter. The whole world knows you as the Dream Girl, but I'm proud to be known as Hema Malini and Dharmendra's daughter." She thanked both her parents for the life and values they had given their children. "What you both have done for us as parents is something I truly feel blessed for. It's an honour to carry forward your legacy in whatever way we can. We are so proud of everything you've achieved and the way you've worked so hard throughout your life." Esha concluded the message with words that visibly moved Hema. "I'm here with you. I'm your pillar. I love you so much, Mom. You're such a strong woman. The way you hold yourself together and handle your emotions isn't easy. Have a wonderful show. I love you, and I'll see you soon when you're back home," shared Esha.

‘Jana Nayagan’ set for grand global release amid massive fan frenzy

Chennai: The re-edited 'Jana Nayagan'-the final film of C Joseph Vijay before he took charge as Tamil Nadu chief minister in May—is set for a grand global release on July 23, its production house KVN has said, amid mounting excitement among fans. The production house announced bookings for the film across nearly 8,000 screens globally, spread across 30 countries and Indian states, and bookings surged at remarkable speed. According to a source, over 3,500 shows are planned in Tamil Nadu for the movie, which has a total runtime of 3 hours and 3 minutes. The number is expected to increase, the source added. On the massive anticipation surrounding 'Jana Nayagan', a source in the Theatre Owners Association said there was "tremendous pressure" for ticket bookings in the state. Theatres were struggling to accommodate the high demand, he added. On box office expectations, he said there was a possibility of the film entering the Rs 1,000 crore club. The film's journey to certification was marred by significant delays, legal interventions and piracy issues. "Film leak" won't hurt the industry or producers, he said, adding that such leaks do not

reduce theatrical audiences as people would still prefer to watch a film in a theatre. Booking for the film opened to a massive response, with Rs 10.60 crore in tracked advance ticket sales recorded within hours. Tamil Nadu, where pre-sales began on July 19, reported phenomenal bookings, with single screens and multiplexes together selling over 90,000 tickets within hours of the window opening. In Chennai, Kamala Cinemas sold over 10,000 tickets within minutes of opening the portal, and Mayajaal Multiplex sold out 48 shows in less than an hour. The state government has capped ticket prices at Rs 190 in Chennai to regulate the fan frenzy and ensure the safety of the people. 'Jana Nayagan' is scheduled to be screened across 900 screens in Tamil Nadu. Despite an earlier leak, the film has continued to draw great interest. Film producer Venkat K Narayana confirmed the theatrical release on July 23 and said the film underwent modifications, including an update to the title card on posters to reflect Vijay's position as the CM. The film has generated huge excitement, being widely seen as Vijay's farewell to cinema as he now devotes himself full-time to politics.

Married at 19, Naseeruddin Shah was ‘obnoxious’ to first wife; ‘absent dad’ to daughter Heeba



Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah are often regarded as one of Bollywood's most enduring couples, admired for their honesty, mutual respect and decades-long companionship. But years before marrying Ratna in 1982, Naseeruddin went through a deeply troubled first marriage with Purveen Murad aka Manara Sikri (the sister of actor Surekha Sikri), with whom he had a daughter, Heeba. In his autobiography And Then One Day, the veteran actor looks back on that phase with remarkable candour, admitting he was an emotionally immature husband and an absent father in his early twenties. The story dates back to the late 1960s, when a 19-year-old Naseeruddin Shah, then studying at Aligarh Muslim University, had fallen in love with theatre. While his family strongly opposed his acting ambitions, he found unwavering support in Purveen Murad, a 34-year-old medical intern at the same university. Encouraged by the only person who truly believed in his dream, Naseer fell deeply in love with her despite their 15-year age gap, and the two eventually got married.

Film star Naseeruddin Shah in film JALWA. Express archive photo *** Local Caption *** Film star Naseeruddin Shah in film JALWA. Express archive photo Film star Naseeruddin Shah in film JALWA. Express archive photo The age difference, however, was not their biggest challenge. Both families opposed the marriage for different reasons. Naseer's family objected because Purveen was a divorcee with two children, while her family feared the young actor would eventually change his mind. To reassure them, Naseer even agreed to pay alimony in the event of a divorce, little knowing that the marriage would soon begin to unravel. The birth of their first child changed every-

thing Within a year of their wedding, Purveen gave birth to their daughter, Heeba. Instead of bringing them closer, the arrival of their child widened the emotional distance between the couple. In his memoir, Naseer takes full responsibility for the failure of his marriage. He writes, "Through the period of her pregnancy, Purveen had turned really moody, and my utter incomprehension of the miracle occurring within her and total oblivion to what was expected of me didn't help. Many serious arguments, which I always got the worst of, were the result." Naseeruddin Shah and Heeba Shah in film RVISMAT. Express archive photo Naseeruddin Shah and Heeba Shah in film RVISMAT. Express archive photo Looking back at himself as a 21-year-old, the actor admits he was hopelessly self-absorbed and incapable of supporting his wife emotionally. "I was incapable of contributing in any way at all to making her feel good about herself. I found the bar on sex not easy to handle either. My attentions had already begun to wander and were beginning to zero in on R, a rather good-looking second-year student who, as a whore in the NSD production of The Threepenny Opera, had earlier caught my fancy." By the time Purveen entered the final trimester of her pregnancy, Naseer had joined the National School of Drama, where his aspirations increasingly overshadowed his responsibilities at home.

"As for me, without a clue of the responsibilities it entailed, the trouble that's part of the whole deal, and then the indescribable joy it brings, I had no time to spare for the life I was helping bring into the world; only my own gratification took priority, nothing else mattered," he writes. The actor also confessed that he remained largely oblivious to everything his wife was going through while preparing for the birth of their child. "I did occasionally steal some roses from the university garden and bring them to Purveen in my cycle basket. That pleased her, but apart from that I played the part of the obnoxious adolescent to perfection. The role of father was way beyond my ken." He recalls being reprimanded by his mother-in-law and slowly beginning to help with household chores, including washing dishes. Yet emo-

tionally, he continued to drift away. Film star Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah and Heeba Shah in Urdu play ISMAT APA KE NAAM. (Photo: Express Archive) Film star Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah and Heeba Shah in Urdu play ISMAT APA KE NAAM. (Photo: Express Archive)

"I slowly began to resent this child who was coming between me and the only woman who had ever given me any attention; and when the baby finally arrived, the neglect I displayed still shames me deeply all these decades later." Four days after Heeba's birth, he had to return to NSD because missing classes meant losing a part of his scholarship. Although Heeba's arrival briefly softened the relationship between Naseer and his father, the distance between him and Purveen only continued to grow. "I was insecure, ill-adjusted." Heeba's arrival actually caused Baba and me to be civil to each other for a while, but now the gulf with Purveen had widened. Her whole life now revolved around Heeba and she and I had precious little to say to each other anymore. The stimulation of being on the cusp of a life of professional acting ensured that I didn't miss her at all. "My indifference to Heeba can only be explained, though not condoned, by the fact that I myself was then an insecure, ill-adjusted twenty-one-year-old with absolutely no conception of what it took to rear a newborn, and I completely shirked my share of the duties while idiotically attempting at the same time to assert my rights as a husband." As communication between the couple broke down, the marriage reached its lowest point. "The only way of dealing with a wife, in the world according to the Shahs, was with firmness and authority. Not unaware that I was thoroughly incapable of either, I retreated into a resentful shell. It hurt to know I was no longer the most important thing in Purveen's life." He also admits that he remained emotionally detached from his daughter for years. "I have no idea in what sort of light I will appear if I say that for an unconscionably long time I felt nothing whatsoever for the child Heeba, but it is necessary that I confess it. She didn't figure at all; it was almost as if she didn't even exist."

By then, Naseer had already met Ratna Pathak during his theatre days. Although the two fell in love, they could not marry until 1982 because his divorce from Purveen had not been finalised. According to the actor, arranging the agreed settlement took several years. In his memoir, he describes Ratna as the "only love" of his life. Ratna Pathak Shah and Naseeruddin Shah at their Mumbai home. The couple in the play Dear Liar. Express archive photo. Ratna Pathak Shah and Naseeruddin Shah at their Mumbai home. The couple in the play Dear Liar. Express archive photo.

Their marriage, too, came with its share of challenges. Speaking to The Lallantop, Ratna recalled that both families had reservations about the relationship because acting was considered an uncertain profession. "So, this was the problem, and on top of it, he was an actor. Back then, Naseer would often hear, 'How can a guy with a face like that become an actor?' Even if you are a wonderful actor, survival in this profession is never guaranteed. It's a tough life." She added, "My parents were worried about how we would survive. My father died very young, but my mother and Naseer eventually became very close. So it wasn't a problem at all. Naseer's family accepted me happily and without any questions."

Despite the initial hiccups, Heeba and Naseer share a strong bond. Meanwhile, Parveen is believed to have moved abroad with Heeba, where she continued practising medicine. Naseer had little contact with his daughter during her early years. As he grew older, however, the actor made efforts to rebuild their relationship. Heeba began visiting him during school vacations, and after Purveen's death, she moved in with her father. Today, she shares a close bond with Naseer, Ratna, and her half-brothers, Vivaan and Imaad Shah. The family has frequently collaborated on theatre productions.

Speaking about working with her father and step-mother, Heeba told Aadyam Theatre, "They have been strict but also kind at the same time. Of course, we all got yelled at. They have also given me the space and appreciated me when I worked hard. They made sure I was always on my toes." Reflecting on fatherhood years later, Naseeruddin admitted during a conversation with Yuva, "I have been a very strict father. I don't want my children to be intimidated by me or take me too seriously. I don't know how much of that I have achieved. I can say that I have never been an ideal father because often my anger issues came in between."

Actor Naresh calls E20 petrol a ‘nightmare,’ says it cost his friend Rs 3.5 lakh

Telugu actor Naresh Vijaya Krishna has criticised the central government's ethanol-blended petrol policy in a detailed post on X, calling it a "nightmare" for vehicle owners and warning that the party could face electoral consequences if the issue is not addressed. Naresh said a friend, whom he described as a BJP sympathiser, recently had to spend Rs 3.5 lakh replacing engine valves on a new Toyota Camry due to damage caused by ethanol-blended fuel. He added that if the same happened to his own Porsche Panamera, the repair cost would be approximately Rs 12 lakh. To avoid that risk, he said he has been forced to switch to high octane 100 petrol, which costs Rs 165 per litre.

"This ethanol petrol is giving heart attacks from bike users to high-end car users," Naresh wrote, adding, "What about bike users or anyone for that matter? Nightmares." I am not anti national but this ethanol Petrol is giving heart attacks from bike users to high-end car users. My friend (a sympathiser of BJP) who bought Toyota Camry recently had to change valves of the engine. Which cost him 3.5 lks. If the same happens to my new Porsche...

While making it clear that he was "not anti-national," Naresh said the government's decision to roll out E20 petrol, which contains 20 percent ethanol, appeared rushed and poorly planned. "As a former leader of BJP, I understand the party has a strong think tank with plans A, B and C. But this decision to protect the environment at the cost of crores of people certainly looks very hasty and radical," he wrote. He pointed to Brazil as an example of a country that implemented ethanol blending successfully by doing it in phases over time, and questioned why India chose to push it through at the pace it did. "Small countries like Brazil have successfully implemented ethanol in a phase-wise manner and succeeded. Why the hurry?" he wrote. Naresh also tied the issue to the BJP's electoral prospects, noting that the party was forced into a coalition government after the 2024 general elections and has approximately two years before



the next one. "With about two years for the next elections and the last results which ended up in a coalition government as any indication, this is a red signal for the BJP," he said. Naresh, is a veteran of Telugu cinema with over five decades in the industry and approximately 200 films to his name. He began as a child artist at the age of nine in Pandanti Kapuram in 1972 and became a lead actor with the Jandhyala-directed hit Nalugu Stambhalata in 1982 when he was just 18. Through the 1980s and 90s, he was a familiar face in Telugu cinema with films like Jamba Lakidi Pamba, Sri Kanaka Mahalaxmi Recording Dance and Chitram Bhalaru Vichitram, before transitioning into character roles in later years with notable appearances in Drushyam, Guntur Talkies and Chandamama Kathalu.