

SC to take up pleas on police ‘excesses’ today

The Supreme Court will on Monday hear petitions alleging police brutality during the recent CJP protests over the NEET paper leak. The matter will be taken up by a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, which had earlier indicated that it may constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by a former Supreme Court judge, to probe allegations made by protesters and pellet-gun victims and determine whether attacks on police personnel were carried out by students or by “miscreants”.

IMD Forecasts Light Rain, Strong Winds for Telangana

Hyderabad: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Hyderabad said multiple districts will observe light to moderate rainfall over the coming week across Telangana. For Monday and Tuesday in Hyderabad, IMD forecast partly cloudy conditions.

Across GHMC, CMC and MMC jurisdictions, Musheerabad received the highest rainfall on Sunday with 18.8 mm while Kapra received 18.5 mm.



Stay High On Life, Not Drugs: Modi

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged the country's youth to take a pledge against substance abuse, saying drugs may provide a temporary “high” but ultimately destroy careers and personal lives.

Launching the ‘Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan’ virtually, Modi said a developed India requires physically and mentally fit, confident young people who stay away from destructive habits.

“Today, as the nation has set the goal of a Viksit Bharat, it is imperative that the country's youth remain physically and mentally fit, brimming with self-confidence, and permanently steer clear of destructive habits like drugs,” he said.

Describing drug abuse as a threat to national development, the Prime Minister alleged that hostile countries use drug trafficking as part of their strategy to weaken India. “Drugs can give you a high for some time, but they make your entire career and personal life low,” he said.

Modi said people who overcome addiction should not face social stigma but be respected and given a second chance. “Society should respect them, embrace them and give them a second chance,” he said.

The campaign was launched in the virtual presence of a large number of young participants, including representatives of Gen-Z. Referring to India's youth as the country's “Amrit generation”, Modi said their energy, imagination and talent would play a crucial role in achieving the goal of a developed India

by 2047.

He said the campaign represented a collective resolve involving individuals, families, society and the nation. From Sunday, a 100-week nationwide public participation drive will be held, with activities every Sunday focusing on art, culture, sports, meditation, spirituality and community service to spread awareness against substance abuse.

“The coming 100 Sundays will mark 100 strong steps towards a drug-free India,” he said.

Modi said addiction not only harms an individual but also devastates families by shattering the hopes and dreams of parents and siblings. He urged families not to hide addiction out of fear of social stigma, but to communicate openly with affected members and seek medical and professional help.

Highlighting the government's anti-drug measures, the Prime Minister said strict action was being taken against drug traffickers, with arrests increasing significantly and narcotics worth thousands of crores of rupees seized across the country.

The ‘Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan’ aims to inspire young people to remain drug-free and become ambassadors of positive social change in their communities through a 100-week nationwide awareness campaign.

Hyderabad Police Deploy AI Tech at Bonalu Festival, Nab 13 Suspects



Hyderabad: The city police for the first time deployed an artificial intelligence (AI)-based crowd management system at the Secunderabad Sri Ujjaini Mahankali Bonalu festival.

The system via facial recognition helped police detain 13 suspects, including those harassing women.

In one instance, the Secunderabad zonal IT team spotted a suspect attempting to rob a devotee, and relayed the information to a She Teams personnel in plain clothes. The suspect was promptly apprehended.

The system would be deployed at similar events and would also be linked to drones, city police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar said. “We can prevent crime, identify, arrest and prosecute the culprits. We are waiting for the government's approval.”

Earlier in the day, Sajjanar along with senior officials examined the working of the system set up at the Mahankali police station, watching the proceedings on three large monitors, “The technology is remarkable,” Sajjanar said.

The facial recognition aspect will be used to identify suspects, DCP, traffic, Avinash Kumar told Deccan Chronicle. It will also predict situations based on the number of devotees entering and exiting the temple as well as people waiting in queues and can be used in emerging crowd control scenarios.

The software is used in the advanced countries. The system can be monitored from main command control centre, said Sayed Amjad Hussain, CEO and founder of BYC AI, said.

PM Talks Of Forgiving Students; Govt Owes Them Justice: Rahul

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks of “forgiving” students, but it is the government that owes the students truth, justice and an apology. Gandhi made the remarks in an Instagram post as he shared a video of his interaction with the families of Gopika, Roshini and Vetri Anandan, who committed suicide following the NEET paper leak and cancellation, during his visit to Tamil Nadu on Saturday.

The leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said, “During my visit to Tamil Nadu, I met the families of Gopika, Roshini and Vetri Anandan, three young medical aspirants whose lives were lost following the NEET paper leak and the cancellation of the examination. Each family was left with the same painful question: why should honest, hardworking students pay the price for a dishonest system?”

A leaked paper led to a cancelled examination, a forced NEET re-exam and unbearable pressure on young minds, Gandhi said.

Behind every statistic is a child with a dream and a family now living with an irreplaceable loss, he said.

“I listened to their pain. Our fight is for an education system where hard work is respected, examinations are fair and no student is pushed to the edge because institutions failed them,” the former Congress chief said.

“The Prime Minister speaks of ‘forgiving’ students. After listening to these parents, my conviction is even stronger: India's students need no forgiveness. The government owes them truth, justice and an apology,” Gandhi asserted

In the video, Gandhi is seen interacting with the families of the students who committed suicide.

In Mamallapuram, interacting with the relatives of those who took the extreme step vis-a-vis NEET, Gandhi said, “Nothing is more painful than seeing a parent grieve their child.

“Behind every young life lost is a family carrying pain



that will never leave them and serious questions about a broken education system. Leaked papers. Cancelled exams. Years of preparation destroyed overnight. Our students are told to work honestly in a system that is not honest with them.

“The tears of parents who have lost their children, their wailing; there is no greater sorrow than this. This grief will live with them forever and along with it remain many questions about this broken and corrupt education system,” he had said in a post on X

Referring to paper leaks and cancelled exams, he said, “Prime Minister has the audacity to talk about forgiving the students.”

“Has he even met a single grieving family who has lost their child, or those whose entire savings, life, time and dreams have been snatched away by paper leaks? The answer is no! India's students do not need the Prime Minister's forgiveness; Modi ji should apologise to them,” the Congress leader said.

In a video message on Friday, Modi said he and his late mother were subjected to abusive language at Jantar Mantar during the protests over alleged NEET irregularities. He asserted that dragging such “misguided children” to court would not solve the problem and hence, he wanted to forgive them.

AP ‘Preferred Destination’ For Global Investments And Innovation-driven Partnerships: Naidu

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday highlighted Andhra Pradesh's rapid economic transformation, investor-friendly policies and the state's immense potential for investment, innovation and international collaboration as he met an Australian delegation.

The delegation was led by assistant minister for international education and assistant minister for citizenship, customs and multicultural affairs Julian Hill at his camp office in Amaravati.

The meeting marked a significant milestone in the AP-Australia relations, with the two sides signing four pacts on clean energy, advanced manufacturing, inclusive education, student mental health and skill development. These, the government said, would pave the way for long-term collaboration in education, research, technology and workforce development.

Naidu said AP is emerging as a preferred destination for global investments and innovation-driven partnerships. He outlined the state's vision of becoming a hub for advanced manufacturing, renewable energy and knowledge-based industries.

He felicitated Julian Hill with a traditional shawl and presented him with a pack of Araku Coffee and a commemorative memento.

The MoUs were signed in the presence of education minister Nara Lokesh and Julian Hill. Lokesh said, “Andhra Pradesh is pursuing one of India's most ambitious renewable energy programmes. Our vision goes beyond

creating renewable energy capacity—we are building a complete ecosystem that combines advanced manufacturing, world-class research, innovation and highly skilled talent.”

“Our partnership with IIT Tirupati and UNSW, one of the world's leading universities, will help establish Andhra Pradesh as a centre for clean energy innovation while preparing the next generation of engineers, researchers and entrepreneurs who will power India's energy transition,” he said.

The first agreement brings together the state government's Centre of Excellence for Energy Transition (CoEET), Visakhapatnam, IIT Tirupati and University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, to establish a centre of excellence for solar manufacturing at IIT Tirupati.

The initiative aims to position AP as India's leading centre for solar manufacturing research, innovation, skill development and technology commercialisation.

The second MoU, signed by UNSW, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam (SPMVV) and Samagra Shiksha, Andhra Pradesh, focuses on strengthening inclusive education by equipping teachers with the skills needed to effectively support children with autism and other neurodiverse learning needs.

The third agreement enables the State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE) and Australia's Rebound to jointly implement a technology-enabled pilot project promoting student mental health and well-being across selected higher education institutions. The programme will



be offered free of cost to participating institutions.

The fourth MoU was signed between the State Skill Development Corporation and Australia's Dynamic Learning Services to collaborate on vocational education, workforce development, industry-aligned training and international employment pathways aimed at enhancing the global employability of Andhra Pradesh's youth.

Education secretary Kona Sasidhar, school education commissioner Tameem Ansaria, higher education commissioner Narayana Bharat Gupta, APSSDC managing director Ganesh Kumar, IIT Tirupati director Prof Satyanarayan Gannavarapu, SPMVV vice-chancellor Prof V Uma, Australian consul-general in Chennai Silai Zaki and others.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

7-point agenda for CJP — the bigger battle for future of India's youth

The resignation of a Union Minister following sustained student protests is much more than a political event. It demonstrates that peaceful, organised youth movements can influence public policy. Perhaps the most inspiring statement came from one of the movement's leaders: "Don't make a hero out of me." Democracies are strengthened not by heroes but by ideas and institutions.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has won its first battle. The greater challenge now is whether it can evolve from a protest movement into India's most respected youth policy movement. History shows that movements lose direction when they become partisan or rush into electoral politics. The CJP should remain independent, evidence-based, and focused on reforms that improve the lives of students. The three young faces who emerged at the forefront of the movement came from completely different worlds. Abhijeet Dipke studied journalism and public relations and built a career in political communications, including higher studies in Boston. Saurav Das pursued journalism and investigative reporting, focusing on governance and public accountability. Ashutosh Ranka graduated from IIT Kanpur, later specialised in public policy at the London School of Economics, and worked in global management consulting.

They did not grow up in the same city. They did not attend the same school or college. They did not build careers in the same profession. There was no traditional institutional network connecting them. Yet, when a national issue touched millions of students, they found one another, combined their complementary strengths, and transformed public anger into an organised, disciplined, and evidence-based movement.

Equally significant is what they represent. None of them is a doctor, even though they led a movement centred on medical admissions. Their collective expertise lay in communication, journalism, engineering, public policy, and strategy—skills that proved just as critical in influencing national debate. This may well be the new face of India's Generation Z leadership. The NEET agitation highlighted examination integrity. The next phase must focus on opportunity. Millions of young Indians are not defeated by examinations; they are defeated by the shortage of affordable, high-quality educational opportunities and the growing mismatch between education costs and employment outcomes. India's largest youth constituency is not the students who obtain subsidised government seats—it is the much larger group that does not. Every year over 22 lakh students write NEET while only a small fraction obtain government MBBS seats. In engineering too, more than one million aspirants eventually depend on private colleges. The challenge today is therefore not merely capacity—it is affordable access to quality education. The first reform must be expansion of medical education. India continues to compare doctors per million population with other countries. That benchmark measures healthcare availability after graduation. It does not measure educational opportunity. A second metric is required—medical seats per million youth (18–22 years), because young people, not the entire population, compete for these seats. India should adopt a national mission to double medical education capacity over the next decade while maintaining quality standards. The second battle is affordability. Admission without affordability is not access. Private MBBS course can cost Rs 50 lakh to over Rs 1 crore, while engineering in private colleges often costs between Rs 6 and Rs 20 lakh. AI-enabled learning, simulation laboratories.

Love marriage ends in tragedy... Husband kills wife..

.....Hanumakonda, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): The allegations that a woman was murdered by her husband on Saturday night in Krishna Colony, 4th Division under Kakatiya University police station limits in Hanumakonda district have shocked and alarmed locals. Police suspect that an ongoing family feud led to the crime. "According to preliminary information, the accused, a mason by profession, fell in love with the victim and married her about six years ago. The couple has two children. However, locals said that there have been frequent domestic disputes between the couple for some time." On Saturday night, the woman allegedly died after her hands and legs were tied and she was attacked on the neck with a sharp weapon. Immediately after receiving the information, the Kakatiya University police reached the spot, inspected the situation and collected evidence. "The body was shifted to a government hospital for postmortem. The police have registered a case and started an investigation. They are also investigating the exact reason behind the murder and whether a long-standing family feud led to the tragedy." "The incident left the couple's two young children motherless. What started as a love marriage ended in a heartbreaking tragedy. The shocking crime has deeply disturbed the local residents and the police have intensified their investigation.



Ponnam Prabhakar Offers Golden Bonam at Sri Ujjaini Mahankali Temple, Prays for Telangana's Prosperity

....Hyderabad correspondent, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): "Bonalu reflects Telangana's rich cultural heritage and traditions. We have prayed for timely rains, prosperity, good health and the continued progress of the State," Telangana Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar said after offering the traditional Golden Bonam and silk robes to Goddess Sri Ujjaini Mahankali on behalf of the State Government in Secunderabad on Sunday. Accompanied by his family, the minister offered the first Bonam and performed special rituals during the Ashada Bonalu celebrations. He said prayers were offered for abundant rainfall, a prosperous agricultural season, the success of every citizen in their profession and the smooth implementation of the State Government's welfare and development programmes. Ponnam Prabhakar said elaborate arrangements had been made for devotees attending the Bonalu festivities in Hyderabad. He noted that the city has a long tradition of celebrating the festival with participation cutting across caste and religious lines, reflecting Telangana's spirit of communal harmony. The minister said the free bus travel scheme for women was expected to increase the number of devotees visiting temples during the festivities. Recalling that the goddess had protected the region during difficult times in the past, he expressed confidence that Telangana would continue to receive her blessings and prayed for favourable weather despite concerns over climatic challenges. He also extended Bonalu greetings to the people of the State.



A Father's Debt Can Never Be Repaid: Municipal Chairman Palakurthi Sarangapani

....Wardhannapet/Jalli, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): The first death anniversary of late Palakurthi Yakaiah, father of Wardhannapet Municipal Chairman Palakurthi Sarangapani, was observed with devotion on Sunday at Jalli village in Narsampet Assembly constituency. On the occasion, Palakurthi Sarangapani and his wife Sujatha paid floral tributes to Yakaiah's portrait and fondly remembered his life and legacy. "Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Palakurthi Sarangapani said that whatever he has achieved in life is because of his parents. He became emotional while stating that he could never repay the debt he owes to his father, late Palakurthi Yakaiah, who worked hard to educate him and helped him reach his present position. He urged everyone to take good care of their parents and never neglect their well-being." Among those who attended the programme were Wardhannapet Mandal Congress Party President Poshala Venkanna Goud, Wardhannapet Agricultural Market Committee Chairman Narukudu Venkataiah, Wardhannapet Municipality Vice-Chairperson Nethavathi Shibarani Rajender, Wardhannapet Town Congress Party President Eega Damodar, councillors Tirupalli Vani Kumaraswamy, Kamili Kheema Naik and M.D. Apsar, Sammeta Srinivas Goud, former councillor Sammeta Sudheer Goud, Bakkatatla Raju Yadav, Gangadhar Rao, Hotel Poojari Srinu, Paka Sujatha, Lingam Rajitha Reddy, Kukkala Rakesh, along with municipal staff, Congress leaders, party workers, and a large number of local dignitaries, who paid rich tributes to the late Yakaiah.



CC Flooring Construction Taken Up at Sri Sri Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple UPPAL MLA BANDARI LAKSHMA REDDY

"UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): CC flooring works have been initiated at the premises of Sri Sri Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple in Cherlapally to enhance facilities for devotees. The development work has been taken up with the support of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. "Temple committee members said the project aims to provide better convenience and a safer environment for the large number of devotees visiting the temple. They expressed their gratitude to MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy for his continuous support towards the development of the temple. Speaking on the occasion, the temple committee members stated that they are committed to undertaking more development works in the future to further improve amenities for devotees. Local devotees appreciated the MLA's contribution and welcomed the initiative. "Villagers, temple committee members, and devotees participated in the programme.



Srinivas Nagar Welfare Society Elects New Committee Unanimously



.....Thotakura Chander Yadav elected President; Vemunuri Muralidhar chosen as General Secretary.BODUPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The Srinivas Nagar Welfare Society, Boduppal (Reg. No. 198/95), under the Boduppal Circle of the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation, unanimously elected its new executive committee during the Society's General Body Meeting held at the Community Hall on Sunday at 10:00 a.m. "A large number of society members attended the meeting and discussed various issues concerning the development and welfare of the colony. As the term of the previous committee had expired, the General Body resolved to constitute a new committee in accordance with the society's bylaws. "A three-member Election Committee comprising Prof. Anjaneyulu, Dr. B. Ramachandram, and Gangadhar was appointed as Returning Officers to conduct the election. After consulting the members and ensuring a cordial and unanimous process, the committee declared Thotakura Chander Yadav elected as President and Vemunuri Muralidhar elected as General Secretary, both unanimously. "The newly elected President and General Secretary expressed their gratitude to the Election Committee and all society members for conducting the election smoothly and peacefully. They also thanked the members for reposing confidence in the new leadership and assured them of working for the overall development and welfare of Srinivas Nagar Colony.

The trace of the week-old Kanarani Divyangu..!

.....Jawahar Nagar, August 2, Sada Nand, A mother of Akhil (24), who has been suffering from mental disability since childhood, has gone missing and has not been found anywhere even after a week. "Akhil, who lives near the Ambedkar Nagar water tank, went out on Sunday 26th July at 11 am and did not return home. "Akhil's whereabouts are not known for a week, and the family members are worried. "Ramachari and Dhanalakshmi's parents lodged a complaint with the police as they could not



find her in the houses of relatives and friends. "However, no information has been received so far. "Akhil, who is disabled, cannot speak properly, at least he cannot tell anyone his address or his mother's phone number. "Therefore, the family members and locals want the police to recognize this case as a special case and speed up the search. "If anyone has any information about this youth, people are requested to immediately inform the nearest police station or give information on 9866784884.

Implement Promises Made to Yadav Community : Yadav JAC

....Hyderabad, August 02 (Indian Chronicle): Yadav Joint Action Committee (JAC) State Chairman Dr. Dasari Ajay Kumar Yadav has urged Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to fulfil the promises made to the Yadav community during the Assembly elections, warning that the organisation would launch statewide protests if the assurances remain unimplemented. Addressing the Yadav JAC State Executive Committee meeting held at the JAC State Office on Sunday, Dr. Ajay Kumar Yadav



alleged that attacks on Backward Classes (BCs) and the Yadav community have increased since the Congress government came to power. He accused the government of conspiring to weaken BCs and Yadavs economically. He further alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched against Vatte Janayya Yadav and asserted that the Yadav JAC would extend its full support to him. He also claimed that no action was being taken against rice mills owned by members of the upper castes. Dr. Ajay Kumar Yadav demanded an allocation of ₹10,000 crore for the Yadav Corporation. He warned that if the government failed to implement its election promises, the Yadav JAC would intensify its agitation across the state. The meeting was attended by JAC Vice Chairman Chilukala Srinivas, Working President Shivashankar, Media Convener Prashanth, Publicity Secretary Arala Ramesh, Senior Advocate Nagula Srinivas, Venkateshwarlu, advisors Vasu K. Yadav, Narasimha, Thota Srinivas, IT Wing President Raju, and Ashok, along with Naragoni Srinivas.

Indira School, Nacharam – Investiture Ceremony

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, August 02: "The Investiture Ceremony was successfully conducted at Indira School, Nacharam. "The programme was attended by the School Director Anwar, Principal Shehnaz Begum, PET. Shekhar, and the Chief Guests Inspector Mansingh, SI S.K. Mybelly of Nacharam Police Station, and WSI Rajani. "On



this occasion, the newly elected Student Cabinet members were congratulated and encouraged to discharge their responsibilities with leadership, discipline, dedication, and a strong sense of responsibility. The guests also motivated the students to focus on their education, respect their parents and teachers, and grow into responsible citizens with strong moral values. "During the ceremony, badges and awards were presented to the Head Boy, Head Girl, and Sports Captains, and they were wished success in carrying out their leadership responsibilities.

Fan Symbol Panel Registers Resounding Victory in Sai Baba Colony Welfare Association Elections

“Anthati Bikshapathi Goud elected President with a huge majority of 79 votes; Subba Reddy elected General Secretary

*****UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“The elections to the Sai Baba Colony Welfare Association in Uppal were held peacefully and enthusiastically on Sunday, with a large number of residents exercising their franchise.”The Fan Symbol panel secured a convincing mandate from the colony residents and emerged victorious with a significant majority. In the polling, the Fan Symbol received 204 votes, while the rival Scissors Symbol secured 125 votes, giving the Fan panel a 79-vote majority.”Anthati Bikshapathi Goud was elected as the President, while Subba Reddy was elected as the General Secretary of the Welfare Association.”Following the announcement of the results, celebrations erupted across the colony. Supporters felicitated the winners with flower garlands and shawls, distributed sweets, and expressed their joy.Speaking on the occasion, newly elected President Anthati Bikshapathi Goud thanked every resident who reposed faith in the panel and assured that all election promises would be fulfilled. He said the new committee would give top priority to the colony's development by addressing issues such as sanitation, drinking water supply, street lighting, roads, and public safety.General Secretary Subba Reddy said the committee would work transparently with the cooperation of all residents and that the welfare of the colony would remain its primary objective. He also thanked the voters, party workers, and supporters for their overwhelming support.”Several colony elders, youth, women, and prominent residents congratulated the newly elected office-bearers and expressed confidence that the new committee would work collectively for the overall development and welfare of Sai Baba Colony.



Political Leaders Must Be Accountable to the People: BJP Medchal District General Secretary GONE SRINIVAS



*****BODUPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“The 389th consecutive Sunday “Gnanamala” tribute programme was held at the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Boduppal Circle of the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation under the leadership of Natti Maisaiah, State President of the Ambedkar Ashaya Sadhana Sangham.”BJP Medchal District General Secretary Gone Srinivas and Advocate Kiran attended the programme as chief guests. They paid floral tributes to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and remembered his immense contributions and sacrifices in drafting the Constitution of India.”Speaking on the occasion, Gone Srinivas said that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar dedicated his life to providing India with one of the finest Constitutions in the world. He noted that the Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens, in line with Ambedkar's ideals. However, he expressed concern that the laws enshrined in the Constitution are not being implemented fairly for everyone and that the weaker and underprivileged sections are still not receiving adequate justice.”He further stated that both the Central and State Governments should take strict action against political leaders involved in corruption and illegal activities, irrespective of their position or influence. He emphasized that everyone, regardless of status, must remain accountable under the Constitution and the rule of law.”Among those who participated in the programme were Garugula Yakaiah, Rapolu Venkatesh, Sai Bandari, Chilla Anjaiah, Ramakrishna, Galla Venkateswarlu, and others.

Tributes paid to Macherla Sambayya... Dr. Gogula Rana Pratap Reddy Attends Death Anniversary



*****Narasampeta, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): The first death anniversary of late Macherla Sambayya, a resident of ward 28 of Narasampeta town, was celebrated with devotion on Sunday in the presence of family members, relatives and well-wishers. BJP Warangal District General Secretary Dr. Gogula Rana Pratap Reddy attended the program and paid floral tributes to the portrait of the late leader.”On this occasion, Dr. Rana Pratap Reddy visited the family members of the deceased and expressed his deep condolences. Remembering the values, dedication and services provided by the late Sambayya to his family and society, he prayed for the peace of his soul. Wishing to give the family the strength and courage to overcome this loss, he assured them that he would always stand by them.”Various BJP leaders and party workers also paid floral tributes to the portrait of the late Macherla Sambayya. Later, Dr. Rana Pratap Reddy spoke to the family members and enquired about their well-being.”The event was attended by Juluri Manish, Konkisa Vignesh, Achcha Dayakar, Vijay Singh, Banoth Rajender, Gokula Sandeep, Tarun Sai and others.

40 Youth Join BRS, Former Mayor Jakka Venkat Reddy Welcomes New Members

*****MEDIPALLY , AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Around 40 youths from Medipally and Peerzadiguda divisions under the Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation joined the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) on Sunday. The induction programme was held at the BRS Party office in Peerzadiguda under the leadership of former co-option member Nazia Javed Khan.”Former Peerzadiguda Municipal Corporation Mayor Jakka Venkat Reddy welcomed the new members into the party by draping them with the party scarf. Addressing the gathering, he said that the youth are the driving force behind the nation's future and urged them to play an active role in strengthening Telangana's development.”He stated that under the leadership of BRS president and Telangana's first Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), the state achieved remarkable progress in various sectors. He recalled that BRS Working President K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) had promoted employment, innovation, and entrepreneurship by establishing world-class platforms such as T-Hub, enabling young people to showcase their talent globally.”Criticising the present Congress government, Venkat Reddy alleged that it had failed to fulfil the promises made during the elections. He said farmers, unemployed youth, students, and various sections of society were disappointed with the government's performance. He claimed that, as a result, young people across Telangana were once again turning towards the BRS.”He further said that the youth were extending their support to KTR's fight against what he described as the anti-people policies of both the Central and State governments, leading to an increasing number of youngsters joining the BRS.”Among those present were BRS General Secretary Yadavalli Raghuvardhan Reddy, senior leader Lethakula Raghupathi Reddy, former corporators Kolturi Mahesh, Madhusudan Reddy and Kaude Pochayya, Women's Wing President Nirmala, Minority President Jilani Pasha, Akula Madhukar, Shyamala Srinivas, Yasaram Srinivas, Munikuntla Kiran Goud, Pingali Jogi Reddy, Bullet Shankar, Praveen Reddy, Venkat, Chirra Santosh, Subhan, Gopal Reddy, Pannabhai, Amar Patel, along with several local leaders, party workers, and the newly inducted youth members.



BJP Focuses on GWMC Elections... Division-wise In-Charges Appointed: Ganta Ravi Kumar

“Warangal, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its preparations for the upcoming Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) elections, treating the polls as a prestigious electoral battle. With the objective of strengthening the party's organizational structure and effectively implementing election strategies at the grassroots level, BJP Warangal District President Ganta Ravi Kumar has issued orders appointing Zonal and Division In-Charges for each division.”According to party sources, the newly appointed in-charges will be responsible for coordinating party activities in their respective divisions, strengthening the booth-level organizational network, preparing party workers for the elections, and expanding the party's direct outreach to the public.”BJP District General Secretary Bakam Harishankar stated that the committees were constituted under the guidance and directions of BJP Telangana State President N. Ramchander Rao, State Election Affairs In-Charge Abhay Patil, State Organization General Secretary Chandrasekhar Tiwari, and District In-Charge Kondapalli Sridhar Reddy.”He further said that the party has prepared a comprehensive action plan aimed at securing victory in the forthcoming GWMC elections. The strategy includes coordinated efforts in every division, identifying public issues at the grassroots level, effectively communicating the party's policies to the people, strengthening booth-level structures, and energizing party cadres. He added that the primary objective of these appointments is to ensure effective election management and lead the BJP to victory in the civic polls.



VALLAPU JAGAN YADAV Appointed as Medchal-Malkajgiri Urban OBC District General Secretary- BJP Leaders Pay Courtesy Visit to MP Etela Rajender

*****UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Vallapu Jagan Yadav was appointed as the Medchal-Malkajgiri Urban OBC District General Secretary. On the occasion, he, along with OBC District President J.K. Shekhar Yadav, paid a courtesy visit to Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etela Rajender on Sunday.During the meeting, MP Etela Rajender felicitated Vallapu Jagan Yadav by draping him with a shawl and congratulated him on his new responsibility. He expressed confidence that Jagan Yadav would discharge his duties effectively and work to take the BJP's ideology and policies to the people in a wider and more impactful manner.Speaking on the occasion, Etela Rajender said that every party leader should work with dedication and commitment to strengthen the BJP. He advised Vallapu Jagan Yadav to focus on the welfare and empowerment of the OBC community, identify public issues, and strive for their resolution. He also urged him to work responsibly to enhance the party's support among the people.Expressing his gratitude, Vallapu Jagan Yadav thanked the BJP state and district leadership for entrusting him with the new responsibility. He assured that he would work in accordance with the party's ideology, dedicate himself to the development and welfare of the OBC community, and remain at the forefront in addressing public grievances.Among those present were OBC Committee Member and Joint Spokesperson Ulugonda Narayan Dasu, District Secretary Pisari Shankar, Rajender Goud, Assembly Co-convener Sabitha Yadav, along with several BJP leaders and party workers, who extended their congratulations to Vallapu Jagan Yadav on his appointment.



Heartwarming Moments with Children at Shelter Homes... Dr. Anitha Reddy's Unique Friendship Day Celebration“

“Hanumakonda, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): On the occasion of Friendship Day, Dr. Anita Reddy, Chairperson of Anurag Helping Society and a member of the Kakatiya University Governing Council, celebrated the day with children at Anand Nilayam Girls' Orphanage and Spandana Home for Mentally Challenged Persons in Hanumakonda. She tied friendship bands to the children, extended her heartfelt wishes, and spent quality time interacting with them.”Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Anita Reddy said that there could be no greater way to celebrate Friendship Day than by embracing children with love and extending a hand of friendship. She said that assuring the children, “I will always be there for you,” filled them with immense joy.”She remarked that, despite the many relationships in life, friendship is the most precious bond through which people share their joys and sorrows. She emphasized that friendship does not require the same age, status, or position; all it needs is a compassionate heart and a willingness to do good. She added that friendship and service are like her two eyes and that the ability to befriend everyone is one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon her by God.”The programme was attended by Sucharitha, Arvika Reddy, Raghava, Saritha, and the children from both shelter homes.



MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Inaugurates GS Fitness Gym in HB Colony

*****Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, August 2 :***** Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, along with former corporators Jeripothula Prabhudas and Gundarapu Srinivas Reddy, inaugurated the newly established GS Fitness Gym on HB Colony NFC Main Road, opposite Vasantha Reddy Sweet Shop, in Meerpet HB Colony Division on Sunday.”On the occasion, the MLA congratulated gym owner Gautham and wished him success and prosperity in his business. Speaking at the event, Bandari Lakshma Reddy said regular exercise is essential for a healthy lifestyle and helps improve not only physical fitness but also mental well-being and peace of mind.”He expressed happiness over the opening of a gym with modern facilities on the HB Colony Main Road and encouraged local residents to make use of the facility and take care of their health.”Former Division President Vanjeri Praveen Karipe, Ullem Balraj, Ramakrishna, Naveen Goud, Shekhar Goud, Balayya Goud, Poosa Ramesh, Kumar, John and others participated in the programme.



Warangal artists get global recognition: DCP Dara Kavitha Eega Mallesham couple honoured with 'Vishishta Kalaseva Ratna' award



“Hanumakonda, August 2 (Indian Chronicle): Warangal is the birthplace of all types of arts and artists, and the artists here have received global recognition, said Warangal Central Zone DCP Dara Kavitha. She was speaking at the "Urugallo Swarabhishekam" music evening program organized by prominent artists at Ambedkar Bhavan in Hanumakonda on Sunday in the memory of legendary singers S. P. Balasubrahmanyam and S. Janakila. “The program was jointly inaugurated by the chief guest DCP Dara Kavitha, former Central Khadi and Small Scale Industries Director Eega Mallesham, and Arya Vaishya National Federation leader Gattu Mahesh Babu by lighting the lamp. Later, S. P. Local singers mesmerized the audience by singing timeless songs made famous by Balasubrahmanyam and S. Janakila. “Speaking on the occasion, DCP Dara Kavitha said that Warangal has given many poets and artists who

have achieved international fame. She said that she has a great passion for music and was very happy to have the opportunity to attend and enjoy such a musical event even in the midst of her busy official duties. “Gattu Mahesh Babu said that Warangal artists have gained recognition both in the country and abroad and have brought fame to the region. “On the occasion, Eega Mallesham and his wife were awarded the "Vishishta Kalaseva Ratna" award in recognition of their special services to the art field. This award was presented by DCP Dara Kavitha. “Among them are ACPs Jitender Reddy, Kooja Vijay Kumar, police officer Rama Rao, anchor Himashree, Adarsh ??Law College Chairman Boora Vidyasagar, singers Kasarla Shyam, Puli Ganesh, Janagam Ramu, Charles, Chandrasekhar, Karunakar, Vijay Kumar, Srujan Rao, Rajitha, Swapna, Swarna, Swarna, Swarna, Swarna, Swarna Krishnaveni, Madhu, Bhikshapati, B.S. Nandu, Madhulatha and many other artists and celebrities.

Friendship Day: A Timeless Bond That Builds Individuals, Society and Nations—Sreeram Venkatesh

“Tarnaka, Indian Chronicle, August 2: “Friendship is one of God's greatest blessings and a bond built on trust, loyalty, mutual respect and selfless support, said Sreeram Venkatesh on the occasion of Friendship Day. “He said the true meaning of friendship is beautifully reflected in the Ramayana. The friendship between Lord Rama and Sugriva teaches us the importance of trust, mutual respect and keeping one's word. Similarly, Hanuman's unwavering devotion and selfless service to Lord Rama represent the qualities of an ideal friend who stands by others without expecting recognition or reward. “He also recalled Jatayu's supreme sacrifice in protecting Mother Sita, saying that true friendship and loyalty are demonstrated through courageous actions rather than mere words. At the same time, the Ramayana reminds us that a true friend should have the courage to speak the truth and offer honest advice, rather than blindly praising others. “Sreeram Venkatesh observed that in today's digital age, people may have thousands of online connections, but genuine relationships based on trust, compassion and emotional support are becoming increasingly valuable. Technology may connect people instantly, but true friendship is built through character and commitment. “He said that friendships based on trust and mutual respect also play an important role in strengthening society and nation-building. When people rise above differences and support one another, communities become stronger and the nation progresses. “On this Friendship Day, he appealed to young people to choose friends who inspire honesty, discipline, good values and service, and to strive to become such friends themselves. “Let us celebrate Friendship Day not merely by exchanging greetings, but by strengthening relationships built on truth, compassion, loyalty and selfless service. True friendships rooted in righteousness never fade with time; they inspire generations,” he said.



Special Sanitation Drive Conducted at Balaji Enclave-Garbage Cleared from Colony; BRS STATE LEADER BANNALA PRAVEEN MUDIRAJ Participates



“UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): A special sanitation drive was conducted on Sunday at Balaji Enclave Colony under Beerappagadda Division to improve cleanliness and hygiene in the locality. BRS State Leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj participated in the programme along with Balaji Enclave Colony Association President Gummakonda Venugopal Reddy, Secretary Omkar Singh, committee members and sanitation staff. Residents had earlier brought to the notice of former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj that heaps of garbage had accumulated along several roads in the colony, causing inconvenience and health concerns for the residents during her visit to the colony last month. Responding promptly, she ar-

anged a special sanitation drive, under which garbage and solid waste piled up on various internal roads were completely cleared. “Speaking on the occasion, Bannala Praveen Mudiraj said that maintaining cleanliness in residential colonies is a shared responsibility of the public, elected representatives and the civic authorities. He stressed that a clean environment is essential for protecting public health and improving the quality of life. “During the programme, residents also highlighted the recurring problem of indiscriminate dumping of garbage near the Balaji Enclave Park and at the entrance of North Kalyanpuri. Responding to their concerns, former Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj assured them that CCTV cameras would be installed at the identified locations with the cooperation of Balaji Enclave and North Kalyanpuri Colony Associations to monitor and prevent illegal dumping of waste. “The programme was attended by Colony Association President Gummakonda Venugopal Reddy, Secretary Omkar Singh, committee members Ramana Gupta, T.G. Venkatesh, D. Shankar, C.H. Praveen Rao, Sharabhayya, Srinivasa Chary, D. Vara Prasad, P. Siddheswara Rao, Gautham, Sanitation Supervisor Srinivas, sanitation workers and several colony residents.

Grand Farewell to Uppal Traffic SI Pusapalli Muthayya After 37 Years of Distinguished Service

“UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Sub-Inspector of Police Pusapalli Muthayya, serving at the Uppal Traffic Police Station, retired with honour on Sunday after rendering more than 37 years of dedicated, disciplined, and sincere service in the Telangana Police Department. “A grand retirement felicitation ceremony was organised at the Uppal Traffic Police Station to mark the occasion. The event was attended by Muthayya's batchmates who had served with him in different parts of the state, along with his relatives, close friends, and teachers who had guided him during his formative years. They extended their heartfelt wishes and congratulated him on his remarkable career. “The programme was attended by Uppal Traffic Police Station SHO & Traffic Inspector G. Nagaraju, Reserve Inspector Govardhan, police officers and staff of Uppal Traffic Police Station, along with several invited guests, who praised Muthayya's outstanding contribution to the police department and honoured him for his exemplary service. Speaking on the occasion, SHO G. Nagaraju said that Pusapalli Muthayya had always placed duty above everything else and served the public with unwavering commitment throughout his career. He described him as a symbol of honesty, humility, discipline, and dedication, adding that his friendly nature with colleagues, patient approach in resolving public grievances, and uncompromising attitude towards duty made him an inspiration to everyone. Several speakers observed that Muthayya's commitment, discipline, and service-oriented approach would continue to inspire young police officers and staff. They stated that his valuable contribution to the police department would always be remembered. As part of the felicitation, Muthayya was



honoured with a ceremonial shawl, bouquets, and mementoes in recognition of his long and distinguished service. Expressing his gratitude, Pusapalli Muthayya thanked the senior officers, colleagues, family members, friends, and teachers who had supported him throughout his career. He said that his years of service in the police department would remain one of the most memorable chapters of his life. The gathering wished him good health, happiness, peace, and a joyful retired life surrounded by the love and affection of his family. Many speakers remarked, “Retirement marks the end of a job, not the end of the spirit of service. Pusapalli Muthayya's honesty, discipline, and dedication will continue to inspire generations in the police department.”

Ravikanti Satish Kumar Appointed as Telangana Arya Vysya Youth State Secretary



“Manthani Peddapalli District, August 2 (Indaina Chronicle): Ravikanti Satish Kumar, a resident of Manthani town, has been appointed as the State Secretary of the Telangana Arya Vysya Youth Wing in the newly constituted state executive committee. “He formally assumed charge during the oath-taking ceremony of the new Telangana Arya Vysya Youth executive, held on Sunday at Vasavi Kalyana Mandapam, Lakdikapul, Hyderabad. “The event witnessed the presence of Arya Vysya community leaders, youth representatives, and several distinguished guests from across the state. The newly elected office bearers took the oath of office and pledged to work for the welfare of the Arya Vysya community, youth empowerment, and the expansion of service-oriented activities. “The appointment of Ravikanti Satish Kumar as State Secretary has been widely welcomed by Arya Vysya association leaders, businessmen, youth representatives, and well-wishers from the Manthani region. They congratulated him on his new responsibility and expressed confidence that he would make significant contributions to the development and welfare of the community at the state level.

Extensive Awareness Seminar on "Mee Suraksha – Nenu Saitham" Held at Apurupa Jagapathi Heights---UPPAL DI RAVIKUMAR and SECTOR SI CHIRANJEEVI Participate

“UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): As part of the Telangana Police Department's "Mee Suraksha" and "Nenu Saitham" initiatives, a community awareness programme was conducted on Sunday at Apurupa Jagapathi Heights Apartments under the Uppal Police Station limits. Uppal DI Ravikumar attended the programme as the chief guest and addressed the residents. Speaking on the occasion, DI Ravikumar emphasized that public cooperation is essential for maintaining law and order in society. He urged every citizen to act as a friend of the police and actively support efforts to prevent crime. He warned that drug abuse is destroying the future of the youth and appealed to the public to immediately inform the police if they come across any information related to narcotic activities. Sector SI Chiranjeevi created awareness on the increasing incidents of cybercrime. He advised residents not to share OTPs, bank account details, passwords, or personal information with unknown callers or through suspicious links. He also urged victims of online fraud to immediately contact the Cyber Crime Helpline 1930 or report the matter at the nearest police station. The officers also educated participants about the services provided by the She Teams for the safety and protection of women. Women and girls were encouraged to report any form of harassment without fear and make use of the support offered by the



Telangana Police. “The officials explained that the objective of the "Mee Suraksha" and "Nenu Saitham" programmes is to strengthen community policing, enhance public awareness on safety and security, and encourage citizens to become active partners in crime prevention. “Residents of the apartment actively participated in the interactive session, raised several queries, and received clarifications from the police officers. Around 60 apartment members attended the awareness programme. “The police appealed to citizens to work in coordination with law enforcement agencies and contribute towards building a safe, secure, and crime-free society.

MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Assures New Drainage Construction in B-Block, New Ramnagar Colony of Chilukanagar Division

“UPPAL, AUGUST 02 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Residents of B-Block, New Ramnagar Colony in Chilukanagar Division are set to get relief from their long-pending drainage problems, with Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy assuring that a new drainage system will be constructed at the earliest. A delegation led by BRS senior leader Shekhar Masa met the MLA at his residence and submitted a representation seeking a permanent solution to the drainage issue in the colony. The delegation explained that the existing drainage system has been inadequate for several years, causing severe inconvenience to residents. They also pointed out that the situation worsens during the monsoon season, leading to overflowing drains and unhygienic conditions. “They requested the MLA to initiate the construction of a new drainage network to permanently address the problem. “Responding positively to the representation, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy assured the delegation that he would discuss the matter with the concerned officials and take the necessary steps to resolve the issue. He promised that work on the new drainage system would be taken up at the earliest to provide a lasting solution for the residents. Among those present on the occasion were Colony General Secretary Naveen, Bahujan Samaj Party senior leader Ragiri Gnaneshwar, Balaraju, Suresh, Avinash Yadav, Nabi, and other local residents and leaders.

Indian-origin diamond merchant abducted in Mali, freed after family pays Euro 4 million ransom

Surat: An Indian-origin diamond businessman allegedly kidnapped in Mali in April has been released after his family paid a whopping Euro 4 million (nearly Rs 44 crore) ransom, sources said. The abductors initially demanded around Rs 100 crore, but 75-year-old diamond merchant Dhiru Ramani's family members, who live in the US, negotiated the amount down before securing his release, they said. The family paid a ransom of Euro 4 million (about Rs 44 crore) to secure his release last week in the West African country, a Surat-based source familiar with the developments said. Ramani, originally from Gujarat's Amreli district and associated with the diamond trade in Surat, remains in Mali where local authorities are questioning him after his release, the source told PTI on condition of anonymity. The businessman was allegedly abducted three months back while he was in Mali, where he recently acquired a gold mine and had been living for some time. "He has been released, but he is still in Mali. The local police are questioning him about his release and the circumstances surrounding it,"

Suspect in Berlin Pride attack shot dead by police



German police said a 21-year-old man with a record of Islamist extremist activity was shot dead on Sunday, a day after he allegedly drove a minivan into people near Berlin's Pride celebrations, killing one person. The ramming attack happened in the Tiergarten park near the Brandenburg Gate at about 10 p.m. (2000 GMT) on Saturday, not far from one of Europe's biggest annual LGBTQ celebrations, Christopher Street Day.

Authorities said that in addition to the one fatality, 29 people were injured, some by a bladed weapon the attacker wielded. "Around 6 p.m. (1600 GMT), the suspect involved in yesterday's attack in Tiergarten was located at an allotment garden complex in Spandau," Berlin police wrote on X, referring to an area in Berlin's westernmost borough where residents cultivate garden plots. "According to initial findings, he ran towards officers while armed with a bladed weapon; police... subsequently opened fire. Despite immediate resuscitation efforts by the Berlin Fire Department, he died at the scene." Dagmar Euent and Juliane Gotzler, who have a garden plot, said they heard several shots and were told to stay inside their garden hut by police. Berlin police had identified the suspect as Abdul B, 21, and published his picture, asking the public for information on his whereabouts. The suspect had "attracted attention in the past through a high number of criminal offences, through radicalisation, through membership of the Islamist scene," Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt said earlier on Sunday, adding that the suspect was a German citizen of Lebanese heritage, born in Germany in 2005. The Tiergarten attack was the latest in a series of vehicle attacks on crowds in Germany in recent years that have intensified debate around

the source said. Ramani's US-based family handled the negotiations on its own, and no Indian government agency was involved in the process, as per the source. He is originally from Dhar village in Amreli district and has been associated with the diamond business since around 1980. He later moved to the United States, where his family is engaged in the international diamond trade. Around the time of the alleged kidnapping in April, the Indian Embassy in Bamako, the capital of Mali, issued a general security advisory urging Indian nationals living there to exercise caution. "Due to recent security developments and reported attacks in Kati and other parts of Mali, the Embassy of India in Bamako urges all Indian nationals residing in Mali to remain highly vigilant, exercise utmost caution, stay indoors, and strictly follow the instructions issued by the Malian authorities from time to time," the advisory dated April 25 had said. The advisory, however, did not refer to any specific incident or individual.

security and immigration amid a surge in support for the far-right. Ahead of a memorial service at St Mary's Church in Berlin, centre-right Chancellor Friedrich Merz vowed consequences and urged Germans not to be intimidated, affirming the country would stand united in defence of its freedom. "We will defend the freedom, openness, and liberal spirit of our lives and our society with everything we can do," he said.

Thousands of people, some carrying the LGBT rainbow flag, attended a vigil at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. Some carried placards with slogans such as "Hatred kills", while others cried and hugged each other. At the Tiergarten park, people lit candles and left flowers. There were calls across the political spectrum for Germany to tighten laws and crack down on Islamic radicalism. Green politician and Bundestag Vice President Omid Nouripour wrote on X that Germany must stand against "murderous Islamism". Daniel Peters, a regional leader of the centre-right CDU, said on X that Islamic State "supporters must not walk free in Germany". Security sources told Reuters the suspect had been released from juvenile detention only two months ago. Asked about reports he had received a suspended sentence, Dobrindt told broadcaster ZDF, "It would certainly have been advisable to place this individual in custody". The security sources said he was known to domestic intelligence and was among the hundreds of people classed as potentially dangerous, a label that usually leads to scrutiny or monitoring. Authorities have said the suspect had previously been convicted of preparing a serious act of violence endangering the state. The attack comes at a sensitive time for Merz's unpopular coalition government, which is going through a bruising cabinet reshuffle as critics accuse it of being ineffective. State elections take place in two months, with the far-right opposition party Alternative for Germany (AfD) campaigning on issues including immigration and security in a bid to secure control of a regional government for the first time. "We will not allow religious extremists to divide our country with violence and intolerance!" AfD co-chief Tino Chrupalla said on X. In May, a man believed to have mental health problems drove into a pedestrian zone in Leipzig, killing two people and seriously injuring three. In 2016, Anis Amri, a Tunisian with links to Islamist militants whose asylum application was rejected, hijacked a truck, killed its driver and drove it into a busy Christmas market, killing 11 people and injuring dozens. He was shot dead by police in Italy four days later.

Indian-origin individuals among 19 held in Ontarios biggest drug crackdown



Nineteen people, most of them believed to be of Indian-origin, were arrested in one of the largest-ever drug busts in Canada's Ontario province in which authorities seized nearly 1.7 tonnes of narcotics with an estimated value of over USD 97 million. An intelligence-led cross-border investigation, codenamed Project Bay, dismantled an alleged drug trafficking network that used commercial transport routes to move narcotics into Canada, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) said in a press statement. Police said 19 people have been arrested, while two remain at large.

Many of the accused are truck drivers allegedly recruited to transport illicit consignments across the Canada-US border. Among those arrested were Gagandip Thindal, 27, Simranjit Singh, 32, Kanwarpal Kular, 32, Jatinderpal Singh, 39, Jasvinder Sohi, 55, Tejwinder Sandhu, 29, Harjinder Sandhu, 33, Haninderpal Grewal, 34, Tarminder Singh, 19, Avtar Sahota, 54, Gundeep Tariwal, 32, Mehakpreet Singh, 24 and Karandeep Singh, 27. According to the OPP, the investigation began in January 2025 after the Windsor Police Service launched a probe into drug trafficking. The Canada Border Services Agency joined the investigation a month later, with the probe eventually expanding to include the OPP and several other law enforcement agencies. According to investigators, the network operated through a broker-style model within the commercial transportation sector, using established logistics links to arrange drivers to knowingly transport illicit consignments concealed within legitimate supply chains across the international border. Police executed 22 search warrants between June 25 and July 20 at residences and businesses in Windsor, Corunna, LaSalle, Brampton, Kleinburg, Markham and Caledon. Authorities seized about 973 kg of cocaine, 660 kg of methamphetamine, 49 kg of opium, 230 oxycodone tablets, 17 firearms, about 80,000 Canadian dollars and USD 10,000 in cash, high-end jewellery, money counters, 43 mobile phones, six laptops and a vehicle. The estimated street value of the drugs seized is more than 139 million Canadian dollars (approx USD 97 million), the OPP said, describing it "one of the largest drug busts by weight in Ontario". OPP Chief Superintendent Mike Stoddart described the seizure as a significant blow to organised crime,

saying the operation had disrupted the cross-border flow of illegal drugs and firearms and prevented substantial harm to communities across Ontario.

China issues red alert as Typhoon Noul approaches



Beijing: China's national observatory has issued a red alert — the highest level in the country's typhoon warning system as Typhoon Noul approaches its coast. Typhoon Noul, the 12th typhoon of the year, is forecast to make landfall along the coast of south China's Guangdong Province, according to the alert issued by the National Meteorological Centre late Saturday night. The typhoon's centre was about 100 km offshore southeast of Huidong County in Huizhou City, Guangdong, late last night with maximum winds near the centre reaching Force 14, the NMC said. The NMC forecast that Typhoon Noul will move northwestward at around 20 km per hour, while continuing to strengthen. After making landfall, it is expected to shift to a north-north-westward course and gradually weaken, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Earlier on Saturday, the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters raised its emergency response for flood and typhoon control in Guangdong Province to Level III, while activating a Level IV flood emergency response for Jiangxi and Hunan provinces. China has a four-tier, colour-coded weather warning system for typhoons, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange, yellow and blue. Geographic Reference The regions are Fujian, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong and Guangxi, covering large parts of eastern, central and southern China. Met officials in Hong Kong on Saturday initiated emergency measures as Typhoon Noul approached. More than 410 flights and 150 high-speed train services were cancelled while the Home Affairs Department had opened 28 shelters in anticipation of the approaching storm.

Iran says it still controls strait, not seeking talks, after Trump halts bombing



DUBAI, Iran said on Monday it was still in control of the Strait of Hormuz and not seeking to resume peace talks with the United States, after President Donald Trump halted a two-week bombing campaign that his top brass told him had run its course. Following 13 successive nights of intensifying bombing that provoked Tehran to fire on U.S. bases in response, Trump halted the campaign over the weekend. Iran said it would suspend its own attacks for as long as the U.S. pause endures. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here. The end of the U.S. bombing campaign sent oil prices tumbling in the hope that disrupted global supplies could resume flowing. Brent crude, which had briefly ticked above \$100 a barrel last week for the first time since May, plunged more than 8% by mid-morning on Monday to just under \$89.

But in signs on Monday that Tehran may already be testing the effective new ceasefire, Jordan reported shooting down two drones and Iraqi security sources said drones had struck a base of Iranian Kurdish opposition fighters in northern Iraq. There were no reports of casualties in either incident. Trump's decision to suspend the campaign reflected advice from his military that the bombing, aimed at breaking Iran's grip on the strait, had reached the limits of what it could achieve, according to a U.S. official and several U.S. media reports. The U.S. official told Reuters that military commanders had advised the president they were running out of targets. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, had expressed concern over the depletion of air defence munitions, the official said.

REQUEST FOR MORE TALKS 'NOT IN OUR DNA', IRAN SPOKESMAN SAYS The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, said on Sunday Trump had paused the campaign to allow room for negotiations. Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other U.S. officials have described Iran as "

begging for a deal, opens new tab But the spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, Esmail Baghaei, said in a televised press conference on Monday that Iran had not

South Korea court gives ex-President Yoon suspended jail term for violating election law



SEOUL, A South Korean court sentenced former President Yoon Suk Yeol to 18 months in prison, suspended for three years, after finding him guilty of violating the election law by making false statements during his 2022 presidential campaign. The sentence, if upheld through appeals, could force Yoon's People Power Party to return 39.7 billion won (\$27.1 million) in election expenses reimbursed by the National Election Commission following his presidential election victory. Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here.

The Seoul Central District Court found Yoon made false

Malaysia PM orders action against Rohingya Muslims gathered in front of UN refugee agency



KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Monday ordered enforcement agencies to take action against a group of Rohingya Muslim refugees that had gathered in front of the office of the U.N. refugee agency in Kuala Lumpur, saying those without proper permits would be detained. Hundreds of Rohingya refugees were allegedly evicted from their homes in northern Penang state on Sunday and traveled to the Malaysian capital on buses to seek assistance on resettlement from the UNHCR, the New Straits Times daily reported on Monday. Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here. The evictions came amid a rise in online hate speech and misinformation targeting the Rohingya since May that has led to greater harassment and scrutiny of the ethnic community, including widespread school closures.

According to the UNHCR, there were about 215,600 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with the agency in Malaysia at the end of February, more than half of them ethnic Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar. In a video posted on his social media accounts, Anwar said the country needed to be strict in enforcing the law, saying the gathering was raising concerns among local residents. "No one has the right to take over any part of the city," he said. "I have directed immigration, police, and the local authorities to take strict action. Those without permits are to be brought to (the Immigration Department). The rest should be warned

asked to resume peace talks with the United States. Messages were still being passed between the sides through mediators and Iran had not forsaken diplomacy, but "reports about Iran requesting negotiations with the U.S. are fabricated," Baghaei said. "This ?is not in our DNA." Tehran also indicated it was still in control of the world's most important waterway for energy markets. IRAN STATE MEDIA SAY SIX SHIPS TURNED BACK IN STRAIT Several Iranian state media outlets cited an "informed source" as saying that Iran had turned around six "offending ships" on Monday morning that had attempted to cross the strait without its permission. One of the vessels, the source said, had had "an accident". As previously announced, the traffic route in the Strait of Hormuz is the route specified by Iran, and other routes are contaminated and have no way out," the Iranian state media reports quoted the source as saying. Trump launched his renewed bombing campaign to punish Iran after Tehran fired on ships using a route through the strait that has been promoted by the United States, which has told vessels to sail close to the coast of Oman. Iran says ships may pass only through a channel that runs closer to its own coast, which it controls and where it intends to impose transit fees. The two weeks of renewed U.S. bombing killed scores of people in Iran and destroyed bridges and tunnels across the south as well as military targets. Four U.S. service members were killed by Iran's return fire against U.S. bases in neighbouring Arab states. Iran also struck civilian infrastructure in Gulf countries in what it said was retaliation for U.S. strikes on civilian targets. Last week Iran's Houthi allies threatened to extend the disruption to global oil supplies to a second major waterway by announcing a blockade of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in the Red Sea, sending oil prices even higher. The halt to the renewed U.S. bombing campaign leaves no clear indication of what leverage Washington can exert to achieve Trump's aim to break Iran's grip on the strait. Washington and Tehran reached an agreement in June on a framework for talks meant to take place by the end of August to resolve major issues such as Iran's nuclear programme. But the sides have disputed the meaning of the memorandum's language about the Strait of Hormuz, with Washington insisting it requires Tehran to allow free travel while Iran says it grants it the authority to supervise transit. Iran aims to formalise its control over the strait in an agreement with Oman, which controls the opposite shore. A senior Omani delegation was in Tehran over the weekend discussing the strait and Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Baghaei said those talks went well. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who launched the war in February alongside Trump but has not participated in the U.S.-Iranian negotiations to end it, is due to meet Trump in Washington early this week.

statements during the 2022 presidential campaign when he denied introducing a lawyer to a former tax official and claimed he and his wife, former first lady Kim Keon Hee, had not met shaman Jeon Seong-bae. Both relationships had come under scrutiny during the election campaign. The court accepted prosecutors' arguments that Yoon had introduced the lawyer to the former official and maintained a long-standing relationship with Jeon after first meeting him through Kim. "When a candidate personally announces false information at public events with a large impact, such as debates and interviews, the effect on voters' decision making is very significant," the court said in its ruling. Prosecutors had sought a two-year prison term, arguing Yoon's remarks helped ease scrutiny of the allegations during the presidential race. Yoon, who had denied any wrongdoing, plans to appeal the verdict, his legal counsel said in a statement. Under South Korea's election law, political parties receive state reimbursement for campaign expenses if their presidential candidate wins or secures at least 15% of the vote. If a candidate later receives a final election-invalidating sentence, such as a jail term or a fine of at least 1 million won, the party must return the funds. Yoon is also facing other criminal trials, including an insurrection case related to his December 2024 martial law declaration. In February, a lower court sentenced him to life imprisonment over the case.

that action can be taken against them. "The UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It told Reuters on Friday that it was concerned by rising online hate speech, disinformation and dehumanising narratives targeting Rohingya and other refugees, which it said could fuel harassment and discrimination offline. Though it is not a signatory to the U.N. refugee convention and regards asylum-seekers as illegal migrants, Muslim-majority Malaysia has long been seen as a safe haven for Rohingya fleeing persecution in largely Buddhist Myanmar. That changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Rohingya were accused of spreading the virus, disrespecting cultural norms and competing with locals for jobs.

Srihari Nataraj enters 50m backstroke semifinals, Budigina reaches para swimming final

Glasgow: India's swimming campaign at the Commonwealth Games 2026 started on a high note on Friday as Olympian Srihari Nataraj secured a place in the men's 50m backstroke semifinals, while para swimmer Budigina and Ali Imam produced impressive performances to qualify for the men's 100m freestyle S13 final.

Nataraj finished fifth in Heat 4 of the men's 50m backstroke after clocking 25.52 seconds to comfortably book his place among the top 16 swimmers progressing to the semifinals.

England's Oliver Morgan won the heat in 24.91 seconds, while compatriots Jack Skerry (25.08) and Matthew Ward (25.16), along with Benjamin Winterborn (25.37), also advanced from the same heat. A total of 40 swimmers competed across the heats, with the fastest 16 making it through to the semifinals.

All you need to know about: preeclampsia



Last week, on May 22, World Preeclampsia Day was observed, to increase awareness about preeclampsia, a serious pregnancy complication. This year's theme, 'Ask me about preeclampsia', aimed at initiating open conversations and raising awareness about the condition. With that in mind, here is all you need to know about preeclampsia.

What is preeclampsia?

Preeclampsia is a serious condition that develops during pregnancy, usually after 20 weeks or so, often marked by high blood pressure and protein in the urine. Because the condition can also affect other organs of the body including the kidneys, liver and brain, it requires careful monitoring and management. Untreated preeclampsia can have serious, even fatal consequences for the mother and baby. In some women, preeclampsia may develop after the delivery of the baby; this is known as postpartum preeclampsia.

What causes preeclampsia?

The exact cause of preeclampsia remains unknown, but researchers believe it may have something to do with blood supply and circulation in the placenta being affected. The placenta is an organ that develops in the uterus during pregnancy, connecting mother and baby via the umbilical cord. It provides oxygen and essential nutrients to the growing foetus and removes waste products. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), preeclampsia affects 2–8% of pregnancies worldwide. There are around 46,000 maternal deaths due to pre-eclampsia per year and around 5,00,000 foetal or newborn deaths. Preeclampsia and eclampsia (a complication of preeclampsia) are responsible for approximately 10% of maternal deaths in Asia and Africa, it says.

Who is at risk of preeclampsia?

Risk factors for preeclampsia include being pregnant with more than one baby, pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, hypertension or kidney disease, obesity, a history of preeclampsia in a past pregnancy or a family history of it, as well as a first time pregnancy, being 35 or older and a time gap of 10 years or more since a previous pregnancy.

What are the signs and symptoms of preeclampsia?

For many, there are no signs and symptoms of preeclampsia, and it is often only diagnosed during a visit to a healthcare provider. In some cases, symptoms can include: high blood pressure, proteinuria (excess protein in the urine), severe headaches, changes in vision such as blurred vision, light sensitivity or flashing, upper abdominal pain (just below the ribs), nausea and vomiting and swelling of the

face, hands and feet.

How is it diagnosed?

Preeclampsia is diagnosed, the WHO states, based on the onset of hypertension (blood pressure =140/90 mm Hg) and proteinuria (=0.3 g/24 hours) after 20 weeks of gestation. However, recently, there has also been recognition of the condition without proteinuria. The Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI), in its 2019 good clinical practice recommendations, defines preeclampsia as a multisystem inflammatory disorder beyond 20 weeks of pregnancy with significant proteinuria characterized by de novo onset of hypertension (BP =>140/90 mmHg). It adds however that an atypical variant of preeclampsia has been recognised which is accompanied by neurological, hematological, hepatic, renal manifestations or foetal growth restriction, in the absence of proteinuria. As per the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists guidelines, the diagnosis of preeclampsia no longer requires the detection of high levels of protein in the urine (proteinuria). Preeclampsia is now to be diagnosed by persistent high blood pressure that develops during pregnancy or during the postpartum period that is associated with a lot of protein in the urine or the new development of decreased blood platelets, trouble with the kidney or liver, fluid in the lungs, or signs of brain trouble such as seizures and/or visual disturbances.

What are the complications that can develop?

If untreated, pre-eclampsia can cause severe complications to both mother and baby. These may include: eclampsia, in which the patient develops seizures and may go into a coma; HELLP syndrome (haemolysis, elevated liver enzymes, low platelet count), a liver and blood clotting disorder, which is potentially risky to both mother and baby and organ damage to the liver, kidneys, brain and lungs of the mother. Placental abruption, which is the placenta separating from the inner wall of the uterus before delivery is another potential complication.

Complications to the baby include premature birth, as well as foetal growth restriction, which happens when the baby does not receive adequate oxygen and nutrients, leading to slow growth.

How is it treated?

Treatment involves managing the condition and close monitoring until it is the best time for the baby's delivery. This depends on the severity of the condition and the gestational age of the foetus. The goal of treatment is to prevent complications and ensure a safe outcome for the mother and baby. Medications may include antihypertensive drugs, anticonvulsant medication and corticosteroids. Generally, preeclampsia goes away within some weeks after birth. However, blood pressure and other signs/symptoms may need to be monitored closely for some time after the birth. If postpartum preeclampsia develops, it requires immediate medical attention.

Can preeclampsia be prevented?

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle including staying at a healthy weight, with adequate exercise and a well-balanced diet are some factors that could help. Healthcare providers may also prescribe low-dose aspirin in case a patient is at risk of preeclampsia. It is important to consult a doctor before taking any medication or supplements.

Can mHealth and AI amp up tobacco cessation efforts?



If we compare the GATS 1 (Global Adult Tobacco Survey) with the GATS 2, all parameters related to tobacco cessation show a downward trend. While the sustained efforts by the government through implementation of national programs such as NTCP, COTPA, and NOHP; ratification of strategic frameworks such as WHO's MPOWER or FCTC; or multilateral collaboration with global health organisations, NGOs, and other stakeholders, the efforts fall short in responding to the tobacco scourge prevalent in the country. 28.6 % of the people aged 15 and above use tobacco in India, the use of smokeless forms being double that of smoked forms. This can be attributed to the social acceptability of smokeless tobacco (SLT), especially among women in old times. Tobacco continues to hold cultural value in local traditions, where it is offered to guests and gods with equal reverence.

The second largest consumer—and third largest producer—of tobacco, India is home to 72.7 million smokers. It is responsible for 13.5 lakh deaths, 1.5 lakh cancers, 4.2 million heart diseases, and 3.7 million lung diseases every year. With a 20 % share of the global burden load, India is touted as the oral cancer capital of the world. Secondhand smoking (SHS), caused by the inhalation of toxic fumes when somebody is smoking in the vicinity, compounds the problem further. It contributes to 14% of total tobacco deaths, with the brunt falling squarely on the most vulnerable—women, children, and older people. Almost half of the non-smoking women and over one-third of pregnant women are exposed to tobacco smoke in India and Bangladesh.

According to GATS 2, despite 85.6% of people being aware of the detrimental effects of SHS, 38.7% of people working at home and 30.2% working indoors were exposed to smoking. A 2023 report by WHO on global tobacco epidemic believes that physical distancing—whether it be designated smoke rooms (DSRs) or ventilation—fails to protect from the exposure of SHS. The smoke residues from 7000 chemicals, including over 70 carcinogenic substances, cling to physical surfaces long after a cigarette is stubbed out. Through case studies of popular smoke ban laws in Atlanta and Finland, WHO FCTC's Section 8 advocates for strict legislation for a smoke-free environment to protect our basic right to breathe in clean air. Multiple studies have shown that dependence on tobacco and bidis significantly impairs individuals' ability to quit. The wide availability of locally-produced tobacco brands in India further complicates regulation of nicotine content. Moreover, Big Tobacco is frequently accused of deliberately maintaining high nicotine levels to promote addiction.

Furthermore, the tobacco industry lobbying has actively obscured critical information and deflected public discourse from the health risks linked to tobacco use. This has resulted in manufacturing of narratives, such as conflating the harms of tobacco smoking with air pollution. What harm will one cigarette cause when the level of pollution amounts to breathing 20 cigarettes a day!? (While air pollution demands urgent action, the harm caused by cigarette smoke is 2 to 2.5 times greater, according to a Chinese study.) In the 1996 issue of Time Magazine, the president and CEO of Philip Morris was quoted saying that cigarettes are no more addictive than coffee or gummy bears. This impact on teenagers by Big Tobacco propaganda is concerning. 8.5% of young adolescents (between 13 and 15 years) consume tobacco in some form in India. With stylish names, flashy packaging, fancy brand ambassadors, and fun flavours, the tobacco industry preys on the young to initiate tobacco use as well as continue it. A WHO report highlighted the addition of sweetening agents, flavorings, bronchodilators, and additives such as levulinic acid and menthol to tobacco products—measures intended to reduce the harshness of nicotine and create a cooling effect in the throat. These modifications in taste, smell, and sensory appeal, experts believe, hype the demand of these products among the youth. Kicking the habit

The GATS 2 survey revealed that out of the total people who wanted to quit, 70% had to do it alone, and most couldn't sustain it beyond a month. We must also realize that cessation is not a one-off thing but a continuum—the counselling must always be ongoing and adaptive. Pranav Ish, a

pulmonologist at VMMC and Safdarjung Hospitals said even 2-3 minutes of reinforcement has worked wonders in his patients. GATS 2, however, reveals a dismal picture when it comes to the attitude of healthcare providers: only 31.7% of healthcare providers advised their patients to quit in the last month, and 48.8% in the last year. Aninda Debnath, assistant professor, Community Medicine, AMMC, Delhi, says that while a lot of programs related to tobacco cessation are in place, a critical look at their functioning and utilisation is important. The COTPA Act prohibits advertising of tobacco in any form; however, a study by Vital Strategies found 75 % of online surrogate marketing of tobacco on Meta platforms. Vikrant Mohanty, HoD and Project Head, National Resource Centre for Oral Health and Tobacco Cessation, MAIDS, Delhi, said: "While the government is doing its bit through cessation services at primary level, dedicated counsellors in NCD clinics, dentist training under NOHP, a comprehensive approach with integration of stakeholders at various levels is the need of the hour. The dropout from follow-up still remains huge, and faith in the treatment low." Traditional forms of counseling are, for one, not equitable—the social desirability bias kicks in when hospitals expect the patient to come back. Plus, affordability and accessibility to TCCs is an issue for most who come from lower to lower-middle classes and work in informal sectors or as daily wage workers. Researchers have found that the results of tobacco cessation have stagnated, or at times gone down, for people with social disadvantage. While mCessation in the form of encouraging text messages or telephonic counselling through NTQLS has been an innovative solution (as part of WHO's Be He@lthy, Be mobile), limited success has been observed. Some of the gaps in successful implementation of mHealth include voice recognition inaccuracies, network connectivity issues, poor digital literacy, shoddy interface, absence of personal connection, poor long-term engagement, and high attrition rates. Integrating mHealth with innovative solutions such as PSD (Persuasive Systems Design) or just-in-time-adaptive-intervention (JITAI) that deliver an intervention in moments of elevated need or receptivity has shown great promise.

This is where AI can give us a leg up. Mohanty adds that large language models can bridge the gap of delivery, provide personalized healthcare systematically, capture data, and use them in improving the outcomes. "AI can be harnessed not only through chatbots but also indirectly to train healthcare professionals so they can assess, advise and follow-up with the patients rigorously. Dr. Debnath emphasised the importance of refresher training—a component often neglected—which can be made significantly more accessible and efficient with the help of AI." Monika Arora, Vice President of Research and Health Promotion at PHFI, believes, "Chatbots and virtual assistants powered by AI can provide round-the-clock support, track and monitor tobacco use behavior, offer evidence-based information, and deliver personalized motivational messages. AI can also utilize predictive analytics to identify individuals at higher risk of relapse and tailor interventions accordingly."

However, this can't happen in isolation. All the interviewees believed that AI should not be thought of as an alternative but as an adjunct to traditional strategies. Dr. Arora and others are working on an AI-based model under Project CARE, where the focus is on "co-development with users and healthcare providers" who can come up with innovative and contextually relevant solutions. However, all is not rosy with mHealth and AI. While mobile penetration in the country is good, the lack of digital literacy might act as a massive deterrent. Debnath shared a personal anecdote: "My mother has a smartphone, but she uses it only for calling and WhatsApp." Moreover, in this age of digital revolution, when we are always bombarded with text messages and the ubiquitous 'ting' of notifications, the impact of one more message needs to be looked at with a fair bit of skepticism. These newer innovations should be complemented with other time-tested strategies. Plain packaging, which was initiated by Australia for the first time in 2012—and was followed by a wave of countries—should be considered as the next step to challenge the growing empire of tobacco corporations. Stronger warnings, higher taxes, increasing the size of graphic warnings, banning e-cigarettes, and hiring brand ambassadors can aid our efforts.

Emerging approaches such as adaptive counseling, designed to provide stepped care that addresses patients' unmet needs and parallels chronic disease management, can also be considered. Dr. Ish added: "It feels rewarding that a patient who could earlier smoke three cigarettes had to contend with only one due to high costs." India has garnered international attention for its tobacco cessation program, but the sheer burden of tobacco warrants that we not only explore newer strategies while also ensuring rigorous implementation of the existing ones.

Checkmate to cognitive decline: Unleashing the transformative power of chess in India

I indulged in a seven-week sabbatical in India, a deliberate pause to rejuvenate my mind and spirit. Surrounded by the warmth of my family and immersed in the familiarity of my hometown, I found the perfect sanctuary to refocus on my doctoral pursuits. The comforts of home and the absence of solo responsibilities afforded me the luxury of dedicating myself fully to my studies—a welcome reprieve from the juggling act of living independently, working full-time, and shouldering a multitude of obligations.

Just as my academic momentum began to build, I craved further cognitive stimulation. My mind began to wander back to neurobics, a subject dear to many in my family. Memories of my childhood chess classes resurfaced, and I recalled how, despite my mother's considerable investment, I had never truly applied myself. Now, an inexplicable yearning to relearn the game emerged, and I decided to start by playing with my mother and grandfather, both formidable players. Their suggestion that I resume formal training sparked a renewed passion within me. As I recommenced coaching, I felt an invigorating sense of cognitive vitality, a newfound sense of identity, and an unexpected tranquility. My cognitive output was optimised, and I was astonished by the profound impact of this simple board game on my mental well-being. The experience was nothing short of revelatory, leaving me awestruck by the game's multifaceted benefits. In the verdant expanse of India's intellectual terrain, the venerable game of Chaturanga took root, germinating a profound legacy of philosophical and strategic thought that would flourish for centuries. This ancient precursor to modern chess was an apt metaphor for the classical Indian army, with its four constituent divisions – infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots – serving as a potent allegory for the delicate interplay of power, wisdom, and artistry.

As Chaturanga traversed the Silk Road, it absorbed and assimilated diverse influences, evolving into the sophisticated game of Shatranj in Persia and eventually, the mod-

ern game of chess in Europe. Yet, despite its geographical and cultural migrations, the Indian essence of the game remained an indelible thread, weaving together the narrative of a civilisation that has consistently prized intellectual refinement and strategic brilliance. Today, India's resurgence in chess supremacy is a testament to its enduring intellectual legacy. Luminaries like Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi embody the very essence of strategic brilliance, foresight, and analytical acumen that once characterised the nation's monarchs and scholars. Their mastery of the game is a powerful echo of India's storied past, where intellectual pursuits were revered as the highest form of artistic expression. To engage in the game of chess in India is to participate in a rich cultural dialogue that transcends time and space, invoking the ghosts of ancient strategists and philosophers who once wielded the game as a tool for intellectual refinement. Each move on the board reflects the eternal quest for equilibrium, echoing the Vedic concept of "Rita"—the cosmic order that governs the universe.

In India, chess represents a sublime confluence of art, philosophy, and strategy, a synthesis that spans centuries and civilisations. The game remains an enduring testament to India's intellectual heritage, a bridge that spans the ancient and modern, symbolising the nation's timeless genius and its unwavering commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. As you immerse yourself in the strategic world of chess, the game's cognitive demands expertly hone your mental faculties. Memory plays a pivotal role, as recalling intricate patterns, strategies, and moves becomes second nature. This rigorous mental exercise yields a profound impact on both short-term and long-term memory, fortifying your ability to retain and retrieve information. The deliberate planning of each move, guided by the dual objectives of protecting your pieces and outmaneuvering your opponent, cultivates logical thinking, analysis, and abstract problem-solving.

Lab-grown bat organs, next stop on the road to predicting pandemics



Bats are important animals that help maintain ecosystem balance and human well-being. They play key roles like pollinating plants, dispersing seeds, and controlling insect populations. But of late they have become popular for a different reason: their unique ability to harbour viruses without succumbing to disease. SARS, MERS, Ebola, COVID-19—some of the most devastating human diseases of the past century are believed to have originated in bats. Despite their central role in pandemic ecology, we know surprisingly little about how viruses interact with bat biology, or why some viruses remain harmless in bats but become deadly when they jump to humans. Bat organoids

Studying bats has numerous challenges. They are nocturnal, elusive, and in many regions protected by law. Another challenge is a lack of suitable research tools and animal models. Traditional laboratory animals like mice or monkeys fail to replicate the unique physiological traits of bats and primary bat cells are notoriously hard to grow in culture. Even cell lines derived from the same bat species that hosted a virus may not support its replication due to the loss of key host receptor expression.

In a study recently published in Science, an international team of researchers has developed the world's most comprehensive platform of bat organoids: small, three-dimensional lab-grown tissues that replicate the structure and function of real bat organs. Organoids have long been developed and used for human biomedical research—and they are now being applied to bats. Previous attempts at creating bat organoids were limited to a single fruit bat species and one organ type. These models failed to capture the full diversity of bat species, especially those found in temperate regions like East Asia, where many emerging viruses have been identified.

To address this, the team created organoids from five insect-eating bat species native to Asia and Europe. These included models of the trachea, lungs, kidneys, and intestines. These structures mimic the real tissues closely, with features like mucus-producing goblet cells and gas-exchanging alveoli. When exposed to viruses like SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV, influenza A, and Seoul orthohantavirus, the organoids revealed species and organ-specific vulnerabilities. For example, MERS-CoV replicated easily in the respiratory organoids of several bat species. SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19, surprisingly couldn't infect any of the bat respiratory tissues unless researchers added a human gene, TMPRSS2, which enabled the virus to enter human cells. This finding may help explain why some viruses may not initially pose a risk to humans but become dangerous after acquiring adaptations that allow them to survive

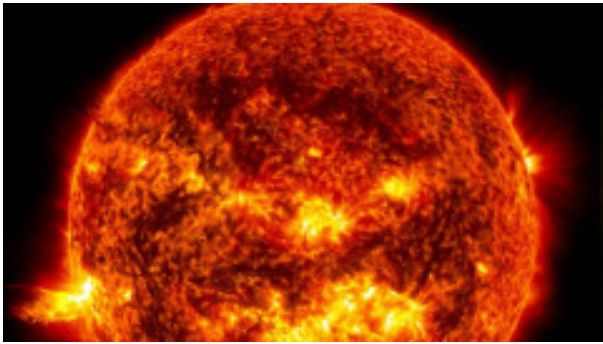
and replicate in the human body. In their study, the researchers also exploited the organoid platform's usefulness for virus discovery. Using faecal samples from wild bats, they were able to isolate two previously unidentified viruses: a mammalian orthoreovirus and a paramyxovirus. The paramyxovirus wouldn't grow in normal lab cells but flourished in the organoids, likely because it requires bat-specific cellular factors to enter and replicate but which are absent in conventional lab cell lines. In a separate study published in PLoS Biology, another group created immortalised bat cell lines from Seba's short-tailed bat (*Carollia perspicillata*), a fruit bat native to Central and South America. These cell lines were developed from organs like the kidney, brain, liver, and spleen tissues, and were shown to support replication of MERS-CoV, vesicular stomatitis virus and Andes orthohantavirus, a close relative of deadly hantaviruses found in humans. In their study, the researchers observed that the kidney cells permitted natural entry and replication of MERS-CoV whereas SARS-CoV-2 was unable to infect them—mirroring the results observed in the organoid models. Both bat cells and organoids activated immune responses when exposed to synthetic viral RNA or viruses, similar to real bats. Global virology resource

Together, these two new bat models demonstrate the ability to monitor real-time immune responses in bat tissues, offering an advanced tool to understand how bats coexist with viruses that are lethal to other species. While organoids let researchers study how viruses behave in real tissue, the cell lines allow high-throughput testing of viral entry and immune reactions. Both initiatives aim to establish global biobanks of bat-derived organoids and cell lines to enhance pandemic preparedness. The *Carollia perspicillata* cell lines are already being distributed through ATCC, a major biological repository. Meanwhile, the organoid initiative plans to expand its reach by incorporating additional bat species and tissue types.

Together, these resources are expected to help researchers (i) track species-specific virus behaviour; (ii) identify immune pathways and viral entry points; (iii) screen antiviral drugs under more realistic conditions; (iv) predict zoonotic spill-over risk before outbreaks begin. Implications for India India is home to more than 120 bat species, with particularly high bat diversity in the Northeast and the Western Ghats. Despite this diversity, virological data on these bats is limited and many species are poorly studied. In the Northeast, studies have detected antibodies to Ebola and Marburg viruses in both bats and humans. Kerala has also experienced multiple Nipah virus outbreaks, with fruit bats identified as the likely carriers. Nonetheless, efforts to study native bats in depth are hindered by biosafety concerns, legal restrictions, and limited research infrastructure.

These new lab-grown models could offer a safer, more ethical way forward, allowing researchers to study bat viruses without handling live animals. Given the ongoing pressures from habitat loss, climate change, and increased human-wildlife interactions, the risk of new zoonotic diseases is also rising. This prompted the Government of India to launch an inter-ministerial scientific initiative on April 4 to study these risks. Tools like bat organoids and cell lines could support more effective monitoring and research into emerging viruses and improve the country's preparedness for the next pandemic.

It's clear now: iron inside the sun is more opaque than expected



The world is full of mysteries but not all of them are grand. Sure, we don't know what the mind really is or what the inside of a black hole looks like. But there are also many mysteries hiding in the little details. For example, we don't know why iron inside the sun is so opaque. Solid iron objects are everywhere around us. They're used to make door-knobs, cooking utensils, furniture, water tanks — all sorts of things. And they're all opaque. When light hits an iron object, it can't pass through. Instead, some of it is absorbed and some of it is scattered. How much light an object absorbs is called its opacity: the more it absorbs, the more opaque it is. Iron's opacity isn't an important detail when making a door-knob but when we're talking about the sun, the implications are practically cosmic.

The sun is the star closest to the earth and thus the one humans have studied the most. A lot of what we know, or think we know, about different kinds of stars comes from studying the sun. This is true on two levels. First: scientists have developed various theories to explain the sun's properties. Over many decades, they pointed telescopes, detectors, and antennae at emissions from the star to capture electromagnetic radiation, charged particles, heat, etc. and compare the data with each theory. Then they eliminated theories that disagreed with the data and refined those that did. On the second level, the sun is just one kind of star; the universe has many kinds. To understand their properties, scientists used the theories to build models that 'simulate' them. These properties include the generation of heat and energy and their movement through the star, the star's magnetic field, its rotation and quakes on its surface, the evolution of the stellar atmosphere, the formation of sunspots and flares, and the effects of these changes on near-star space.

Stars are the universe's engines: we can't understand the universe if we don't understand how stars work. When stars form, they allow planets to form around them, which they subsequently supply with light, heat, and a protective magnetic shield. (Sometimes they supply too much or too little: scientists have found more than a few exoplanets fried by their host stars or turned into giant ice balls.) Their mass deflects asteroids and comets, and their flares energise nearby gas clouds and increase the formation of other stars. When a star dies, depending on its manner of death, it releases copious amounts of metals and other elements into the universe that aren't made in any other natural process. This variety of effects means stars' properties affect the formation of star clusters, galaxies, the universe's structure, and its evolution. Scientific models can thus simulate all these things if they get the stars' properties right, and herein lies the rub.

A series of independent studies until the mid-2010s reported that there appeared to be 30-50% less carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen in the sun than what models predicted. These models aren't easy to tweak with new data. They have been able to successfully predict some things, like the sun's current brightness and how many neutrinos nuclear fusion in the sun's core produces every second.

The models have also become so complicated they can run only on the most powerful supercomputers. When faced with the discrepancy, modellers suspected they were due to problems in the way the elements' abundances were measured. If the measurements are improved, the discrepancy might go away, they said. But a notable study published in 2015 disagreed: its authors wrote that the discrepancy "could be resolved if the true mean opacity for the solar interior matter were roughly 15% higher than predicted". How much energy an element absorbs inside the star affects the star's temperature profile. The authors were thus suggesting the models' data about the opacity of elements inside the sun were off. To buttress their argument, they subjected a plasma containing iron to conditions expected at the star's radiation/convection zone boundary, a layer about 30% of the way from the surface to its centre. They reported that depending on the frequency of radiation striking it, iron's opacity was found to be 30-400% higher than predicted. Subsequent studies upheld the crux of these findings: that models were underestimating iron's opacity. In a study published on January 27 this year, scientists reported "opacity profiles" of various elements derived from helioseismic inferences, i.e. based on the propagation of sound within the sun. They wrote: "We find that our seismic opacity is about 10% higher than theoretical values used in current solar models around 2 million degrees, but lower by 35% than some recent available theoretical values."

But researchers who banked on models — which were based on their theories — still had to be sure if uncertainties in the measurements of the time-varying properties of the plasma in these studies could explain the discrepancy. In a study published on March 3 in Physical Review Letters, researchers from the US and France reported they had put this question to the test and concluded the problem was indeed in the theory, not in the observed data. At Sandia National Laboratories in the US, the team exposed a thin sample of iron to X-rays and pointed spectrometers at the X-ray source. The spectrometers observed the X-ray shadow cast by the iron sample. The team also linked up the spectrometers to ultrafast X-ray cameras that recorded changes in temperature and particle density more than one billion times per second. The team wrote in its paper, "Our new measurements use a novel technology to measure opacity sample evolution ... These measurements quantify the impact of temporal gradients on published film-integrated data and contradict the hypothesis that the temporal evolution might explain the published model-data discrepancy."

The study's challenges weren't trivial. Measuring opacity in sun-like conditions requires technologies that didn't exist until recently. To mimic the conditions in the sun, the electrons in a plasma need to be energised to at least 180 eV while their density exceeds 30,000 billion billion particles per millilitre. The energy came from the X-ray source at Sandia. The thin iron sample also contained a small amount of magnesium as a tracer.

The magnesium's interaction with the X-rays, as observed at the spectrometer, allowed the team to calculate the electrons' energy and density. The team inferred iron's opacity to the X-rays based on how strongly it absorbed the radiation. The more strongly it did, the darker the shadow it would cast in the spectrometer readings. This 'darkness' is called the line optical depth. The paper added, "The ultimate approach to resolving the model-data discrepancy entails measuring iron opacity as a function of time. However, that must satisfy many more requirements, including absolute transmission measurements, rather than line optical depth reported here, and formal uncertainty determination, while measuring plasma conditions." "Such an absolute opacity approach is presently under investigation," the team added.

A U-turn that has left a void in Ukraine's defence against Russia: Data



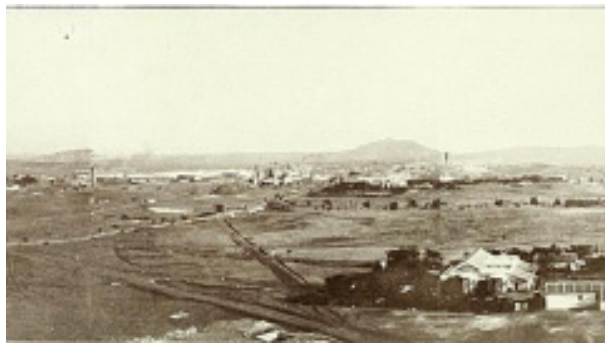
On February 24, for the first time, the U.S. voted against the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine war. This vote, along with its decision on March 4 to pause military aid, shows a marked shift in the U.S.'s policy towards Ukraine, which has depended heavily on it throughout the war for its military needs. Among the 176 member countries of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that participated in the draft resolution, Advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, 93 voted in favour, while 65 countries, including India, abstained from voting. Only 18 countries voted against the resolution. The U.S. was joined by Russia, North Korea, and Belarus, countries with which it has never once agreed on Ukraine-related decisions. Its decision clashed with those of countries that had aligned with the U.S. in over 80% of the UNGA resolutions in the past, including Canada, Britain, Australia, and France.

The U.S.'s U-turn has implications for Ukraine, which is still trying to defend itself against Russian invasion. Ever since Russia's initial occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, over 40 countries have extended financial, humanitarian, and military aid to Ukraine. The U.S.'s total contribution of \$114 billion is the largest since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. It remains the leading donor in military, humanitarian, and financial aid to Ukraine in this period. European nations have together contributed \$132 billion. Chart 2 shows the top five countries that have donated military aid to Ukraine since 2022 (in %). The U.S. has donated \$64 billion, more than half of all the military aid

received by Ukraine during the war. The U.K. is at a distant second, having donated about 10% of the total amount.

In fact, backed mainly by the U.S., Ukraine became the largest importer of major arms in the world in the 2020-24 period, a nearly 100-fold rise compared with the figures of 2015-19. U.S. military aid has given Ukraine some vital arms and ammunition, especially missiles, which Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said "will do all the talking". Chart 3 shows the U.S.'s share in Ukraine's imports across various categories of weapons since the start of the war. The U.S. supplies over 70% of the aircraft used by Ukraine in the war and leads in providing weapons across most categories, including sensors (63%), missiles (55%), armoured vehicles (41%), and air defence systems (28%). However, it does not hold the largest share in artillery, which is primarily supplied by Poland, or in engines, where Germany accounts for about 40% of the supply. The arms supply data includes arms supplied and arms that countries have committed to supplying. U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that the U.S. will be pausing military aid following his clash with Mr. Zelenskyy at the White House comes at a critical time. The outnumbered Ukrainian military forces and civilians continue to suffer casualties. Chart 4 shows the number of civilian fatalities and injuries in Ukraine per month since February 24, 2022. While the number of fatalities, which peaked in March 2022, has decreased since the beginning of the war, an average of about 172 civilians have been killed in Ukraine every month over the past year. A total of 12,605 civilians have been killed since February 2022.

Dignity above gold: Revisiting the KGF workers' strike of 1930



A mention of the year 1930 might remind most Indians of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Dandi March. But down south, in the princely state of Mysore, in the deep, dark and dangerous mines of Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), the flames of a very peculiar proletarian struggle were being kindled around the same time. It was a serendipitous discovery for historian Janaki Nair when she came across a report about the general strike of mine workers at KGF in The Hindu newspaper dated April 6, 1930, the same day Gandhiji broke the salt law. Nair, who has extensively researched and written about the general strike of 1930 at KGF, recently spoke at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) as part of a series of lectures on subaltern struggles in the princely state of Mysore. The 21-day long strike by an 18,000-strong workforce against a new system of fingerprint registration introduced by John Taylor & Sons has a special place in the list of labour movements given how the workers mobilised under no obvious leadership and succeeded at bringing the company to meet their demands.

The first news report on the strike appeared in The Hindu on April 4, 1930, under the headline "Kolar Gold Field – The Oorgaum Mine Strike." The events, however, started unfurling on April 1, 1930, says Nair, when an anonymous notice was found attached to a rock in KGF urging the mining workers to stop providing their fingerprints. The company's explanation for introducing the new registration was that it needed to register all workers and be able to identify them to fulfill obligations under the Workman's Compensation Act introduced in Mysore in the previous year in 1929. "The anonymous notices which sprang up in different parts of this 75 square mile area were asking workers to simply stop work from April 8 until the new registration system was withdrawn," Nair notes.

What was the workers' beef against the new registration system?

The winding engine operator at his platform, He controls from here the movements of the cages in their Journey up and down the mine. The discovery of the champion lode or the richest gold vein in KGF was in the late 1880s. The worker numbers rose from around 6,000 to a whopping 36,000 by 1907 and dropped to about 18,000 by 1930. The four mines of KGF constituted the largest enterprise in Mysore state.

Given the precious nature of the product and the large size of the workforce, John Taylor & Sons imposed very strict rules to govern the region. Nair refers to it as the "Company State." "In some ways, the company was the state in this particular region. The state government did not have much to say or do in terms of regulations that were operating in the KGF," she explains. Among the strictest rules put in place was the Mysore Mines Regulations, 1906, which, in Nair's words, developed a new taxonomy of crime itself. "All those who were in possession of any form of unwrought gold were punished. There had to be very strict system of licenses for traders and merchants in the area. There was a strict ban on a certain category of people called the 'undesirables.'" The working conditions were precarious and dangerous, to say the least. KGF mines were among the deepest in the world with Oorgaum mine going down to 8,000 feet or about 2.5 km. "In addition to the Mysore Mines Regulation of 1906, in 1916 Mysore Criminal Tribes Act came into being and was exclusively operating only in KGF," Nair points out. It identified five sets of tribes - Gantichors, Kepmaris, Woddars, Korachars and Koravas - as criminal tribes and placed them under forms of surveillance which were extremely pervasive and obnoxious, she adds.

While the company could not operate without the help of these tribes whose skills were very essential to mining, they used the Acts to keep a close eye on them. Nair explains this with the example of Woddars who were traditionally well-diggers and hence crucial for mining operations. "The Woddars, for instance, under the Criminal Tribes Act, were expected to be physically examined. Their orifices were examined from mouth to anus to vagina and they had to simply subject themselves to this kind of examination if they wanted to continue to labour in this region."

The working conditions were precarious and dangerous, to say the least. KGF mines were among the deepest in the world with Oorgaum mine going down to 8,000 feet or about 2.5 km. The deep hot mines witnessed a very high number of accidents. Often, the workers themselves were blamed for it by the company. "The heat question was some-

thing that the company was unwilling to deal with. Air conditioning was finally introduced in KGF only in the 1930s. The excuses that were given to not provide certain kinds of facilities was that natives are used to working in very high temperatures and therefore they can tolerate higher temperatures. The kinds of facilities that were offered to these workers were kept to the very bare minimum," Nair says.

There was also the distinction between the company and the contract coolies. While a portion of workers worked directly for the company, around 55% of them were provided by contractors making the lives and livelihoods of the latter further precarious. But what Nair finds interesting is how, even in such a repressive system, the workers found a new sense of meaning and self-worth. Most workers were migrants from the dry districts of Chengalpattu, Salem and North Arcot in Madras Presidency, where bonded labour was the norm. Money wages, therefore, became a form of liberation for the migrant workers of KGF. They earned a respectable wage between Rs 23 and 25 rupees a month which went up to Rs 50 for a mesthiri. A new sense of identity and dignity was taking shape among the workers and the fingerprint registration was a question mark posed on it.

The tipping point While the workers earned decent wages for the times, around 80% of them were heavily indebted to the Marwari moneylenders in the region, points out Nair. The moneylenders also managed to persuade the company to allow them to attach the salaries of the gravely indebted workers. "There was a complete complicity between the company and the moneylender... Sometimes the worker was indebted up to five or six times his monthly salary," Nair notes.

It was to such tense and strenuous circumstances that the fingerprint mandate was introduced. "Finger printing was also a way that was introduced to identify the criminal tribes. So, finger printing was associated very strongly with ideas of criminality which in Mysore was applicable only to the KGF areas," says Nair. For the worker who was already doing a very dangerous labour, the notion of being considered a criminal on top of it or his identity verging on criminality must have been the tipping point. "There was full understanding of the dangers of work in this area. There was also full understanding of the kinds of restraints and surveillance measures that were being imposed on workers in this area," Nair says.

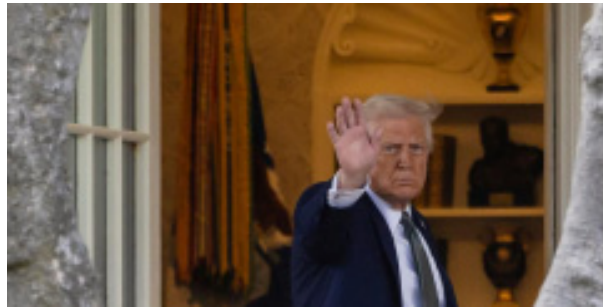
Having a central registry of workers also meant contract workers who used to work in multiple mines under different contractors would be prevented from doing so. "They felt there was no reason to be enslaved onto the mines. They had a very clear picture of what work meant and what it did not mean. And it did not mean committing yourself to this kind of bondage," Nair adds. By April 12, more demands such as grant of hospital and sick pay, service money to contract labourers, full strike pay, contract labour to be on same footing as company labour for attendance bonus, recognition of labour representatives and abolition of employment office in any form made it to the list. With the workers standing their ground and many of them beginning to leave for their native places, the company was not left with a choice. The nearly 7,000 fingerprints which it had collected were destroyed in the presence of a Mysore government bureaucrat and around 2,000 workers.

"The workers came back to work about 21 days later, but not before the state government had taken grave notice of the difficulties that had set in KGF and had sent Diwan Mirza Ismail to look into it," Nair notes. By 1904 the Kolar fields produced nearly all the gold in India, valued at over 20 million pounds sterling annually. One of the most prominent features of the strike was the lack of any obvious leadership and the communication through anonymous notes. The strike also witnessed a unique kind of solidarity between the company workers and contract workers which wasn't witnessed prior to it. "They were clear that the registry was a threat to all workers, not just to company or contract workers," Nair notes. She also observes that KGF was a location where new forms of self-definition were emerging as a consequence of political influences and economic liberty brought in by money wage.

"There was no question of a return to certain forms of extra economic coercion, which they felt was implied in the collection of the fingerprints." According to Nair, it was an extraordinary occasion because there aren't many examples of workers striking for something other than conditions of work, wages and so on. "This strike was not about wages. Strictly speaking it wasn't even about working conditions. It was about dignity and self-worth which the workers were not willing to sacrifice in order to continue to work in these mines," says Nair who also makes a direct parallel with the current times. "We are constantly asked by the State to identify ourselves, provide what they call 'know your customer' documents over and over again. At the same time the state is becoming more and more inscrutable, and less transparent. So, this historical hostility to forms of identification are actually quite important and interesting to us as forms of resistance against this insistence on identification."

Judge orders Trump administration to return two transgender inmates to women's prisons

A judge on Wednesday (March 19, 2025) ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to transfer two transgender women inmates back to federal women's prisons after they had been sent to men's facilities in the wake of President Donald Trump's executive order that truncated transgender protections. U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth in Washington issued a preliminary injunction after the women were added as plaintiffs in ongoing litigation over the impact of Trump's executive order on transgender women in federal prisons. Mr. Lamberth ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to "immediately transfer" the two women — identified in court papers by the pseudonyms Rachel and Ellen Doe — back to women's facilities and said the agency must continue to provide them with hormone therapy treatment for gender dysphoria. The women said in court papers that they were living in constant fear of sexual assault and other violence after being moved to male prisons. Male inmates repeatedly propositioned them for sex and male officers subjected them strip searches without female officers present, they said. "The fact that they have already been transferred and, allegedly, have been abused at their new facilities can only strengthen their claims of irreparable harm," Mr. Lamberth wrote. The preliminary injunction is the latest in a series of rulings thwarting the agency's efforts to comply with the executive order, which calls for housing transgender women in men's prisons, and for halting gender-affirming medical care. Mr. Lamberth, who was appointed by Republican President Ronald Reagan, previously blocked the bureau from transferring a dozen other transgender women inmates to men's prisons. In a



ruling last month, he order that their "housing status and medical care" remain as they were prior Inauguration Day, when the president signed the executive order. Separately, in January, a federal judge in Boston halted the transfer of another transgender women's to a men's prison. At the time, Rachel and Ellen Doe were not plaintiffs to any lawsuit challenging Trump's executive order and were not covered by Lamberth's initial rulings. In a court filing last month, a Trump administration official said that as of Feb. 20, there were 22 transgender women housed in federal women's facilities.

That's about 1% of the nearly 2,200 transgender inmates the agency said it has in its custody. With Mr. Lamberth's order Wednesday, at least 15 people are now covered by orders blocking or reversing the moves. Mr. Lamberth has yet to rule in a lawsuit filed last week by three other inmates — a transgender woman housed in a men's prison and two transgender men housed in women's prisons.

Kota C-section death raises questions: How safe are Caesarean deliveries and what complications can occur?



A woman died while the condition of five others deteriorated due to complications following caesarean deliveries at a government medical college and hospital in Rajasthan's Kota. Considered very safe and life-saving when medically necessary, what are chances of complications with this procedure? "While complications can happen, most C-sections are completed safely. The risks are usually lower when the surgery is done in a well-equipped hospital with experienced doctors, trained nurses, proper hygiene and emergency support systems. Early recognition of warning signs such as fever, severe pain, breathing difficulty, excessive bleeding or swelling is very important because timely treatment can save lives," says Dr Preeti Rastogi, Director & HOD, Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Medanta, Gurugram. The exact cause of the complications in the Kota case is under investigation, so individual incidents should not be seen as representative of the overall safety profile of caesarean deliveries, she explains.

What is a C-section delivery?

A Caesarean section, or C-section, is a surgery used to deliver a baby through cuts made in the mother's abdomen and uterus. It is often done when a normal vaginal delivery may be risky for the mother or baby. In many cases, C-sections are life-saving procedures. However, like all surgeries, they can sometimes lead to complications. While medically necessary C-sections save lives, non-essential caesarean deliveries should be carefully evaluated after discussion with the treating obstetrician.

When does a C-section procedure become complicated?

C-section complications can happen during the surgery, immediately after delivery, or even weeks later. Some complications are mild and manageable, while others can become serious if not treated quickly. One of the most com-

mon complications is infection. Infection may occur at the surgical wound, inside the uterus, or in nearby organs such as the bladder. Women with infection may develop fever, pain, redness around the stitches, swelling or foul-smelling discharge. Doctors usually treat these infections with antibiotics, but severe infections may require longer hospital care. Heavy bleeding, also called postpartum hemorrhage, is another major risk. Since a C-section is a surgery, blood loss is generally higher than in a vaginal delivery. In some cases, bleeding becomes severe enough that the mother may need a blood transfusion or emergency treatment. Excessive bleeding can become life-threatening if not controlled quickly. Some women may also develop blood clots after surgery. These clots usually form in the legs or pelvic veins. If a clot travels to the lungs, it can block blood flow and become extremely dangerous. Doctors often encourage women to start walking carefully after surgery to reduce this risk. Complications related to anesthesia can also occur. During a C-section, women are usually given spinal, epidural or general anesthesia. Some patients may experience allergic reactions, breathing problems, low blood pressure, severe headache, or nausea due to these medicines. Serious reactions are uncommon but possible. In rare cases, nearby organs such as the bladder or bowel may get injured during surgery. These injuries can lead to pain, infection, urine leakage, or the need for additional surgery. Although uncommon, such complications require immediate medical attention.

Are new-borns at risk too?

Babies can also face some risks during a C-section. Some newborns may develop temporary breathing problems, especially if they are delivered before labour begins naturally. Very rarely, the baby's skin may accidentally get cut during the surgery. Recovery after a C-section requires careful hygiene and regular monitoring of wound healing. Mothers may experience pain around the stitches, difficulty moving, weakness, or tiredness for several weeks. Keeping the surgical area clean and dry is important, as poor wound care can increase the risk of infection or reopening of stitches.

What about future pregnancies?

C-sections can also affect future pregnancies. Women who have had one or more C-sections may face a higher risk of problems related to the placenta in future pregnancies. There could be bleeding that would require complex treatment. The scar on the uterus may also weaken and, in rare situations, tear during a future pregnancy or labour.

For months, doctors treated them for TB. They actually had lupus

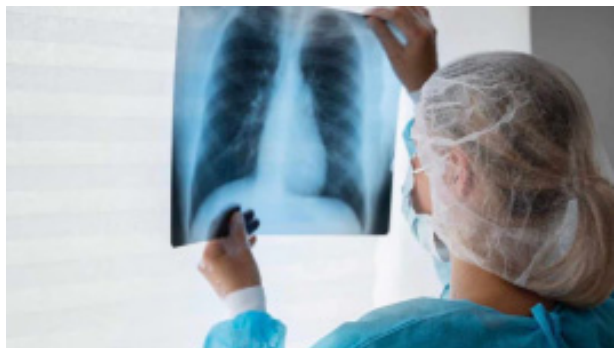
At 16, Vijay Waghmare from Asangaon village in Maharashtra's Satara district felt constantly exhausted. A passionate dancer, he spent most evenings practising with friends and initially brushed off the fatigue, weight loss and joint pain as the result of poor sleep, irregular meals and physical exertion. His farmer parents took him to a local physician, who prescribed painkillers. For a while, the symptoms eased. Within weeks, they returned and worsened. Alarmed, his family took him to a private hospital in Satara, where doctors suspected tuberculosis and advised immediate treatment. But unable to afford prolonged care there, they travelled to Mumbai's KEM Hospital. After extensive tests, doctors arrived at a different diagnosis: Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), a chronic autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissues and organs. Now 19, Vijay has regained weight and strength, returned to dancing, and is responding well to treatment with immunosuppressive medicines. But like most lupus patients, he requires lifelong monitoring to prevent flare-ups and complications. His case is far from isolated. A disease hidden behind common symptoms

Doctors say delayed diagnosis is common for lupus patients in India, where the disease is frequently mistaken for tuberculosis because of overlapping symptoms such as persistent fatigue, fever, weight loss, body pain and weakness. Lupus can also cause joint swelling, skin rashes, sensitivity to sunlight and mouth ulcers in its early stages. Left untreated, it can progress to damage the kidneys, lungs, heart and even the brain. For 20-year-old Kajal Patil from Mumbai's Mazgaon, the diagnostic journey stretched for nearly 18 months. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis after experiencing severe fatigue and joint pain at 17 while preparing for her Secondary School Certificate examinations. As her condition worsened, she struggled to study and eventually became bedridden. After completing months of anti-tuberculosis treatment, her symptoms temporarily improved. But when they returned, she was diagnosed again — this time with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis — and underwent another prolonged treatment course. It was only when recurring fatigue, joint pain and skin rashes led her to KEM Hospital that doctors identified lupus. She was started on high-dose steroids and other medicines to suppress immune activity. Over time, her condition stabilised. She has since completed her Higher Secondary Certificate examinations and now plans to enrol in a computer course.

Why is lupus so often missed?

According to doctors and researchers at the Indian Council of Medical Research—National Institute of Immunohaematology (ICMR-NIRBHID), lupus awareness remains strikingly low in India despite the disease predominantly affecting young women in their reproductive years. "Persistent fatigue and joint pain are often the earliest symptoms. If ignored, lupus can later affect the kidneys, lungs, heart and brain," said Dr Vandana D. Pradhan, Scientist E and Head of the Department of Clinical and Experimental Immunology at ICMR-NIRBHID. The institute screens nearly 5,000 patients annually for autoimmune diseases, diagnosing approximately 200 new lupus cases every year. Most patients are between 20 and 45 years old, and women account for nearly 90 per cent of cases. Doctors attribute this gender disparity partly to hormonal factors, particularly estrogen. Patients with conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome, thyroid disorders and other autoimmune diseases may face a higher risk. "Autoimmune diseases often occur together. Thyroid disorders themselves are autoimmune conditions. But awareness about autoimmune diseases is extremely limited," Dr Pradhan said. While there is no cure for lupus, doctors say early diagnosis followed by continuous treatment — usually involving steroids, immunosuppressants and regular follow-up testing — can help control symptoms, reduce flare-ups and prevent irreversible organ damage.

The tuberculosis overlap One of the biggest reasons lupus slips through the cracks is its clinical similarity to tuberculosis, still one of India's most closely watched public health conditions. "There is very little emphasis on autoim-



mune diseases in standard medical textbooks unless doctors pursue specialisation," Dr Pradhan said. "As a result, many patients presenting with weight loss, fatigue and fever are immediately evaluated for tuberculosis." The challenge is compounded by lupus' unpredictable course. The disease typically follows cycles of flares and remission, where symptoms may improve temporarily before returning — often leading patients to stop medication midway, assuming they have recovered. Doctors caution that treatment interruption can trigger severe relapses and increase the risk of permanent organ damage.

India currently has no nationwide lupus registry, making it difficult to estimate the true scale of the disease. The Indian Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Inception Cohort for Research (INSPIRE), a multicentre cohort launched in 2018 involving more than 2,500 lupus patients across India, offers some of the clearest insights. Its findings show nearly 42 per cent of patients had kidney complications, close to 19 per cent had nervous system involvement and among more than 2,000 participants tracked, 170 deaths were recorded. Uncontrolled disease activity and infections emerged as the leading causes of mortality. For many families, diagnosis is only the beginning of the struggle. Nithin Rajamani, a social scientist at ICMR-NIRBHID who works with lupus patients on mental health and social support, said treatment costs remain a major barrier. "Depending on disease severity, patients spend around ₹3,000 to ₹6,000 every month on medicines alone," he said. "That is apart from travel expenses, wage losses and repeated hospital visits." Specialised lupus diagnosis and treatment facilities remain concentrated in tertiary care hospitals in major cities, making access especially difficult for rural patients. Women often face additional delays because symptoms like fatigue and body pain are frequently dismissed as routine stress or the physical strain of household work. Many women dismiss fatigue and joint pain as part of daily life. In rural areas, even doctors may not immediately suspect lupus because testing facilities and awareness are limited.

High cholesterol is no longer a 40+ problem: Why more Indians in their 20s are at risk

A 29-year-old marketing professional visited the OPD after experiencing occasional fatigue and mild breathlessness during workouts. He had no major health complaints, did not smoke and believed heart disease was something people worried about only later in life. However, a routine health check-up revealed alarmingly high LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels. Further questioning uncovered a strong family history of early heart disease — his father had suffered a heart attack at 48. The early stages of arterial damage had already begun silently over the years. Cases like these are becoming increasingly common in urban India, where unhealthy diets, long working hours, chronic stress, poor sleep, and lack of physical activity are accelerating metabolic disorders at a much younger age. Yet cholesterol testing continues to be viewed as something only middle-aged adults need to think about. The myth of 'middle-aged cholesterol'

For decades, cholesterol testing has largely been associated with people above 40. This assumption is now out-

Semaglutide generics launch pushes sales of GLP-1 drugs by 75% in 1 month



THE MARKET for diabetes and anti-obesity GLP-1 medicines has risen by over 75% in size since the launch of generic versions of semaglutide over a month ago, shows recently released pharmaceutical market data. Total semaglutide sales have gone up from 25,000 units in February to 1.7 lakh units in April, driving the overall sales of GLP-1 medicine.

The data shows 4.14 lakh units of GLP-1 injectables were sold in India in April this year, going up by 76% from 2.35 lakh units in February. This increase was also captured in the data for March — the generic versions of semaglutide became available March 21 onwards, a day after pharmaceutical giant Novo Nordisk lost its patent on its blockbuster molecule — when 2.66 lakh units of GLP-1 drugs were sold. The data shows this increase in market over the last two months was driven by semaglutide. While other GLP-1 drugs such as tirzepatide and liraglutide saw some dip in sales — dropping from 1.1 lakh units in February to 0.98 lakh units in April — there was nearly seven-fold increase in sales of semaglutide by volume. Both semaglutide and tirzepatide — the two GLP-1 drugs that have been approved for treatment of obesity — belong to a class of drugs called incretin mimetics. They mimic the action of the gut hormones called incretins to improve secretion of insulin, inhibit secretion of glucagon that stimulates glucose production in the liver and also reduces appetite by slowing down digestion. While semaglutide uses just one target hormone GLP-1, tirzepatide uses another one called GIP. Trials have shown more weight loss on average with tirzepatide as compared to semaglutide. Innovator's demand

An increase was seen in the sales of the innovator product — increasing from 25,000 units in February to 32,000 in April. But the sales of generic versions of semaglutide jumped from 0 units in February, to 40,000 units in the last 10 days of March, and 1.37 lakh units in April, according to the

How rat poison led to Mumbai watermelon deaths: What doctors say about early signs and silent risks

The deaths of a family in Mumbai's Pydhonie area after consuming watermelon laced with rat poison have once again drawn attention to the deadly impact of rodenticides on the human body. Forensic analysis has confirmed the presence of zinc phosphide, a highly toxic chemical commonly used in rat poison, in both the watermelon samples and the viscera of the deceased family members. According to officials and relatives, the family — Abdullah Dokadia (40), his wife Naseem (35), and their daughters Ayesha (16) and Zainab (13) — fell ill after consuming watermelon late at night and died within hours.

What is zinc phosphide?

Doctors say zinc phosphide is among the most dangerous poisons routinely available in the market because of the way it reacts inside the body. Dr Tushar Palve, medical superintendent at Cama and Alibless Hospital, says, "Once it enters the human body, it reacts with stomach acid and releases phosphine gas, which is highly poisonous. This gas rapidly affects the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Patients can deteriorate within hours, developing severe vomiting, breathing difficulty, low blood pressure, cardiac toxicity and multi-organ failure." Zinc phosphide is not only used in rodenticides but also in pesticides used for farming and grain storage. "Improper handling or contamination of food items can become extremely dangerous because even small quantities can prove fatal in humans. Some reports and past incidents have also highlighted how fruit vendors or storage handlers allegedly use rat-killing substances to prevent rodent infestation in fruit godowns and transport areas. Accidental contamination of fruits or food products with phosphide compounds can have deadly consequences if consumed unknowingly," he explains.

How to deal with phosphide poisoning?

Phosphide poisoning is particularly dangerous because there is no specific antidote available. "Once phosphine gas is released inside the stomach, it rapidly damages the heart, lungs, liver and kidneys, often leading to shock, cardiac arrest and multi-organ failure. Treatment mainly depends on early hospitalisation, intensive monitoring and supportive care, but survival chances reduce significantly in cases of severe exposure," says Dr Palve.

Dr Manjusha Agarwal, consultant, Internal Medicine, Gleneagles Hospital, Mumbai, says rat poison tends to interfere with blood clotting and, therefore, damages vital organs. So, when it is consumed, patients may initially experience nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dizziness, or weakness. However, the real danger often appears later when internal bleeding tends to occur silently. "Some people may

data. "People were waiting for the drug and the price reduction helped," said Dr V Mohan, Chairman, Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre. Though the anti-obesity GLP-1 drugs by Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly entered the Indian market only in 2025, just a year before the expiry of Novo Nordisk's patent, the generic versions have not cut into the sales of the innovator products. Instead, they have created their own market. The semaglutide market in India is split evenly between Novo Nordisk's innovator molecule and the generic versions. Both the innovator and the generic molecules generated Rs 44 crore each in sales in the month of April.

"The innovator molecules have more or less managed to retain their market, yet there has been a significant growth in the generic versions of the drug. What this essentially means is that the generic drugs have expanded the market instead of cutting into the market for the innovator molecules," said Sheetal Sapale, vice president (commercial), Pharmarack. When it comes to generic versions of semaglutide, Torrent pharmaceuticals has emerged as the leader, capturing 38% of the market. This is followed by Zydus with 10% and Lupin with 9%. While this market share reflects both injectable and oral versions of the drug, the trend remains similar when it comes to injectable versions only, with Torrent leading with 28% of the market share. The high share of total semaglutide by Torrent pharmaceutical is owing to the fact that it is the only company to enter the oral segment with its brands Semalix and Sembolic. Most of the other companies stuck to injectable semaglutide. Changing trends Eli Lilly's Tirzepatide continues to be the market leader. A slight dip in its sales was noted in the month of March when the generic versions were launched, but it has almost recouped its share. Tirzepatide sales worth Rs 135 crore were recorded in February, dropping to Rs 114 crore in March, and again bouncing back to Rs 121 crore in April. The semaglutide market, on the other hand, has expanded from Rs 48 crore in February to Rs 88 crore in April. Among this, the share of the innovator semaglutide products such as Ozempic, Wegovy and Rybelsus has gone down from Rs 48 crore in February to Rs 44 crore in April, whereas the sales of the generic versions of the drug has increased from 0 in February to Rs 44 crore in April, according to market insights provided by Pharmarack. "While the value of the market is similar for the innovator and generic products, the volume is much higher for the generic versions. The volume impact of generics, along with strong unit growth, indicates increased affordability along with aggressive promotion expanding the market," said Sapale. "This also shows that some doctors are sticking to the innovator molecules for patients who are able to afford it," she added.



notice bleeding gums, blood in urine, black stools or unexplained bruising. Severe poisoning can induce breathing difficulty, seizures, shock, multi-organ failure, and even death. Hence, immediate medical attention is required as delayed treatment can become life-threatening within hours or days based on the type of poison consumed," Dr Agarwal says. Consuming rat poison can also raise the chances of severe liver injury, especially when toxic chemicals enter the bloodstream and tend to affect the body's detoxification system, according to Dr Amol R Jadhav, chief liver transplant surgeon and programme director, Medicovert Hospitals, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai. "The liver plays a major role when it comes to filtering harmful substances, and poisoning can lead to inflammation, liver cell damage, or even acute liver failure in some people. Many patients may develop yellowing of the eyes and skin, persistent vomiting, confusion, fatigue, or even swelling in the abdomen. So, understand that timely diagnosis, liver function monitoring, and emergency treatment are necessary to prevent permanent organ damage and save the patient's life," Dr Jadhav says. Rat poison consumption is a medical emergency because the symptoms may not always appear immediately. Dr Ravindra Zore, a chief intensivist and ICU head at the Zynova Shalby Hospital, Mumbai, advises against delay. "Liver failure may require urgent liver transplant. Rat poison tends to take a toll on the nervous system, too, causing confusion, dizziness, seizures, tremors, difficulty speaking, and loss of consciousness. In severe cases, toxic chemicals can also lead to brain swelling, nerve damage or coma because of internal bleeding and reduced oxygen supply to the brain. Patients can suddenly collapse due to internal bleeding, low blood pressure, or even organ failure. Children are particularly vulnerable as small quantities can be highly toxic for them. So, ensure the person gets timely treatment."

normal weight, and still carry significantly elevated cholesterol levels without realising it. Early screening allows doctors to identify risk before permanent damage occurs. A simple lipid profile can detect abnormal cholesterol levels before plaque buildup becomes extensive, giving individuals an opportunity to make corrective lifestyle changes early. It also helps identify inherited conditions such as familial hypercholesterolemia, a genetic disorder that causes very high LDL cholesterol from a young age. Many people with this condition remain undiagnosed until a serious cardiac event occurs within the family. Another important reason for early testing is the concept of cumulative exposure. Cardiovascular risk is influenced not only by how high cholesterol levels are at a given point, but also by how long the body remains exposed to elevated cholesterol. The earlier cholesterol levels are controlled, the lower the lifetime damage to blood vessels and the lower the future risk of heart attack and stroke. Research also increasingly shows that cardiovascular disease is affecting younger adults.

How Milind Soman completed his toughest sea swim at 60: ‘No extreme protocols. Just repetition of the same drill’



When actor and fitness enthusiast Milind Soman emerged from the cold waters of the Strait of Gibraltar on May 1, Indian flag in hand, after completing the 15-km crossing from Tarifa in Spain to the Moroccan coast, the internet reacted with collective disbelief. “How is this man 60?” That was the top comment.

Soman completed the crossing in under five hours with three other Indians, all in their 30s. Speaking to The Indian Express, he says, “The Gibraltar crossing is one of the world’s most demanding open-water challenges, shaped by strong and shifting currents, rapidly changing tides, dense international shipping traffic and water temperatures that can dip to a punishing 15°C. This is where the Atlantic crashes into the Mediterranean, creating unpredictable and often brutal conditions. Although accomplished endurance swimmers train specifically for it, decades of disciplined consistency rather than the last-minute push saw me through.” A challenge nearly a decade in the making

The swim had been in the works since 2017, when Soman first applied to the Gibraltar Swimming Association. “Getting a slot is no easy feat. The strait is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, with only one support boat permitted per swimmer each day. Clearances depend heavily on weather and marine traffic. There is a queue. I applied in 2017 and forgot about it,” he says. Then the pandemic happened. Years later, the opportunity resurfaced through a friend, and the long-delayed crossing was finally back on. By then, his body was already prepared. All he needed was to swim for half an hour for a few days continuously in the straits to acclimatise his body to the water. Soman insists no miracle training was behind this feat. “Marathons for 25 years — so my body was fit. I kept to my swim rituals, just a couple of times a month,” he says. His endurance journey began in the pool. Long before becoming one of India’s most recognisable public figures, Soman was a competitive swimmer who represented India at the national level in the 100m and 200m breaststroke. Running entered his life much later. It was only after making an appearance at the Mumbai Half Marathon that he discovered its appeal as the simplest form of cardiovascular training. He began with 10-km runs, steadily increasing distance over the years, eventually pushing himself to 100-km ultramarathons. At 47, he completed his now-iconic 1,500-km run from Delhi to Mumbai over 30 days.

Contrary to what many would expect, Soman did not spend months obsessively training for the sea crossing. “I had already completed several long sea swims in Goa earlier this year, including distances approaching 20 km. Recently, I completed my first Ironman (a premier long-distance endurance event consisting of a 3.86 km swim, 180.25 km bike ride and a 42.2 km marathon run). I didn’t overtrain or prepare specifically for the event, I maintained a consistent baseline,” he says. His philosophy is simple: if fitness is maintained year-round, the body can remain re-

markably capable. His daily routine reflects that belief. Not one for gyms and fad diets, Soman’s mornings begin with sit-ups and leg raises in bed, followed by planks, four or five rounds of Surya Namaskar, and push-ups — sometimes 20, sometimes 40. “Nothing elaborate. No extreme protocols. Just repetition of the same drill,” says Soman. His nutrition is equally pragmatic. He avoids fad diets, preferring local, seasonal, home-cooked food, fruits and whole grains while steering clear of heavily processed packaged products.

Soman says the challenge was not fatigue. “The only challenge was keeping the core body temperature up.” At 15°C, prolonged exposure becomes a physiological battle. Hydration during the crossing was carefully managed by the support crew. Open-water rules prohibit touching the boat, so every 45 minutes the team passed him nutrition bottles during one-minute feeding breaks. “My fluids included electrolytes, isotonic salts, carbohydrate gels and hot coffee to help counter the cold. Adding to the challenge, all my younger co-swimmers, including a helicopter pilot, an IAS officer and an entrepreneur from Bengaluru, meant synchronising pace. If you’re not swimming at your own pace, you can get colder,” he explains. Soman’s crossing underscores a larger truth about ageing and athleticism. According to fitness expert Mickey Mehta, endurance at 60 is fundamentally different from endurance at 25. “The goal shifts from maximising performance to avoiding excessive fatigue or injury — and recovering well. This is where many people misunderstand later-life fitness. Endurance after 60 is not about aggression. It is about calibration. The pace and intensity should challenge you, not kill you,” says Dr Mehta.

At this stage of life, endurance becomes a process of measured stress on the body — enough to challenge the heart, lungs, bones, muscles and agility systems, but not enough to overwhelm recovery. “Ageing naturally reduces aerobic capacity (VO2 max), muscle mass, joint mobility and recovery efficiency. But these declines are not a reason to stop. They are a reason to train smarter. When approached scientifically and progressively, endurance training after 60 can improve cardiovascular efficiency, muscular endurance, mobility, balance, immunity and overall vitality,” says Dr Mehta.

He stresses that before beginning serious endurance work, individuals — particularly those with hypertension, diabetes, osteoarthritis or sedentary lifestyles — should assess cardiovascular health, gait mechanics, joint range, previous injuries and baseline tolerance. Training should become more consistent, not more extreme. “That means beginning with body weight work and gradually progressing to resistance, agility drills and cardiovascular exercise such as brisk walking, cycling, swimming and structured functional conditioning. Monitoring exertion, breathlessness and recovery response is critical. So is integrating breath regulation, mobility work, cooling down and stretching,” he adds. When personalised appropriately, says Mehta, endurance training after 60 is one of the most effective tools for preserving independence, reducing frailty risk and supporting healthy ageing. Soman rejects the idea that age itself is the obstacle. “The real obstacle is neglect. If you live your life a certain way, life can keep getting bigger.” He cites the example of two participants from his Pinkathon event. “In this women-only marathon, we had women aged 68 and 76. The first began serious fitness journeys only six years ago. Any time is a good time to start moving. Real endurance is not a feat, but taking the first step and building yourself up,” says Soman.

‘My period is late, but I’m spotting. I only notice it when I wipe. What is going on?’



Your periods going off the calendar can be confusing and leave you with a million doubts. Now imagine that they get delayed, and to make it even more confusing, you notice spotting only when you wipe. No proper flow, no clear answers. One such confused internet user shared a similar experience on Quora, seeking answers. The query read: ‘My period is late, but I’m spotting. I only notice it when I wipe. What is going on?’

Is it a shift in your cycle? Are you not having your period? Is it something to worry about? Are you pregnant? Is this a symptom? Intrigued, we decided to dig deeper and solve the mystery. “It means your body started to bleed but didn’t get a full flow,” reveals Dr Kaishreen Khan, Consultant- Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Motherhood Hospitals, Kharadi, Pune. To put it simply, one of the reasons could be that your uterus lining is “shedding very lightly” or something is delaying the normal period. “It’s your body’s way of saying something changed this cycle.”

Does this mean you are pregnant?

“Yes, it could be,” Dr Khan confirms. “Implantation bleeding happens when a fertilized egg attaches to the uterus.” This kind of spotting is usually subtle—“very light, pink or brown, and lasts 1–2 days around the time your period is due.” However, this alone does not confirm pregnancy, for which further medical testing is needed. More often, the cause is hormonal. “Hormone changes are the biggest reason — stress, sudden weight change, travel, or poor sleep.” Conditions like PCOS or thyroid issues, changes in birth control, perimenopause, or even intense exercise can also disrupt the cycle. Sometimes, there’s no major cause at all—“just a one-off hormonal hiccup.” In such cases, pregnancy becomes less likely—but testing can still give clarity. Similarly, if bleeding picks up after a few days, it’s often just a delayed cycle. “That usually means your period just started late and lightly.” In fact, it’s fairly common for periods to begin with spotting before a full flow. “If the bleeding now looks like your usual period and lasts 3–7 days, it’s likely normal. In such cases, pregnancy becomes less likely—but testing can still give clarity.” When to test and when to worry? “Take a home pregnancy test if your period is 8 to 10 days late, using first-morning urine,” says Dr Khan.

If it’s negative and your period still doesn’t come, “repeat it” after about a week. You should also check in with a doctor if this keeps happening. “Consult your gynecologist if this happens 2–3 cycles in a row, or if you’re trying to conceive.”

At the same time, certain symptoms need urgent attention. “Don’t ignore severe belly pain, especially one-sided — it could be an ectopic pregnancy,” Dr Khan warns. Other warning signs include “sudden heavy bleeding, clots, dizziness, pain during sex or foul-smelling discharge,” as well as fever or pelvic pain. “These signs mean you shouldn’t wait — call your doctor the same day,” the gynecologist concludes.

Amazon India to expand Ashray rest centres network to 250 by 2026

Hyderabad: Amazon on Sunday announced plans to expand its network of Ashray rest centres for delivery drivers to 250 facilities across India by the end of 2026. The move builds on the company’s existing network of 100 centres operating across 16 cities, including Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai.

As part of the expansion, Amazon said it will launch 50 new Ashray centres by the end of May. The facilities are open to all delivery drivers, including those not associated with Amazon’s logistics network.

The air-conditioned centres provide seating areas, drinking water, electrolytes, mobile charging points, clean washrooms, first-aid kits, and resting spaces, particularly aimed at helping delivery personnel cope with extreme summer conditions. According to the company, the existing Ashray centres have collectively recorded more than one million visits from delivery drivers in 2025.

Amazon India has also introduced mobile Ashray units in the form of air-conditioned vans stationed along high-traffic delivery routes. These mobile units offer amenities such as drinking water, electrolytes, Wi-Fi connectivity, charging points, and resting spaces to drivers without requiring them to travel to fixed centres. Salim R. Memon, Director of Operations at Amazon India, said the initiative reflects the company’s focus on the health, safety, and well-being of delivery associates. He added that the expansion is part of Amazon’s broader investment of over ₹2,800 crore towards improving safety, health, and financial well-being measures across its operations network. Amazon said it is partnering with organisations such as Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Udyasa Foundation, and READ India to establish the new facilities.

AI for children should not bypass human validation: Vineet Nayar, Founder, Sampark Foundation



During his tenure, Vineet led the transformation of HCL Technologies into one of India’s fastest-growing global information technology service companies. His management practices at HCL Technologies became case studies at both Harvard Business School and London Business School. In 2013, Vineet stepped down from HCL Technologies to focus on Sampark Foundation, which he co-founded with his wife Anupama Nayar. The foundation works to drive ‘large-scale transformation in primary education through frugal innovation’.

Vineet holds a degree in mechanical engineering from GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology and a management degree from XLRI Jamshedpur. He is also the author of the management bestseller, Employees First, Customer Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down (Harvard Business Press). Vineet spoke to indianexpress.com on the work of the Sampark Foundation, the challenges of transforming education in India through technology, and how AI could transform the education sector in rural India. Edited excerpts: Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us about your journey from HCL Technologies to the Sampark Foundation. Vineet Nayar: My journey from HCL to Sampark Foundation was not about moving from business to philanthropy. It was about moving from one large transformation challenge to another. Sampark Foundation today reaches 20 million children across two lakh government schools through eight state government partnerships.

It is not as if we picked up education as a possible intervention in the first instance. We identified five areas, including health, rural development, agriculture, water management, and education, and we launched projects in each one of them. We discovered that the education sector offered the possibility of impact at scale. My wife is a special education teacher from the Spastic Society, and my mother was a government school teacher for 30 years. That was of great help. We experimented, learned, and eventually honed in on education. It was an interaction with my mother which made me realise the need to find one’s true meaning in life. And true meaning, she said, comes only when you help others achieve their goals. That was the moment of change around 2011-2012, when I was 50 years old, that I realised the need to change my path so that I would still have the energy to execute another transformation.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: What were the initial challenges?

Vineet Nayar: When I entered the education sector, I saw that millions of children were in school, but learning was not happening. The system had become dependent on compliance instead of inspiration. Teachers were overloaded. Classrooms were overcrowded. Solutions were designed in boardrooms, not for the realities of rural India. I realised that if we wanted transformation at scale, we had to combine three things: technology, simplicity, and the power of human connection. That became the foundation of Sampark. What excites me most is that Sampark is not a charity, distributing products. We are building scalable learning systems for Bharat.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us about your learnings from HCL that you have brought forward to the Sampark Foundation. And what is it that you had to unlearn?

Vineet Nayar: The world often behaves as if machines are replacing humans. My experience has been the opposite. Machines amplify humans. Weak systems become weaker with technology. Strong human systems become transformational. At HCL, I also learned that large systems change only when frontline people are empowered. In education, the frontline is the teacher. Yet most education reform treats teachers as the problem instead of the solution. So we asked ourselves a different question: how do we make teachers successful? How do we reduce complexity inside classrooms? The second lesson was about scale. India needs solutions that can work across millions of children. Every Sampark innovation is designed with scale, affordability, and simplicity at its core. The third lesson was around feedback loops. Technology becomes powerful when it creates visibility and accountability. Without data, systems drift. With data, systems improve.

On what I needed to unlearn, the amount of resources I had at HCL Technologies was almost unlimited, and I could pick up the phone and speak to anyone in the world. All of that collapsed overnight. So I had to build the organisation all over again, this time with people who were interested in villages and rural education, which is a much smaller pool. People no longer picked up your calls just because you held a particular chair or title. And yes, we had resources, but not billions of dollars to take unlimited bets. So that was one major level of change.

The second level of change was emotional and cultural. At HCL, it was a for-profit initiative. The enthusiasm and motivation were certainly there, but here the morale of the employees is at a level I had never experienced before. As a result, my own motivation, morale, and sense of satisfaction became far higher.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Where does tech fit in the Sampark Foundation’s vision? Vineet Nayar: Technology sits at the centre of Sampark’s work, but not in the way Silicon Valley imagines it. We are not obsessed with shiny technology. We are for solving real problems at scale. Most educational technology fails in rural India because it assumes infrastructure, internet, training, and ideal classroom conditions. Rural India has none of these consistently.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us more about one of your innovations, Sampark TV, and how it works on the ground?

Vineet Nayar: When you enter a classroom, you will see all the content aligned with the state textbooks, almost in a Netflix-style interface. The entire system is driven by an Android device connected to a smart board. It does not require internet connectivity. Now, pedagogy is based on the idea that there is a structured way of teaching every microconcept correctly. You will see lesson plans, animated videos, and there will be gamified assessments that teachers conduct in the classroom. There is also an AI engine inside Sampark TV that captures and sends classroom data back to us. We process it through the AI engine and share daily insights with government agencies.

Normally, we do not know what is happening inside classrooms. What Sampark TV has done is make teaching easier and learning more engaging, while also allowing us to understand what is actually happening in the classroom. At the same time, we are able to extract class-

room-level data and provide it to state administrators. They can see which teachers are teaching according to plan and which are not. The teacher does not have to independently explain every microconcept. She becomes an enabler of learning rather than the sole source of instruction. The multimedia content helps deliver the concept. I am completely against devices in the hands of children, and I can cite research to support that view. I believe the device should remain in the hands of the teacher. So what you will see is one large Android screen in the classroom, fully controlled by the teacher. No personal devices in the hands of students. It is currently active in 86,000 classrooms.

Vineet Nayar: Sampark AI helps us design the optimal learning path for every microconcept. The Sampark AI engine inside the Android device captures data on what the teacher is teaching and how the children are responding. That data flows into our AI engine, which then feeds insights to government administrators through dashboards. They can see which teachers are progressing according to plan and which are not. Sampark AI helps us assess children periodically to understand whether learning is actually happening.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: How does the system track individual student-level performance?

Vineet Nayar: So the first level of tracking happens at the classroom and community level. We visually identify the responses and understand what percentage of children selected the correct answer. That completes the classroom-level assessment. When a Sampark staff member visits the classroom, they take photographs of the children’s work-book pages. Then AI converts those photographs into correct and incorrect responses, and that gives us assessment data for each child individually. Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us about the Harvard Business case studies on Sampark Foundation.

Vineet Nayar: The Harvard case study on Sampark explores a fascinating challenge: can large-scale social transformation happen with the same rigour, innovation, and accountability expected in the corporate world? The cases examine how Sampark built scalable education systems by combining technology, behavioural insights, operational discipline, and government partnerships. Sampark Foundation also features among the 10 cases in the book Genius at Scale by Harvard professor Linda Hill.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Education in rural India. How much of it is a tech problem?

Vineet Nayar: Rural education is not fundamentally a technology problem. It is a systems and human capability problem. Technology cannot replace motivation, teacher ownership, leadership, or community participation. But technology can dramatically amplify outcomes when used correctly. The mistake many people make is believing that distributing devices equals educational reform. It does not. A tablet without pedagogy is just hardware. India must be careful not to copy Western models blindly. Our solutions must be built for multilingual classrooms, low infrastructure environments, and first-generation learners.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us about three tech solutions that have not worked in an Indian educational context. Vineet Nayar: The first failure has been hardware-led thinking. India spent years believing that tablets and computers alone would improve learning. They did not. The second failure has been internet-dependent models. Rural India cannot rely on uninterrupted connectivity for learning. The third failure has been importing urban edtech models into rural government schools. Most of these products were designed for affluent, English-speaking environments and collapsed when exposed to the realities of Bharat.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us about the challenges the education ecosystem would face from new tech interventions?

Vineet Nayar: Let’s talk about AI companies first. AI companies want subscribers. Initially, they offer free services, but eventually they begin charging for them. Now, despite knowing that AI can fudge facts and hallucinate, we are still putting these tools into the hands of children through subscription-based models. We do not know what kind of history, geography, or understanding a child may absorb over the next two or three years. Companies push AI into the hands of children primarily to drive subscriber growth, because their valuations increase when they can claim a billion or two billion users. And because these products are initially free, many state governments in India are adopting them. Now they are training their AI engines using our data. Once people become dependent on these systems, there may no longer be viable alternatives.

I often give this example: when I first entered the technology industry, there were operating systems from companies like Wipro, Infosys, and HCL Technologies. Then Microsoft entered the market, and its operating system spread rapidly because pirated copies were freely available. Over time, Indian operating systems disappeared. I believe something similar could happen here. These companies will learn from our data, build dependence, and later move to subscription models. The edtech companies, in my view, are among the biggest contributors to this problem. They built subscription-driven models for urban children and are now pushing the same approach into rural education.

In our villages and towns, we have multi-grade classrooms. Classes 1, 2, and 3 often sit together. We have multiple languages. Attendance may only be 120-130 days a year. And teachers spend only around 19% of their time teaching, while 81% goes into administrative work. In this context, the tool should be in the hands of the teacher, not the child. That is why I am strongly against putting iPads or similar devices directly into the hands of children. I am strongly against edtech models that isolate the child with a screen. It reminds me of the “Free Basics” debate, when Facebook proposed free internet access. Thankfully, the Indian government did not approve of the same. In my opinion, policymakers should apply the same level of scrutiny to these education models as well. Venkatesh Kannaiah: Do you work with startups? Tell us about some opportunities that you see for social impact startups in the edtech sector. Vineet Nayar: I mentor 19 startups, many of them using AI and advanced technology to solve relevant business and social problems. Some are solving for teacher productivity and learning personalisation. Others are improving employee assessments, operational efficiency, healthcare delivery, financial models, drug discovery, or enhancing human capability. In education, the biggest opportunities are in foundational learning, multilingual AI systems, adaptive learning, teacher enablement, and low-cost, scalable infrastructure. I personally commit a certain number of hours every month to mentoring these 19 startups. I do not invest in them, nor do I charge a fee.

The first question when startups approach me is: What is the use case you are trying to solve? Secondly, is the benefit actually reaching the end beneficiary? And thirdly, is there a meaningful technology embedded in the solution? If a startup can answer those three questions convincingly, I am willing to mentor them. It does not matter whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit.

June GST collections at Rs 1.95 lakh crore, import revenue jumps 35%



The government collected Rs 1.95 lakh crore as Goods and Services Tax (GST) on a gross basis in June, up 13.9% from last year, buoyed by a 34.6% rise in tax revenue from imports – almost double the 19.1% increase seen in May. According to data released by the Ministry of Finance on Wednesday, the June GST collections were only marginally higher than the Rs 1.94 lakh crore mopped-up in May. GST collections had hit a record high of Rs 2.43 lakh crore in April. In June, domestic revenue accounted for 69.2% – or Rs 1.35 lakh crore – of the gross GST collections as it rose 6.5% year-on-year, with the remaining 30.8% amounting to Rs 60,038 crore coming from imports. In May, GST from imports had made up 30.7% of total collections, with government sources arguing then that the rise in Integrated GST revenue from imports was a sign of “industrial capacity expansion”. Officials had said the 19.1% rise in GST from imports in May was driven by inbound shipments of raw materials and intermediate inputs that feed India’s industrial production chain – items such as processing units, memory chips, copper, and aluminium scrap.

However, a significant increase in the IGST of these items was also likely due to a rapid increase in prices of

memory chips, copper, and aluminium. According to Abhishek Jain, Indirect Tax Head & Partner at KPMG, the “exceptional growth” in GST collections from imports “could to some extent be on account of rupee depreciation”. Jain added that the overall growth “clearly demonstrates strong resilience by the Indian economy amidst geopolitical uncertainties”.

Meanwhile, Ikesh Nagpal, Lead-Indirect Tax at tax and consulting firm AKM Global said it was “encouraging” that the growth in GST collections was alongside a 29.1% increase in refunds. This, according to Nagpal, indicated that “strong revenue growth is being achieved without affecting liquidity for businesses”. Total refunds in June rose to Rs 32,436 crore, resulting in net GST revenue being 11.2% higher at Rs 1.62 lakh crore. Net domestic revenue was only 2.6% higher from last year at Rs 1.17 lakh crore, while net revenue from imports was 42.2% higher at Rs 45,370 crore.

The data for June came on the same day the GST began its 10th year of existence, having been rolled out on July 1, 2017. The new indirect tax regime continues to be fine-tuned, with the GST Council last year in September approving a raft of changes, including lower tax rates and a two-slab structure, among others. Experts continue to expect more reforms in the GST system, with BDO India’s Karthik Mani, Partner & Leader (South) – Indirect Tax, saying that industry and taxpayers want a single pan-India GST registration “to end the compliance burden of state-wise registrations”. Other changes on the wish-list include a “genuine amnesty” for routine reconciliation mismatches so taxpayers are not dragged into litigation over minor notices, auto-populated monthly returns to reduce manual filing to near-zero, and fungibility of Input Tax Credit across states. “Achieving these would mark GST’s true transition from a tax reform to a genuinely frictionless, taxpayer-first system,” Mani said.

WhatsApp responds to India username block, says ‘still requires a phone number’

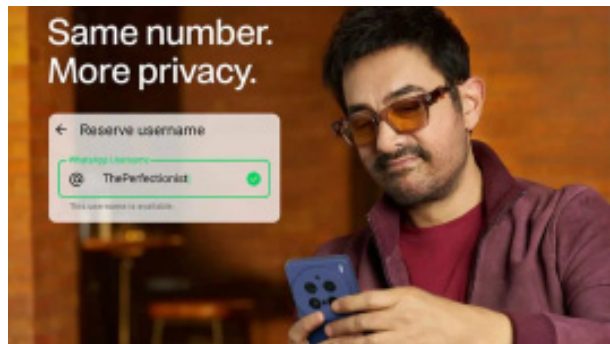
Earlier this week, WhatsApp announced it would gradually allow users to select a username and hide their phone numbers when contacting another user for the first time. It is an optional unique identifier a user can choose for her WhatsApp account. It can also be used by others to message or call her, while keeping the phone number private. Senior government officials said the Union Ministry of Home Affairs raised concerns with the Ministry of Electronics and IT. They said the government would undertake a risk assessment of the new feature, and see if it falls foul of the current legal architecture. The government has asked Meta to furnish a detailed explanation on the username feature in the next three days, and has directed the company to not roll out the feature until consultation on the matter is over, an official said. “As we understand now, there is a possibility that bad actors may claim usernames, or close-enough variations related to prominent personalities, institutions, and organisations, and message other users while pretending to be someone they are not. For those who may not be technologically aware to make out the difference, it could be a huge challenge. We have already seen bad actors carry out impersonation-linked scams such as digital arrests through WhatsApp, and this feature could further help them,” a senior government official said, requesting anonymity. In a statement, WhatsApp said it plans to roll out the features slowly later this year, but clarified it has built safeguards. “To protect against impersonation, we’ve held the highest-profile names — think public figures, government entities, celebrities, verified Meta accounts — so they can only ever be claimed by their legitimate owners and lookalike derivatives of known names are held as well.”

It said the users still require a phone number to use WhatsApp and that it has built multiple layers of defense against scams into usernames. “Other users need to know the exact username to message you, we will limit how many new people an account can contact, block repeated attempts to guess someone’s username key, and have systems to detect and remove actively showing common impersonation and abuse patterns,” the WhatsApp spokesperson said. Further, it said, when the feature becomes available and someone sends a message for the first time via the username, WhatsApp will show if they are a new account, if they are in contact, if they are in common groups, and if they are based in a different country, so that one can choose whether or not to respond, the spokesperson said. Another government official said that during internal assessments and subsequent questioning of WhatsApp, if they do not think there are enough guardrails to protect against impersonation, the government may also look into whether the feature’s rollout should be stopped altogether. Queries sent to the ministries of IT and Home Affairs remained unanswered until publication.

Small firms panic over government probe after JSW joint venture letter

An anti-dumping probe initiated by the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Cold Rolled Grain Oriented (CRGO) steel, a specialised type of steel, has sparked outrage among MSME transformer manufacturers, and also raised fears of a hike in electricity cost for consumers. The investigation, ordered on June 22, is based on an application by one company, JSW JFE Electrical Steel Nashik Private Limited, which is a joint venture between JSW Steel Limited, India’s largest steel producer, and Japan-based JFE Steel Corporation.

JSW JFE Electrical Steel is the only producer of CRGO steel in India, and is seen as strategically crucial for the country. It is a key input material in transformers, which forms the backbone of the electricity transmission system. The probe comes in the backdrop of a rapid expansion drive in the country’s transmission network, which is expected to spur demand for CRGO steel. A query emailed to JSW Group did not elicit a comment. As on date, much of the domestic demand is met through imports. JSW JFE Electrical Steel faces stiff competition on the pricing front from producers in China, Japan and European Union. The initiation of the probe comes soon after JSW JFE Electrical Steel became the sole producer of CRGO post the Rs 4,158-crore acquisition of Thyssenkrupp’s Nashik plant in January last year. A safeguard duty investigation initiated earlier had excluded CRGO from its scope on grounds India does not produce this specialised steel. A Jaipur-based MSME said CRGO is a very important raw material for transformers and it comprises about 40-50% of the cost of transformers. If the cost goes up, it will eventually be passed to consumers, said Ajay Sanghi, Managing Director, Sri Krsna Sudarshan Urja. The company manufactures distribution



Paytm founder and Chief Executive Officer Vijay Shekhar Sharma has warned that look-alike usernames could become a major vector for impersonation and scams if not properly protected. “Soon you will have verified username on WhatsApp, and then unverified similar-sounding usernames,” he said in a post on social media platform X. Mobikwik’s CEO Bipin Preet Singh said on X, “Not a good idea at all. Will lead to proliferation of fraud and impersonation. For example, I checked, most variations of my name already taken. Wonder what it can be used for.” The company is billing the feature to make WhatsApp conversations more private as people would need to know the exact username of a person while contacting them if they do not already have their phone number. Messaging services such as Telegram and Signal already have their own versions of such a feature. In a blog post announcing the feature, WhatsApp said, “Usernames are our latest step to make WhatsApp even more private. There’s no directory to browse and no suggestions — people will need to know your exact username to contact you for the first time.” The feature has not yet been rolled out, and WhatsApp is currently allowing users to “reserve” a username for themselves to avoid overlaps with other users. For creators, small businesses, and organisations that may want to maintain a consistent presence online, WhatsApp will allow an option to claim their existing Instagram or Facebook username on WhatsApp.

The company said it takes impersonation-related abuse “seriously,” and will take action against users who may pretend to be someone else. “WhatsApp takes impersonation and abuse seriously. If you think someone is pretending to be you or someone else on WhatsApp in order to scam other WhatsApp users, or attempting to buy, sell, or trade WhatsApp usernames, you should report the user and any suspicious messages so we can review and take action to protect our users,” WhatsApp said in an update on its help centre. It said it will remove usernames or ban accounts altogether that it believes violate its terms of service.

transformers.

“We will represent our concerns in the ongoing anti-dumping duty investigation to the Directorate General of Trade Remedies,” Sanghi told. Another MSME federation head who did not wish to be named said CRGO is a key input item for small MSME transformer manufacturers. “JSW is the only beneficiary of the anti-dumping duty investigation in a sector dominated by MMSE,” the federation official said. “The domestic demand of CRGO is more than 4 lakh tonnes a year; the domestic production stands at 4,000-5,000 tonnes only. Now JSW has put up a plant with JFE Japan, estimating that by FY 2028, they will take the capacity to 3.5 lakh tonnes. They have PLI benefits, and this probe is an attempt to extract higher prices instead of controlling their own costs,” the source claimed. CRGO is used in the core of transformers to enhance their magnetic properties. As per industry estimates, 98 per cent of all CRGO steel produced goes into the transformer business. Any price increase hence raises concerns about power infrastructure costs, which would ultimately reach consumers through tariffs. Alekhya Datta, Fellow and Director, Electricity and Renewables Division, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), said CRGO typically accounts for around 15–20% of the bill of materials in standard transformers. “So a 10% rise in CRGO prices can raise transformer costs by roughly 1.5–3%, while a 20% rise can raise transformer costs by about 3–6%,” he told The Indian Express. The concern is larger here because India is in the middle of a major grid expansion plan over the next six years to 6.48 lakh circuit km of transmission network in 2032 from 4.91 lakh circuit km in 2024, and increase in capacity to 2,342 GVA from 1,290 GVA during the period.

Women-owned cafes in Kabul, online classes: An Indian woman’s journey through Taliban-ruled Afghanistan



In Khaled Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns, Mariam, the key character, a teenage girl, is married off to a shoemaker, Rasheed, in Kabul. Weeks after she moved to a new city, her husband buys her a blue burqa, stressing that a “woman’s face is her husband’s business only.” As Mariam sees her independence fading, she shrinks under Rasheed’s control. Mariam’s story is fiction; however, Afghanistan has long been judged and scrutinised for its oppression against women and ironclad rules, with a sea of videos floating around social media, affecting its tourism to a great extent.

When Indian travel creator Ankita Kumar finally entered Afghanistan, she found a country that challenged every assumption she had carried with her. What she experienced, she shared, cannot be reduced to good and bad. In an interview with indianexpress.com, the Bengaluru-based traveller reflected on her solo journey across Afghanistan, describing it as an emotionally intense experience shaped by hospitality, the harsh restrictions faced by women under Taliban rule, and moments of hope that rarely make headlines. “It was a very complex experience,” she said. “One moment I would experience immense kindness, and the next I would burst into tears because of everything the country has been through. Afghanistan has lived through decades of conflict, and yet there is so much kindness left in its people,” Kumar added.

Travelling with local guides, Kumar visited cities including Kabul, Herat, Bamiyan and Kandahar, interacting with families, female entrepreneurs, tour guides, and locals trying to rebuild their lives under severe restrictions.

“I was treated kindly, but local women were not. As a foreign tourist, Kumar shared that she was welcomed into homes, offered meals and tea, and looked after by strangers wherever she travelled. “People would invite me into their homes and take such amazing care of me,” she recalled. But those moments of generosity were accompanied by an overwhelming sense of guilt. “I couldn’t completely accept that kindness because I knew local women were not being treated the same way. Afghan women continue to live under restrictions that deny them freedoms many of us take for granted,” Kumar highlighted. The experience, she said, taught her that Afghanistan cannot be understood through simplistic narratives. “The biggest lesson for me was learning to hold all these truths at the same time. It cannot be black and white. Kindness and oppression exist together.”

Resistance exists in quiet ways Before travelling, Kumar shared that her understanding of Afghanistan had largely been shaped by literature depicting the suffering of Afghan women. While she found many of those realities to be true, she also encountered women challenging restrictions imposed on them in their own ways. “We often think Afghanistan needs a massive revolution,” she said. “But when you actually go there, you realise resistance happens in very small, quiet ways because open resistance can literally get people killed.” Among the women she met was one running an online university for around 12,000 girls whose education had been interrupted after the sixth grade. She also visited women-only cafes, underground beauty salons, and met female tour guides working despite numerous restrictions.

“What they want is very simple,” Kumar said. “They want to be heard. Our job is not to speak for them but to amplify their voices.” However, she stressed that Afghanistan is far from uniform. “Herat and Kabul are comparatively more liberal. But when you travel into villages, there were stretches where I didn’t see a single woman for two days,” she said.

The Band-e-Amir National Park experience One of the

38 parasites found in a British woman’s brain after years of no symptoms

A British woman has expressed her shock after discovering 38 parasites living inside her brain following a trip to India three years before diagnosis. The woman from Wales, United Kingdom, Lowri Denman, had taken a trip to the country in 2007 but was diagnosed with a rare condition of neurocysticercosis, a brain infection caused by pork tapeworm larvae, only in 2010-11. She initially found a metre-long tapeworm while using a restaurant toilet but didn’t realise its significance. However, according to a BBC Wales report, within 12 months, she started developing “severe headaches, seizures, and psychosis”. The subsequent scans revealed 38 parasites in her brain. According to the treating doctor, Dr Brendan Healy, a specialist in infectious diseases and microbiology, the condition remained silent for years before causing neurological symptoms. After anti-parasitic treatment, steroids, and years of rehabilitation, the parasites calcified, and her health gradually improved, but she remains on epilepsy medication. Denman now wants to raise awareness about the importance of early diagnosis, food hygiene, and recognising persistent neurological symptoms after travel.

What is neurocysticercosis?

Dr Pankaj Agarwal, director of neurology, stroke and neurocritical care at Gleneagles Hospital Parel, Mumbai, said neurocysticercosis is a “serious, rare brain infection” caused by the larval form of the pork tapeworm Taenia solium. “If left untreated, it can lead to complications such as recurrent seizures, brain swelling, hydrocephalus (fluid build-up in the brain), stroke-like symptoms, memory and cognitive problems, and, in severe cases, permanent neurological disability or even death. Early diagnosis and timely treatment are essential to prevent these complications,” said Dr Agarwal. Dr Amit Saraf, director, department of internal medicine, Jupiter Hospital, Thane, clarified that many people mistakenly believe they can get this condition just by eating pork. “In fact, the infection typically happens when tiny tapeworm eggs are swallowed through contaminated food or water or from poor hand hygiene. Once in the body, the eggs hatch into larvae, enter the bloodstream, and can spread to various organs, including the brain, where they create cysts,” said Dr Saraf.

Can someone carry the infection for years without showing any symptoms?

Dr Agarwal said that a person “can carry

most striking experiences of the trip came at Afghanistan’s famous Band-e-Amir National Park. Women are not permitted to remain there after a certain time, forcing Kumar and her group to wake up at 4 am and complete their visit before security personnel arrived. “We had to finish everything before 8 am,” she said. “When security arrived earlier than expected, we were literally scrambling to leave. It made me realise what daily life is like for them, always being careful, always watching the time, always living with restrictions,” Kumar added. Despite the challenges, Kumar shared some of her most memorable encounters were with young Afghans. She recalled meeting the brother of a woman running the online education initiative, who insisted she meet his sister because he was immensely proud of her work. “He kept saying, ‘You have to meet my sister.’ That gave me hope,” she said. “Many young people are emotionally aware, open-minded and genuinely want change.”

Another memorable meeting was with a 23-year-old female guide in Herat. “She had an incredible sense of humour despite everything she was going through,” Kumar said. “When I asked if she was angry with the Taliban, she said she understood their conditioning. I was amazed that someone facing so many restrictions could still hold that kind of empathy.” Entering Afghanistan overland from Tajikistan, Kumar’s first official interactions were with Taliban officials responsible for border formalities. She shared that she initially expected every interaction to be hostile but found reality more nuanced. “Some officials repeatedly asked whether I felt safe as an Indian woman travelling alone,” she said. At the same time, some moments left her uncomfortable. “Some would completely ignore my presence because I was a woman. They would speak only to the men around me.” While she strongly criticised restrictions imposed on Afghan women, Kumar said meeting Taliban members complicated her understanding of the organisation. “I realised not everyone at the lower levels necessarily believes in every policy imposed from the top. That doesn’t justify what’s happening, but it reminded me that people and systems are often more complicated than they appear from a distance,” she shared.

Travelling safely with local guides Although Afghanistan remains a challenging destination, Kumar said she personally did not feel unsafe because she travelled with experienced local guides who accompanied her throughout the journey and arranged permits required to move between provinces. “As a traveller, you’re not allowed to move around independently. Every city required permits, and my guides handled all of that.” However, what unsettled her most was not personal safety but the constant military presence. “There were guns everywhere and checkpoints throughout the journey. That creates a constant sense of discomfort,” she recalled.

Afghan hospitality and unforgettable food Away from politics, Kumar said Afghanistan’s hospitality and cuisine exceeded her expectations. One highlight was visiting a traditional kitchen in Bamiyan, where an elderly Afghan woman prepared local dumplings and other home-cooked dishes. Kumar particularly recommended Kabuli Pulao, Afghanistan’s signature rice dish. “The food was incredible,” she said. “It’s not spicy like Indian food, but the flavours are amazing.” Kumar’s journey into travel began over a decade ago after she quit a stressful production house job in Mumbai and backpacked solo through Vietnam for a month. “That trip changed my life,” she said. “For the first time, I felt like I had found myself.” Over the years, she shared that she funded her travels through freelance work before eventually becoming a full-time travel creator through social media collaborations.

Her Afghanistan trip itself was unplanned. She had originally travelled to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan before a local guide persuaded her to use the remaining days on her Afghan visa. Even her parents were unaware of her plans until she returned to India. “I only told my brother,” she said. “When I came back, I showed my parents a video and gifted them a sign that read, ‘Mummy Papa, I’m fine’ in Pashto.” Reflecting on the trip, Kumar said that Afghanistan deserves to be understood beyond stereotypes while acknowledging the severe restrictions many citizens, particularly women, continue to face. “Go with an open mind,” she said. “Don’t rush to judge. Listen to the people because this is their life, not ours. We can never fully understand what they’re going through, but we can listen with respect, grace and openness,” Kumar added.



neurocysticercosis for years without any symptoms”. “Signs often appear only when the cysts begin to die or trigger inflammation in the brain, leading to seizures, headaches, or other neurological problems,” described Dr Agarwal.

What are the earliest warning signs people often ignore?

Dr Agarwal noted that early warning signs of neurocysticercosis that people often ignore include persistent headaches, occasional dizziness, unexplained nausea, or brief episodes of confusion. “Some individuals may also experience their first seizure or changes in vision, which should never be overlooked and require immediate medical evaluation,” said Dr Agarwal. Although these symptoms can have many causes, they should never be ignored and require prompt medical evaluation for an accurate diagnosis, added Dr Agarwal.

How important are hand hygiene and safe drinking water in preventing infection?

Hand hygiene and access to safe drinking water are among the most effective ways to prevent neurocysticercosis. “Washing hands with soap before eating and after using the toilet, drinking clean water, and maintaining good food hygiene can significantly reduce the risk of infection,” said Dr Agarwal.

Why is neurocysticercosis so difficult to diagnose early?

Experts urge that neurocysticercosis is difficult to diagnose early because many people remain symptom-free for years, and when symptoms do appear, they often mimic common neurological conditions such as migraines or epilepsy.

‘Tough call has to be taken against him now’: Kris Srikkanth on Abhishek Sharma



Indian opener Abhishek Sharma failed to deliver in all three games against Zimbabwe in the series that concluded on Sunday. In all three of his innings, Sharma could not deal with Blessing Muzarembani and the bounce he created on placid surfaces. In the series before this against England and Ireland too, Abhishek did not look his usual self with the bat. Former Indian selector Kris Srikkanth said teams have started to figure out Abhishek and that Sanju Samson will return to the Indian side soon.

“Abhishek Sharma has been sorted out (by opponents) in international cricket, right from the World Cup. I think a tough call has to be taken against him now. I feel Sanju will

get his chance again now. He will receive a call back 100%. The selectors will have to take a tough call,” he said in a video on his YouTube channel. In his last 10 innings, Abhishek has registered only 191 runs with a solitary half-century. Notably, the southpaw has been dismissed for single-digit scores in his last four innings. Out-of-favour India batter Hanuma Vihari questioned why Abhishek has received firm backing from the management while Samson was sidelined despite leading India to T20 World Cup glory with three back-to-back match-winning knocks. “Before the World Cup, Sanju Samson did not perform in five games and lost his spot in the starting 11. He then made a comeback and became Player of the Tournament. In that same tournament, how many runs did Abhishek Sharma make?” In the UK series, apart from one fifty, there were no scores at all. Not even 20s and 30s, no significant score. One fifty in the last eight matches. If you include the World Cup, three half-centuries in the last 18 matches,” Vihari said on his YouTube channel. Vihari questioned why Samson has not received the same treatment during patches of poor form. “How many matches did Samson play in the World Cup? Three. And fifties in all three. Abhishek’s highest score in the five matches is 16. Why is no one talking about it? When it comes to Samson, they say he is inconsistent. Fair enough. But he can win high-pressure matches on his day.

Sprinter Gurindervir out, long jumper Sreeshankar qualifies for final

India missed out on a potential Commonwealth Games medal when the country’s fastest man Gurindervir Singh crashed out of the men’s 100m event after his underwhelming timing of 10.39 seconds left him 28th overall in the heats. 17 athletes advanced from the opening round. The 25-year-old Punjab sprinter, made a decent start and stayed close to Jamaica’s Rohan Watson before fading out in the final 30-35 metres. Watson powered away to win the heat in 10.13 seconds, with Gurindervir finishing second. Watson was overall ninth and made the semifinals on Tuesday. Gurindervir’s 10.39 seconds was far from his best of 10.09 seconds, a national record that he set at the Federation Cup in Ranchi in May, when he became the first Indian to run under 10.10 seconds. Sreeshankar makes long jump finals. Indian long jumper M Sreeshankar made the finals of the Commonwealth Games after breaching the qualifying standard in his very first attempt here on Monday. Sreeshankar, whose season’s best is 8.38m, jumped 8.01m here to earn direct qualification from Group A. The qualification standard has been set at 8m or at least the 12 best performers. The 27-year-old is hoping to improve upon the silver medal that he won in the 2022 edition of the Games.

Swimmer Sajan qualifies for men’s 200m butterfly final. Two-time Olympian Sajan Prakash qualified for the men’s 200m butterfly final after finishing as the sixth fastest swimmer overall in the heats at the Commonwealth Games. The Indian clocked 1:58.59sec to finish second in Heat 2 behind Scotland’s Duncan Scott (1:58.29), earning a place in the eight-man final slated later tonight. Australia’s Harrison Turner topped the qualification standings with 1:56.47sec, followed by New Zealand’s Lewis Clareburt (1:57.35) and England’s Edward Mildred (1:57.99). Sajan



finished ahead of Canada’s Benjamin Loewen (1:58.87) and Australia’s Matthew Temple (1:59.06), who completed the list of finalists. The 32-year-old Indian had set his career-best mark of 1:57.09sec at the Singapore National Age Group Swimming Championships earlier this year. Tejas Shirse qualifies for men’s 110m hurdles final. National record holder Tejas Shirse became the first Indian to qualify for the men’s 110m hurdles final at the Commonwealth Games, finishing sixth overall in the heats with a timing of 13.76 seconds here on Monday. The 24-year-old Shirse finished third in Heat 1, which was topped by overall leader Samuel Bennett of England with a timing of 13.20sec. First three in each heat and the next two fastest advance to the final of the competition that will held later in the day. Shirse’s season’s best came last month during the Indian Athletics Series 9 in Ludhiana where he clocked 13.27sec, which is also the current national record.

‘Rohit, Kohli can’t take two games to find groove’: Former batter warns India ODI team

With only 15 months to go for the 2027 ODI World Cup, the suspense over the futures of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli continues to absorb the discussion whenever India take the field in the format. India’s recent 1-2 series defeat to England has intensified the various discussions about the senior duo and their role in the squad in the months ahead. However, both Rohit and Kohli endured mixed outings in the series as India appeared to be a settled unit in England. Former India wicket-keeper Deep Dasgupta has insisted that India cannot afford Rohit and Kohli to take a couple of games to find their rhythm while returning for ODI assignments from prolonged breaks. While the 39-year-old Rohit aggregated 175 runs in three innings in England, Kohli made 144 runs from as many outings.

“That has to be a conversation with everyone, not just them (Kohli and Rohit), that they have to start the series well and hit the ground running. That is a challenge. You can’t take one or two games to get into the groove. But that’s where the support staff comes in and has conversations with the players by creating an environment to get the best out of everyone.” “There is no conversation needed with them about their places in the team. Four years back, it wasn’t like they had to be reminded before every series that they would be in the team. They knew they would be in the team on the back of their performances. So how does that change



now? It does not and should not change,” said Dasgupta on his YouTube channel. Dasgupta, however, stressed that the discussion over Rohit and Kohli’s futures are heightened because of their single-format roles in the national side. “This discussion about their future is getting exaggerated because they play only one format. When you play multiple formats, if you fail in one but score in the other, the failure is forgotten. So that’s a challenge for these two that can’t be denied. People will remember what they last did in this format because they play only one format. But the conversation with them should be the same as it was three years ago.” India’s next ODI assignment will not be until two months from now in late September against West Indies at home.

‘Abhishek is a player with lot of hype’: India batter questions Samson’s T20I snub

Abhishek Sharma’s prolonged run of poor scores has led to criticism of the team management for their ‘unfair’ preference for the left-handed opener over wicket-keeper Sanju Samson, who was dropped from the T20I squad ahead of the Zimbabwe series that concluded on Sunday. Out-of-favour India batter Hanuma Vihari questioned why Abhishek has received firm backing from the management while Samson was sidelined despite leading India to T20 World Cup glory with three back-to-back match-winning knocks.

“Before the World Cup, Sanju Samson did not perform in five games and lost his spot in the starting 11. He then made a comeback and became Player of the Tournament. In that same tournament, how many runs did Abhishek Sharma make?” In the UK series, apart from one fifty, there were no scores at all. Not even 20s and 30s, no significant score. One fifty in the last eight matches. If you include the World Cup, three half-centuries in the last 18 matches,” Vihari said on his YouTube channel. In his last 10 innings since India’s tour to Ireland last month, Abhishek has registered only 191 runs with a solitary half-century. Notably, the southpaw has been dismissed on single-digit scores in his last four innings. Vihari questioned why Samson has not received the same treatment during patches of poor form. “How many matches Samson played in the World Cup? Three. And fifties in all three. Abhishek’s highest score in the five matches



Abhishek Sharma’s prolonged run of poor scores has led to criticism of the team management for their ‘unfair’ preference for the left-handed opener over wicket-keeper Sanju Samson,

is 16. Why is no one talking about it? When it comes to Samson, they say he is inconsistent. Fair enough. But he can win high-pressure matches on his day. “Abhishek is a player with a lot of hype, but Samson is also equal. He has also performed in the IPL. Why different rules for different players?” The 31-year-old Samson, who was the World Cup’s Player of the Tournament, has featured in four innings in Ireland and England, scoring 33 runs.

Rishikanta Singh used to wash dishes for Rs 150. Now, he has a CWG silver medal



On Sunday night, when Rishikanta Singh Chanambam walked into the dining hall at the Indian contingent’s accommodation in Glasgow with a Commonwealth Games medal, he was not basking in the glory of the silver medal he won, courtesy of his 264kg lift in men’s 60kg weightlifting. Instead, looking at the kitchen staff of the Glasgow games, his mind recollected fragments of an 11-year-old kid. A child who used to earn Rs 150 a day while working at a roadside dhaba near the Ngaihaktang Makha Maning Leikai village in Imphal, Manipur.

Rishikanta grew up washing utensils, carrying buckets of water and spending his evenings at construction sites — just so that his family could have food on their plates. Hours after his achievement, the Indian Navy Petty Officer found himself reliving the months that shaped him. “Before I got into sports as a teenager, I worked as a helper at a local dhaba, washing utensils and carrying water apart from working at construction sites to earn extra money for the family. My father, Irabot Singh Chanambam, worked as a taxi driver, and things were so bad that we could afford only one meal a day. I remember eating rice or wheat flour balls without any vegetables, which my mother, Chandrajini Devi Chanambam, used to make. For over three months, I worked for Rs 150 per day to support my family. And today, as I was having dinner with the silver medal still in my pocket and seeing the kitchen staff work, I was reminded of all those days. This medal is for people like me, who have had no support and had to share the burden of their family,” shared an emotional Rishikanta while speaking to The Indian Express from Glasgow. At a village fair, a sports teacher noticed the wiry youngster. Then 12, Rishikanta, who mostly played football, appeared for trials at the SAI academy at

Khuman Lampak Stadium. He was shortlisted for both boxing and weightlifting before then coach S Brojendra Singh — current secretary of the Manipur Weightlifting Association — made the final call. When Rishikanta came to the trials, he was very thin, but his muscles were very strong. I could see the willpower in his eyes, and he took up weightlifting with natural ease,” remembers coach Singh.

The stadium, which had nurtured champions such as Mirabai Chanu, also gave Rishikanta something he had never taken for granted — regular meals. “Training at the sports complex meant that I did not have to worry about meal time during the time of training. I would visit the local sports shops to get the local shoes and belts modified with stuff from discarded belts or shoes,” shared Rishikanta. After turning 18, Rishikanta stepped away from the sport for nearly a year. With the family still battling financial hardship and no job or financial security in sight, he stayed home, convinced his weightlifting journey had ended. “I was demotivated. My family would talk about all the hardships and how those who could afford it could not win medals, and we did not have any idea about a job through sports. It was when the then Manipur Weightlifting Association secretary, Sunil Elangbam, called me and asked me about my training. I told him that I had left weightlifting due to my family’s financial condition and that I was not eligible for the SAI Academy. Sunil sir told me about the newly opened Weightlifting Centre of Excellence in Takyel in Imphal, and I gave the trials and was selected for that. It was like a new life for me,” remembers the weightlifter. Rishikanta became national champion in the men’s 55kg category in 2019 before winning gold at the Commonwealth Championships in Samoa later that year. The same season also brought him financial security through a job with the Indian Navy.

On Sunday, Rishikanta became the first male weightlifter from Manipur to win a medal in the Commonwealth Games. He knows how he is going to celebrate the medal. “I will hand this medal to my parents and my brothers and sisters who always believed in me. When I started earning, I also made a point to help youngsters in whatever way I could so that anybody can become like me. And I plan to do it this time too.” There is, however, one phone call he wants to make before anything else. “When I worked at the dhaba, I had a friend who has now shifted to Guwahati. I will call him and tell him about this medal. I also hope that the dhaba owner will tell his customers that a Commonwealth Games medallist once washed dishes in his kitchen.”

From ‘curse’ to crown: How Delhi teen Anahat Singh scripted Indian squash history

It was Anahat Singh’s fifth and, importantly, final chance to get it right at the World Juniors Championships in Canada. She had four quarterfinals, one bronze, plenty of deja vu, and even a French coach to match. Gregory Gaultier had been in her tactical corner as coach, the squash legend most famous for losing four Senior World Championship finals before winning the fifth, to teach her precisely how to handle this last week.

The 18-year-old from Delhi, whose father is a lawyer and mother an interior designer, had called the World Juniors a “curse” because she kept missing the title. When she broke the curse, she became India’s first-ever world title holder among women. On Saturday in Ontario, finally, the teen prodigy made up for all misses and ended Egypt’s run of 13 straight titles, after beating three from the squash powerhouse in the quarters, semis and finals. The attacking player with Indian flair and Gregorian gumption defeated Ruqaiyya Salem 11-3, 11-7, 11-9 to ensure a non-Egyptian won the World Juniors for the first time since 2011. India’s last finalist was Joshana Chinappa in 2005.

“I still feel like I’m dreaming,” Anahat told World Squash. “This tournament has been the worst tournament for me. I have been losing in the semis and quarters over the last four years. I have always said, if anyone asked, ‘This tournament’s a curse’, and I have never been able to play well in the event. This is my last year [as a junior] and my only chance to win it. It means the world.” Anahat played badminton in her early years, picked the wristy deception from there and was star-struck by her hero P V Sindhu at the last Commonwealth Games. She is also World No 20 in seniors, and had won her first Professional Squash Association title in Washington earlier. She was preparing for her exams in May. “I’m pushing through school work for exams in May,” she had said. By July, she had passed a bigger test in the glass coliseum. Multiple title-winner and her predecessor Dipika Pallikal, just like Joshana, tried many times but always came up against the Egyptians. The powerhouse has set the benchmark in world squash for many decades, creating an incredible ecosystem — world-class coaching, fierce domestic competition and a culture where young players grow up believing they belong at the very top. “So when you play an Egyptian, you are not just playing an individual; you are playing someone who has come through one of the toughest systems in the sport,” Dipika explained. Breaking that stranglehold was extremely difficult because they are technically gifted, tactically smart and mentally very resilient. “Every win against them is earned. That’s why whenever someone from outside Egypt wins a major title, it’s a significant moment for world squash. So for her to beat that



streak of Egyptians winning this title and get one for India is fantastic,” Dipika said.

India’s best squash brain Saurav Ghosal mentors Anahat, while Stephane Galifi runs her day-to-day training and moulded her mindset — stay attacking, but prepare for Plan B, C and D. “Anahat is a good court mover and likes to dominate the volley,” Gaultier had said earlier, adding that the coaching team would help her identify crucial junctures when to attack Egyptians who were skilled, had no fear, and played with a certain stomp. After wins over Lily Wilson (Australia), Pui Yin Chloe (Hong Kong) and Douce Ye San Lee (Malaysia), Anahat dropped only two sets to Egyptians Habiba Rizk and Barb Samah. But her dominance was evident in beating three on the trot from Egypt to win the title. “I’m teaching her solutions instead of dwelling on frustrations,” Gaultier, who had experienced the depths of loss, had said, reminding her, “you are doing what you love. So no complaints.” “She’s gifted, tricky and has a great squash IQ. You can’t fast forward experience, oui?” he had said. Dipika acknowledged the significance of India’s first title, and Anahat’s resilience. “Titles are never just about a trophy. They represent years of discipline, sacrifice and the ability to deliver when the pressure is at its highest. Winning a title like this tells you that you are not just talented — you have learned how to handle expectations, adapt through a tournament and finish the job. That’s what separates champions from contenders. This is a huge testament to her ability to become one of the best squash players in the world. So I hope this is just the beginning,” she said. The Indian was on song and barely realised she was trailing in the third. “I focussed on hitting the lines,” Anahat said. Dipika, a former Top 10 herself, predicted a strong future. “Anahat has all the ingredients to establish herself among the world’s elite. She has the talent, the temperament and, importantly, the willingness to learn,” she said.

Raja Muthupandi wins silver in 65kg weightlifting, India’s fourth medal at CWG 2026

Raja Muthupandi won India’s fourth medal of the 2026 Commonwealth Games, and third in weightlifting, by winning silver in men’s 65kg late on the fourth day in Glasgow. Muthupandi had a best lift of 126kg in snatch and 160kg in clean and jerk. His total lift was 286kg. Malaysia’s Aznil Bidin won gold with a Games record lift of 299kg while Papua New Guinea’s Morea Baru won bronze with 282kg at the SEC Armadillo.

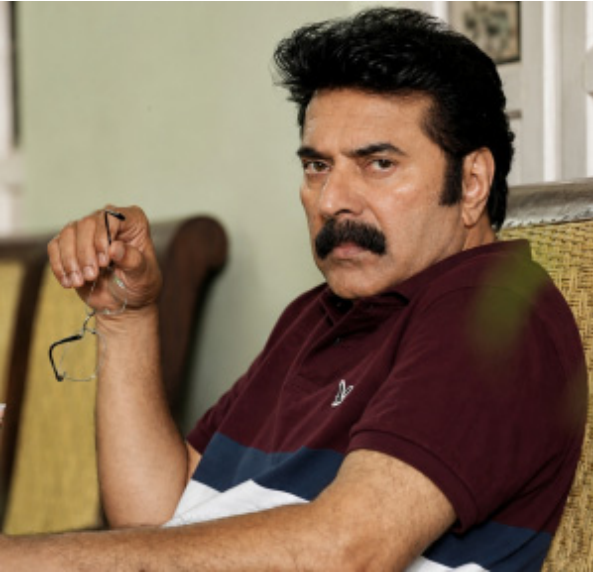
It is India’s third medal in weightlifting and fourth overall at Glasgow 2026. Rishikanta Singh had won silver earlier in the day in men’s 60kg while Mirabai Chanu later won an incredible third consecutive CWG gold in women’s 48kg. The medal marks a remarkable turnaround for Muthupandi, who has dealt with a host of injury and health setbacks in recent years. He secured a flight to Glasgow by winning the national title and setting a new national record. Muthupandi was unsuccessful in his first attempt at lifting 126kg in snatch. He then did it with his second but then couldn’t lift the 129kg he had listed for his third attempt. In clean and jerk, he failed to lift 158kg the first time around but still added two more kilos and remarkably lifted 160kg in his second attempt. He then attempted a Games record 170kg but dropped the

weight before he even began his clean action.

The 26-year-old had suffered a ligament tear in his right elbow during Snatch at the at 2019 Commonwealth Championship that required surgery. This was followed by a lengthy gap in training and he could make his returning only at the 2021 National Championship where he finished 3rd and narrowly missed qualification for CWG 2022. Earlier, Mirabai Chanu dominated the field in women’s 48kg to win her third consecutive gold and her fourth consecutive medal overall at the Commonwealth Games. Mirabai had started off by listing 82kg as her first lift in snatch. While she was unsuccessful in her first attempt,

Mirabai almost made it look effortless with her second. She then went on to break the Commonwealth record itself with her third lift of 85kg. It was the same for her clean and jerk, she listed a Games record 105kg as her first lift. She failed in her first attempt but then did it with her second. Before Mirabai, it was Rishikanta who opened India’s account at Glasgow 2026 in weightlifting, heaved a Commonwealth Games record of 121kg in snatch, before lifting 143kg in the clean and jerk to finish second in the men’s 60kg event.

‘Cried like a child’: Cochin Haneefa kept his fatal illness a secret from friend Mammootty



Haneefa's illness and eventual death. He recalled Mammootty "sobbing like a little child," heartbroken that he couldn't save Haneefa. "When talking about Haneefa, there's no way one can skip mentioning Mammootty's name. I can only wonder why they weren't born as brothers. Mammootty had that much love for Haneefa, and the latter had double the love for him. While Haneefa was expressive, Mammootty wasn't as much. Yet, his love for Haneefa was always evident," Mukesh shared. Mukesh recalls Mammootty's grief over Cochin Haneefa's demise He continued, "That's why when Haneefa left us, Mammootty burst out crying like a little child. His crying was mostly because... until the very end, until his condition got very bad, Haneefa didn't tell anyone about his disease or that his condition was serious. He kept it a secret, and only in the final days did people realise it. By then, his condition had reached such a stage that he could no longer be saved. That's why Mammootty cried." "Those were heart-melting scenes. Mammootty wasn't just crying; he was scolding Haneefa, saying, 'Couldn't he have told me at least? I would have taken him anywhere in the world for treatment.' Those were the moments that made us realise how innocent he is as a person," Mukesh added. Following Haneefa's death, Mammootty wrote on social media, "I lost my best friend. My heartfelt tribute to Cochin Haneefa... pray for him." From villain roles to master director: Cochin Haneefa's cinematic journey Cochin Haneefa made his acting debut in 1972 with Azhimukham. However, most of his early roles were villainous. By the 1980s, Haneefa had become a notable actor. In 1985, he made his directorial debut with Oru Sandesham Koodi, starring Mammootty. In 1986, he wrote and directed the legal drama Moonnu Masangalku Mumbi, also starring the megastar. He also helmed movies such as Oru Sindoor Pottinte Ormaykku (1987), Aankiliyude Tharattu (1987), Paasa Paravaigal (1988), Paadatha Thenikkal (1988), Veena Meethiya Vilangukal (1990), Pagalil Pournami (1990), Vatsalyam (1993), and Bheesmacharya (1994), before shifting his focus entirely to acting. Cochin Haneefa is best known for his performances in movies such as Kireedam, Chenkol, Punjabi House, Mannar Mathai Speaking, Devaasuram, Praja, Arayannagalude Veedu, Sathyam Sivam Sundaram, Swapnakoodu, Mazhathullikkilukkam, Meesa Madhavan, Kunjikoonan, CID Moosa, Kilichundan Mampazham, Pulivaal Kalyanam, and Thilakkam, among others. Meanwhile, a big dream that Haneefa left behind 16 years ago finally became a reality recently as the family of the beloved actor moved into their own home. The new house, built on Ambedkar Road in Vennala, Kochi, has been named 'Cochin Haneefa's AB Manzil,' just as he had deeply wished.

Cochin Haneefa was renowned not just as a phenomenal actor but also as an exceptional writer-director. In a career spanning close to 40 years, he appeared in over 300 films across Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, and Telugu languages, winning the hearts of audiences wherever he set foot. Haneefa was also a beloved figure among industry insiders, and almost everyone still has only the nicest things to say about him.

The unbreakable bond between Mammootty, Cochin Haneefa While he shared a warm bond with almost everyone around him, Malayalam megastar Mammootty held a special place in Cochin Haneefa's heart. In fact, the only time Malayalees saw Mammootty, widely considered as the regional film industry's Valyettan (big brother), cry in public was when the actor-director died. The image of a highly emotional Mammootty struggling to pacify a sobbing Maniyanpilla Raju during one of the moments following Haneefa's death still remains etched in Malayalees' minds. Cinema Anatomy | Jana Nayagan: Vijay's propaganda film makes even Sura and Villu look like masterpieces For the unfamiliar, Cochin Haneefa died at the age of 59 in February 2010. He had been unwell for some time due to liver-related problems. However, not even his closest friends in the industry knew about his illness till the last minute, as he did not wish to burden others with his woes. By the time the megastar and others learned of his condition, it was too late. During a 2023 episode of his podcast, Mukesh Speaking, actor-politician Mukesh recalled the Malayalam megastar's reaction to

Who is Samreen Kaur? Meet actor-model who is dating cricketer Arshdeep Singh

Actor-model Samreen Kaur is making headlines after Indian pacer Arshdeep Singh Indian cricketer Arshdeep Singh has confirmed his relationship with actor and model Samreen Kaur. Weeks after fuelling dating rumours, Indian fast bowler Arshdeep Singh has officially introduced Samreen Kaur as 'my person' on Instagram. The cricketer put an end to weeks of dating speculation by making his relationship with actor-model Samreen Kaur Instagram official. The cricketer shared two loved-up pictures confirming what fans had long suspected, and the post went viral in no time. The post now has more than 2.2 million likes, along with congratulatory messages pouring in from fans and fellow cricketers. Born on September 7, 1999, Samreen Kaur hails from Jammu and Kashmir. She first stepped into the spotlight as a finalist representing the state at the Femina Miss India 2018 pageant before pursuing a career in modelling and acting. She later completed her B.Com (Honours) from Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune. Actor-model Samreen Kaur is making headlines after Indian pacer Arshdeep Singh Samreen Kaur hails from Jammu and Kashmir.



Samreen Kaur was also rumoured to be dating popular YouTuber Ashish Chanchlani. However, both had dismissed the speculation, clarifying that they were close friends and not romantically involved. In a later interaction, Samreen revealed that their bond had changed over time due to personal reasons, while emphasising that they continued to have mutual respect. Actor-model Samreen Kaur is making headlines after Indian pacer Arshdeep Singh Samreen Kaur was earlier rumoured to be dating popular YouTuber Ashish Chanchlani Samreen Kaur and Arshdeep Singh's dating rumours Rumours about Samreen and Arshdeep's relationship first surfaced during the IPL 2026 season, when she was spotted cheering for the Punjab Kings pacer and the duo was seen together on multiple occasions. While both remained silent initially, Arshdeep's latest Instagram post has now officially confirmed their relationship.

Niharika NM recalls rejecting a film due to intimate scenes: ‘Actor didn’t want body double’

Niharika NM, who is gearing up for her upcoming film Bhai tera Star Hai opposite Raghav Juyal, started her journey as a content creator. However, she revealed in a recent interview, that making humorous reels and sketches wasn't her ultimate goal. The actor-influencer wanted to become an actor but the journey as a newcomer was challenging in Bollywood. She also recalled rejecting a film due to its 'intimacy clause'. During a chat with News18, she shared, "When I had moved to Bombay three-four years ago, I spent three years training under a production house. I had gone to film school and I've a background in theatre."

The actor-content creator continued, "I definitely wanted to give acting a shot. I didn't know how far it would go or what I exactly wanted to do. All I knew was that I was passionate about it and I enjoyed it." But, she soon decided to stop struggling for an offer in Bollywood and started auditioning in South cinema, implying Hindi film industry's unrealistic beauty standards. "I tried in Hindi films first but I didn't enjoy the standards that were set for women – how they should look or how their skin tone should be. I thought that it's not the space I should fight in. It was also a very crowded space," she said.

Later on, Niharika went on to sign a three-film deal with Karthik Subbaraj's production house, Stone Bench Films. She added, "But midway through my training process with

them, I turned down really good South films which did wonders at the box office. I couldn't believe it! I was bound by contract. That will remain one of my biggest regrets. But I'm happy for whoever did it. And once the contract ended, there was no stopping me. Then I phelo-ed like raita across films of different languages." But, that was another difficult path to walk, as she didn't want to do intimate scenes on-screen. "There were so many reasons why I got rejected from films. It all sounds hilarious at this point. There was one particular film I was supposed to do. It was being made by this great director. I grew up watching him. He handpicked me. I had auditioned for the part. The look test was done." She shared, "The contract was sent to my house and I had signed it. There was this intimacy clause in it and I had told them that I'm not comfortable doing onscreen intimacy. They were fine with it and were planning on going ahead with a body double. But the actor wasn't okay doing the scene with a body double. He wasn't interested. It was his call. Then it became a situation of this or that." Niharika NM marked her international debut with a guest voice role in the American sitcom Big Mouth season 7 in 2023. She also made her South debut in the Tamil film Perusu last year, followed by Mithra Mandali and Idhayam Murali. Her upcoming movie Bhai Tera Star Hai is set to hit the theatres on July 30. Directed by Vivek B Agarwal, the comedy drama also stars Sanjay Kapoor and Nikki Walia.

Pankaj Tripathi’s Ohh My Dog postponed, director says ‘won’t repeat’ OMG 2 clash mistake



Pankaj Tripathi's upcoming film Ohh My Dog has been postponed by a week amid Spider-Man Brand New Day release Pankaj Tripathi's upcoming film Ohh My Dog has been postponed by a week amid Spider-Man Brand New Day release Pankaj Tripathi's upcoming family entertainer Ohh My Dog was set to hit the theatres in July 31. However, the release date of the film has been postponed by a week. It is now scheduled to debut on the big screens on August 7. While talking to SCREEN exclusively, the film's director Amit Rai revealed that the reason behind the postponement is lesser screens and a clash with other big releases. He also admitted making a mistake by releasing his Akshay Kumar, Pankaj Tripathi starrer OMG 2 with Sunny Deol's Gadar 2, in 2023. When asked about pushing the release date of his film Ohh My Dog, he shared, "We made a practical decision because the screens will get occupied with Spider Man. Already Odyssey has taken over the theatres, and Dhamaal 4 is also screening in two shows. So, our base is a family audience and it will be scattered in all these films, a big chunk will go to Spider-Man Brand New Day. There won't even be a chance of increasing the number of screens."

The director also opened up about the positive response the upcoming movie received from his close friends

and family. "I can't say no to close friends, so we have been doing special group screenings. I wanted reactions, so we have done it in Jaipur, Lucknow, and Calcutta. The reactions are very positive, and that made me take the decision overnight. The reaction of the audience, especially children, was tremendous, more than expected," he said. Rai also recalled making a big mistake of releasing his film OMG 2 on the same date Gadar 2 was premiering, and the latter turning out to become the winner. "I didn't want that positive response to stay limited to close friends. It has to go to people and become big. My last film had the same fate, the crew and my friends loved it. They wanted it to be showcased in schools, but it got an 'A' certificate. Despite that, I kept saying that the release date should be changed," he elaborated. He continued, "But, it was announced by then and the film was released with Gadar 2. Even with the competition, my film earned Rs 188 crore, but Gadar 2 collected Rs 500-600 crore. If OMG 2 had a solo release, it would have comfortably earned Rs 300-350 crore. It shouldn't have been released with Gadar 2, so I don't want to repeat history. I will not make the same mistake again."

In a statement to the media, filmmaker Amit Rai spoke about the decision and said that Spider-Man is expected to "create history" with an opening of "around Rs 50 crore," leaving little room for other films. "Even after making such a good film, the reason won't be anything else... the reason will be that we simply won't have the space to occupy screens," he mentioned. Explaining the postponement of Ohh My Dog, Rai said the team decided to "step aside briefly," delay the release by a week, and return when audiences had already watched the bigger releases. "By then, there will be a little space, and we might be able to grow there." Besides Tripathi, Ohh My Dog also stars Pavan Malhotra and Maahi Rai. The family drama tells the story of a young child's pure bond with a stray dog and handling the major problem of dog trafficking. It also features canine stars Oscar and Bruno, along with more than 250 real dogs. Major clash with Odyssey and Spider Man For the unversed, Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey hit the theatres last week and has been performing well at the box office. It has already crossed \$600 million globally. On the other hand, Marvel's much-awaited Spider-Man: Brand New Day is also releasing next week, on July 31. Having said that, Spider Man is missing an IMAX release because Nolan's The Odyssey secured a worldwide four-week IMAX exclusivity window from July 17, 2026. This block leaves no IMAX screens available for the Marvel release.

Aishwarya Lekshmi calls Kangana Ranaut a ‘mad genius,’ praises her Parliament speeches

Actor Aishwarya Lekshmi has offered a glowing endorsement of Kangana Ranaut, calling the actor-turned-politician a "mad genius" and praising her growth as a public speaker and her work in Parliament. "I love Kangana Ranaut. I feel like she is a mad genius," Aishwarya said in a conversation with Galatta Plus. "I like how she taught herself to talk well and be a good orator. I love the speeches she gives in Parliament."

Kangana Ranaut arrived in Mumbai as a teenager from Manali in Himachal Pradesh with no backing, no formal training in acting, and limited command over English or Hindi. She has spoken openly about how she was mocked in the early years of her career for her accent and her lack of polish. Over the next decade, she taught herself to speak fluently in both languages, worked on her diction, and went on to win four National Film Awards for Best Actress, a record matched by very few in Hindi cinema. Her performances in Queen, Tanu Weds Manu Returns, Fashion and Manikarnika established her as one of the most acclaimed actors of her generation.

In 2024, she entered politics, winning the Mandi Lok Sabha seat as a BJP candidate, and has since made several interventions in Parliament, including speeches during the Women's Reservation Bill debate. Her political positions and confrontational public style have made her a deeply polarising figure, but even her critics have acknowledged her oratory skills on the floor of the House. Aishwarya Lekshmi's trajectory has its own version of that story. Born in Thiruvananthapuram, she completed her MBBS from Sree Narayana Institute of Medical Sciences in Ernakulam before entering modelling in 2014 and making her acting debut in 2017 with the Malayalam film Njandukalude Nattil Oridavela. Her breakthrough came the same year with Mayaanadhi opposite Tovino Thomas. She went on to work across three languages, appearing in Varathan and Kumari in Malayalam, Gargi and Ponniyin Selvan in Tamil, and



Ammu in Telugu. Like Kangana, Aishwarya has no family connections in the film industry. She has spoken in the past about the pressure women face in the industry to conform, including in interviews where she has been vocal about society's obsession with marriage and the limited space given to female-led stories. The comments have drawn a mixed response online, with some appreciating Aishwarya's willingness to express admiration for a controversial figure, and others questioning the praise given Kangana's political positions. Neither actor has responded to the online reaction so far.

Karan Johar to host The Traitors Season 2, premieres on August 13

Mumbai: Filmmaker Karan Johar is all set to return as a host for the second season of the reality show "The Traitors", which will start streaming from August 13.

Collaborating with independent distributor All3Media International for the local adaptation of IDTV's BAFTA and Emmy Award-winning global format, season two is produced by Dharmatic Entertainment. 21 celebrity players will battle for the grand prize and the coveted title.

Nikhil Madhok, Director and Head of Originals, Prime Video, India said: "The Traitors has become one of Prime Video India's most defining reality franchises, transforming the genre with its unique blend of intelligent gameplay, psychological strategy, and riveting entertainment." "Audiences across the country were hooked by its emotionally charged mind games and raw, unfiltered drama. With season two, the stakes are higher, the gameplay is sharper, the drama is more intense, and the new line-up of players will keep audiences on the edge of their seats at every turn." "We're thrilled to have Karan Johar return as the host and master orchestrator, and we can't wait for audiences to experience another extraordinary season."

"The Indian adaptation of The Traitors struck a powerful chord with viewers in its very first season, and we couldn't be more delighted to see it return for another thrilling chapter. The passion, engagement, and sheer obsession from fans have been extraordinary, and we're excited to build on that momentum with season two," said Sabrina Duguet, EVP, APAC, All3Media International.

