

Revanth Reddy likely to meet AICC leadership amid cabinet expansion buzz

Hyderabad: After Forest Minister Konda Surekha and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy is now expected to meet the AICC leadership in New Delhi to discuss a few issues, including cabinet expansion.Exploring Travel MapsThe Chief Minister is likely to fly to New Delhi on September 3. With the State Assembly session scheduled to begin on September 7, his proposed visit has triggered speculation in Gandhi Bhavan about a possible cabinet expansion and reshuffle.

Two killed as trolley overturns in Khammam’s Yerrupalem

Khammam: Two persons died when a tractor trolley hit the motorbike on which they were travelling at Buchiredhypalem village of Yerrupalem mandal in the district.

The incident occurred when the deceased, Pesaramilli Nagaraju (34) of the village and Korakoppula Ramesh (42) of Kothapalli in Andhra Pradesh were returning from a marriage ceremony at Yerrupalem on Sunday. The tractor trolley carrying a load of soil hit the bike; overturned and fell over the bike.

India, Uzbekistan Sign 11 Pacts, Eye Nuke Deal

New Delhi, August 30

India and Uzbekistan on Sunday elevated their diplomatic ties to that of comprehensive strategic partnership and agreed to establish a framework for long-term supply of Uranium for India’s civil nuclear plants during the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent. President Mirziyoyev conferred Mr Modi with Uzbekistan’s prestigious ‘Oliy Darajali Do’stlik’ Order, which the PM dedicated to the enduring bond between India and Uzbekistan saying it is a symbol of the enduring friendship between the two countries and civilisations.

During their wide ranging talks, the two leaders held substantive discussions on bilateral strategic partnership, including trade and investment, innovation and start-up, digital public infrastructure and UPI, defence and security, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, critical minerals, agriculture, education, tourism, agriculture, space and people-to-people exchanges. Several agreements covering a wide range of areas, including mining, culture, education, tourism, ayurveda, were signed after the talks.

The PM appreciated the progress made in the long-term arrangement for supply of Uranium from Uzbekistan to India and reaffirmed the importance of strengthening cooperation in critical minerals. The leaders agreed to upscale bilateral trade targets from the current \$1 bi of \$5 billion by 2030. To take forward the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in a meaningful manner, the two leaders agreed to set up a Foreign Ministers led mechanism and raise the Inter-Governmental Commission to the ministerial level.

In his opening remarks during the talks Mr Modi said Uzbekistan is at the heart of Central Asia, and at the heart of India’s engagement with the region. He said both countries will move forward by setting concrete goals within the framework of the elevated partnership. PM further said that the two countries are also formalising three sister-city and sister-state arrangements and both countries will establish a Coordination Council at the Foreign Minister level to provide direction to all aspects of bilateral cooperation.

In his opening remarks during the talks President Mirziyoyev said India is making truly outstanding ad-



vances in digitalisation, information technology, artificial intelligence, space exploration, and many other fields. Mirziyoyev added that India’s voice and influence in global affairs have grown even stronger and he is pleased to see all these achievements.

Following the talks, the two sides witnessed the exchange of MoUs and agreements covering a wide range of areas, including culture, higher education and research, capacity building, archives, economic collaboration, environment, tourism, mining, ayurveda and sister-state relations. A Letter of Intent for the restoration of the Buddhist sites of Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa in Uzbekistan was concluded. An MoU for the establishment of an ICCR Sanskrit Chair at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies was also finalised. PM announced 100 Lal Bahadur Shastri scholarships for Hindi students in Tashkent State University.

Later, in their joint statement, the two leaders condemned terrorism, including cross-border terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, reiterated zero tolerance approach to terrorism and rejected justification of terrorism on any ground whatsoever. Leaders called for concerted actions against terrorist entities and for disrupting terrorism financing networks, safe havens and infrastructure. They stressed that those responsible for terrorism should be held accountable and their perpetrators, their backers, facilitators and affiliates should be brought to justice. The leaders also stressed on the importance of strengthening cooperation in law enforcement, intelligence-sharing, and combating violent extremism, and illicit drug trafficking, organized crime, and cyber threats.

Revanth Plans Cricket Stadium In Future City

HYDERABAD: , August30

Preparations are under way to build a world-class cricket stadium on 100 acres of land in Bharat Future City, with a seating capacity to rival that of the 1.32-lakh seater Narendra Modi Stadium in Gujarat. Conceived by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the state-of-the-art facility will be modelled on the England’s Lord’s and renowned Australian stadiums.

The foundation stone for the project, planned as a joint venture with the Board for Control of Cricket in India (BCCI), will be laid in December. According to CMO sources, once completed the stadium will gain recognition as one of the best in the world. Following the Chief Minister’s directive, officials are searching for a location within the Future City for the stadium. The stadium is planned with a seating capacity exceeding that of the Narendra Modi Stadium in Gujarat. Estimates are being finalised, but construction costs are also expected to surpass those of the Gujarat facility.

Under the joint venture, the BCCI will bear construction and operational costs, while the state government will allocate the land. Officials are expedit-



ing the process to formalise the partnership. Sources said the stadium will benefit from excellent accessibility, with proximity to the Outer Ring Road, the proposed Regional Ring Road, the planned Metro Rail extension to Future City, and Shamshabad airport.

The sports complex will be a key component of the Future City development. The Uppal stadium will be redesigned to accommodate not only cricket but also other sports. Provisions are being made to host football matches and large-scale concerts. With no facility in the city larger than HICC for events, officials are considering plan to convert it for a multipurpose use.

Power failure disrupts NEET-PG at 2 Jaipur centres; re-test Sept 5

New Delhi, August 30

The NEET-PG 2026 examination was disrupted at two centres in Jaipur on Sunday due to an internal power supply failure, preventing 2,445 candidates from completing the test.

The National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) said it will re-conduct the examination for

expressed regret for the inconvenience caused to the candidates and said the re-examination is being conducted to ensure a fair and equitable opportunity for affected candidates. The panel will submit its report within the stipulated time frame,” official sources said.

A student said while the security was strict, the server crashed multiple times. “We faced trouble in Aadhaar verification. My computer crashed multiple times,” she said.

In a statement, the Union Health Ministry said, “While the examination was successfully completed for the overwhelming majority of candidates nationwide, an unforeseen technical disruption occurred at iON Digital Zone iDZ Sitapura Centres, Jaipur (TC Nos. 41682 and 41683), where the examination could not be completed for 2,445 candidates due to internal power supply issues, attributable to TCS Ltd, the examination conducting agency.”

The NBEMS said

barring these two centres, it successfully conducted the examination at 1,100 centres for 2.63 lakh candidates across the country with comprehensive logistical, technological, security and manpower arrangements to ensure a fair, secure and seamless examination process.

Speaking with the media, NBEMS president Abhijat Sheth said, “An incident was reported in Sitapura, Jaipur, where 2,445 candidates could not complete their examination because of an internal power failure. A mock test conducted under the same computer load on Saturday was successful. To maintain the sanctity of the examination, NBEMS has decided to reconduct the test for the affected candidates.”

The National Testing Agency on August 22 suspended the empanelment of a private exam-conducting agency after a power snag prevented some candidates at a Jaipur centre from completing the AIAPGET exam.

Naidu to Inaugurate Veligonda Phase-1, Release Krishna River Water on Monday

VIJAYAWADA, AUGUST 30

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will inaugurate Phase-1 of the Veligonda project in Markapuram district on Monday, nearly 30 years after laying the foundation stone for the project. The state government has titled the event “Veligonda Jala Sirulu – Abhivrudhiki Rekkalu”.

In a post on X, Naidu said the dream of the Veligonda project, envisioned by the drought-hit people of the region for nearly three decades, would become a reality with the launch of its first phase. He said the project was not merely an irrigation project but a promise to farmers, health security for families in fluoride-affected areas and a means of creating opportunities for youth who had migrated in search of work.

As part of the inauguration, Naidu will release 10.70 tmc ft of Krishna water to Nallamala Sagar. The water will irrigate 1.19 lakh acres and meet the drinking water needs of nearly four lakh people in the first phase.

Naidu said the first phase would bring Krishna water to the region and described the water flowing into Nallamala Sagar as a means of ending decades of water woes and opening up development opportunities.

The release of water is expected to reduce dependence on groundwater. It will also benefit horticulture, agro-processing, food-processing and related sectors, besides creating employment opportunities in rural areas and helping curb migration.

The foundation stone for the project was laid by the then Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh, N. Chandrababu Naidu, on March 5, 1996. Naidu is now inaugurating its first phase nearly 30 years later.

The project will carry Krishna water from the Srisailem reservoir through gravity to the Nallamala Sagar reservoir, where it will be stored. The water will be supplied through canals for crop cultivation and drinking water requirements as needed.

Once fully completed, the project will facilitate cultivation on 4.47 lakh acres in parts of Prakasam, Markapur, Nellore and Kadapa districts, benefiting people in 30 mandals. It will also supply drinking water to 23 lakh people, including those in fluoride-affected areas.

The Veligonda project has faced technical, financial and construction-related challenges during its three-decade journey. Its execution was expedited after the alliance government assumed office in 2024, with the NDA alliance government taking it up as a prestigious project.

The government paid `768 crore in compensation to displaced families in 48 days and extended relief of `169



crore to those whose names were not included in the gazette and the list. Relief of `2 lakh per head was also paid to project oustees who attained the age of 18 after 2019.

In his post, Naidu paid tribute to residents of 11 villages who, he said, had sacrificed their lands, homes and villages for the project.

Naidu will leave his Undavalli residence in Guntur district at 9.30 am on Monday and reach Gantavanipalli in Dornala mandal of Markapuram district at 11.15 am. He will offer special prayers from 10.30 am to 11.20 am before inaugurating Phase-1 by unveiling the pylon and releasing Krishna water by opening the project gates.

He will later address a public meeting at Gantavanipalli village. He will begin his return journey at 1.30 pm and reach his Undavalli residence by 2.15 pm.



the affected candidates on September 5. A three-member committee has been formed to probe the power glitch.

NBEMS sources said the disruption occurred at the iON Digital Zone centres in Sitapura, affecting 2,445 candidates.

The NBEMS has constituted a three-member committee headed by Gayatri Rathore, Principal Secretary, Medical, Health and Family Welfare Department, Rajasthan, to investigate the power failure, the sources said.

The committee also includes a Joint Secretary-level officer from the Union Health Ministry and a senior engineering official from the Central Electricity Authority.

“The committee has been constituted to examine the circumstances leading to the power supply failure and ascertain the reasons for the disruption. The NBEMS has

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Beyond IFI rankings — India's investment divide

Five States—Maharashtra (31%), Karnataka (21%), Gujarat (15%), Delhi (13%) and Tamil Nadu (6%)—accounted for nearly 85 per cent of India's cumulative equity inflow from October 2019 to March 2026, while the entire northeastern region attracted less than one per cent. The contrast is striking, especially given the Northeast's abundant natural resources, rich biodiversity, strategic international borders, and immense tourism potential. The disparity raises an important question: what really attracts investment?

The recently released Investment Friendliness Index (IFI) by the NITI Aayog offers some answers. More than a ranking of States, it provides a framework for understanding why some regions consistently attract investment while others struggle despite possessing significant potential. As India pursues the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, these insights are particularly relevant. According to the NITI Aayog, India needs to sustain annual GDP growth of nearly 7.8 per cent to achieve developed economy status. Meeting that ambition will require far more than public expenditure; it will depend on creating business environments where private investment can flourish. India's investment rate has recovered to 29.9 per cent of GDP in FY2025, marginally above the average of the previous decade. While public investment has strengthened roads, ports, and digital infrastructure, long-term economic transformation will increasingly depend on private enterprises investing, innovating, and creating productive employment. Investors today evaluate much more than tax incentives. They look for quality infrastructure, policy stability, efficient institutions, skilled human capital, financial soundness, and an ecosystem that reduces business uncertainty. Recognising this reality, the IFI assesses all 36 States and Union Territories across eight dimensions: infrastructure, business climate, natural resources, government policy, regulatory ease, institutional environment, financial health, and environmental resilience. Together, these indicators reflect the broader conditions that influence investment decisions in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The findings reveal that India's investment divide is driven less by geography than by differences in economic ecosystems. States that dominate FDI have built diversified industrial clusters in automobiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and engineering. These industries create supplier networks, specialised skills, research capabilities, and logistics infrastructure that reinforce investor confidence. By contrast, much of the Northeast remains dependent on relatively small-scale and low-value industries such as wood products, food processing, textiles, and non-metallic minerals. Without stronger industrial ecosystems, attracting large-scale foreign investment becomes considerably more difficult. Infrastructure presents another challenge. Many northeastern States continue to score below the national average on infrastructure and resource availability, increasing logistics costs and reducing industrial competitiveness. Policy consistency, fiscal capacity, and institutional effectiveness also shape investment decisions. Tourism presents the Northeast's greatest opportunity, as the region possesses assets that few parts of India can match. Yet, it accounted for only 0.43% of India's domestic tourist visits and 1.17% of foreign tourist visits in 2024. Beyond these measurable factors lies a perception gap.

IISER Pune students begin indefinite sit-in, seek action on mental health and academic pressure

Students at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune began an indefinite sit-in protest on August 27 against the suspension of the general secretary of the Student Council Raj Bagwe and various other demands. The protest comes in the wake of the death of a student on campus. The police have not yet provided details of what caused the death.

Bagwe was earlier suspended for one year, reduced to six months, in an unrelated incident of an alleged "strip search" of students on campus. The students claimed Bagwe had raised concerns regarding student safety which resulted in severe disciplinary action against him. Furthermore, students demanded a relaxation of academic requirements in the wake of the student's death, an overhaul of mental health infrastructure with an increase in counselors, a rollback of recently introduced gender-based segregation, and no disciplinary or administrative retaliation against students advocating for systemic change.

A student said the sit-in would continue indefinitely till a satisfactory resolution is reached. In a statement, the institute said, "A disciplinary action was taken on the student council general secretary after a thorough investigation by a committee based on complaints received, which the student appealed against. The appeal resulted in some reduction in action. IISER Pune follows rules and protocols to ensure the safety and security of the residents. We are committed to maintaining a safe and dignified environment for all residents of the hostel. Stricter implementation of hostel rules have been made in order to avoid unauthorized entry into hostel buildings, after some of the girls residents of Hostel 3 raised concerns about their safety. The common areas on the ground floor, however, continue to remain accessible to all students." The statement added, "To accommodate new students who joined in August 2026, we had to convert some common spaces in hostels into residential rooms.

Therefore, to create alternative common spaces for our students, we are opening up the space in the dining complex on the ground and first floor, and converting that into a sitting, co-working space for all students where safety will be achieved. We are working on renovating and furnishing these halls and other existing spaces like the dance room. The institute has two full-time counsellors and two additional counsellors have been brought in by our campus Mental Wellbeing Centre to provide additional support. The institute is also in the process of hiring between one to two additional full-time counsellors."

Festivals Reflect Telangana's Cultural Heritage: Talsani Srinivas Yadav

Hyderabad Correspondent, August 30 (Indian Chronicle): Festivals are an integral part of Telangana's cultural heritage and traditions, former minister and Sanath Nagar MLA Talsani Srinivas Yadav said while participating in Bonalu celebrations held across several parts of the Ramgopalpet division on Sunday. Talsani visited the Sri Julamma temple at Kalasiguda and offered prayers, followed by visits to Sri Gali Maisamma temple at the Ambedkar Nagar double-bedroom housing colony on Necklace Road and Sri Katta Maisamma temple at Indira Nagar. He extended Bonalu greetings to the people and said such traditional festivities helped preserve the region's cultural identity and strengthen community bonds. Temple organisers felicitated Talsani after the prayers. He was accompanied by former corporator Atthili Mallikarjun Goud, BRS division president Atthili Srinivas Goud and party leaders Anjaneyulu, Ganesh, Kondapuram Mahesh Yadav, Koteswar Goud, Tina and Janardhan, among others.



Woman, Son Go Missing After Arriving to Tie Rakhi in Beerappagadda

UPPAL, AUGUST 30 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): A married woman who had come to her brother's house on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan went missing along with her five-year-old son in the Uppal Police Station limits. According to Admin SI Madhu, 26-year-old Kolipaka Manasa, a homemaker from Nellore, had married Kamalakara about nine years ago. The couple has two children, Sahasra (8) and Arush (5). As part of the Raksha Bandhan celebrations, Manasa arrived with her children at her brother's house in Beerappagadda, Hyderabad, at around 6 a.m. on August 25. On August 30, at around 6 a.m., Manasa reportedly told her family that her son Arush was crying and that she would take him to a nearby shop to buy snacks. She then locked the house and left with her son. When she did not return after some time, her brother called her on the phone. She reportedly told him that she was on her way back. However, when he called again later, her mobile phone was found switched off. The family members opened the house and searched the surrounding areas. They also contacted friends and relatives, but could not trace Manasa or her son. Following this, her brother approached the police and lodged a complaint requesting that the whereabouts of Manasa and her son be traced and necessary action be taken. Uppal police have registered a case and launched an investigation.



Godavari Pushkaralu Should Put Telangana on the National Map: Konda Surekha

Hyderabad Correspondent, August 30 (Indian Chronicle): Godavari Pushkaralu should showcase Telangana's cultural identity, traditions and hospitality to the country, Forest, Environment and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha said on Sunday. Surekha inaugurated a Special Officer's office at Praja Bhavan to coordinate preparations for the Godavari Pushkaralu scheduled from June 26 to July 7 next year. She later reviewed the arrangements with senior Endowments Department officials and stressed the need for seamless coordination among government departments, district administrations and local bodies. The minister said the government was undertaking advance planning to provide pilgrims with safe, comfortable and spiritually enriching facilities. She said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had sanctioned Rs 1,000 crore for the event and directed officials to ensure that the arrangements reflected Telangana's hospitality and heritage. Surekha called for priority to be given to the construction and strengthening of bathing ghats, sanitation, drinking water, transport, traffic management, security, medical facilities and uninterrupted power supply. She also stressed quality and durability in all construction works, saying the facilities should not be treated as temporary arrangements but developed to serve future needs as well. Officials informed her that ghat works had already commenced at selected locations, with more than 5 km of ghats planned across different tiers.



1,000 Days of People's Governance From Welfare to a Pioneering World-Class Telangana

"Honourable Chief Minister Shri A Revanth Reddy successfully completed the '1000 days milestone' of the People's Government on September one. Under the visionary leadership of CM Revanth Reddy, the People's Government wrote a new chapter in Telangana history by overhauling the administration aiming to fulfill the people's aspirations, according priority to social justice, instilling confidence among farmers, women, and the youth, attracting massive investments to the state, and building world-class infrastructure for a bright future of the Telangana State. ECONOMIC GROWTH—STRENGTHENING TELANGANA The Telangana state's Per Capita Income increased to ₹4,18,931 in 2025-26, which is approximately 91 percent higher than the national per capita income. In a move to bolster the state economy, the government succeeded in inviting huge investments, creating employment, development of infrastructure and the technology sector. A slew of bold initiatives were taken to strengthen the state financial conditions while simultaneously continuing numerous welfare measures. The collective progress and the development of the state is a testament to the active participation of farmers, women, youth, workers, employees, officials, entrepreneurs, and the general public. TELANGANA RANKS NUMBER ONE IN AGRICULTURE - A PILLAR OF SUPPORT FOR FARMERS The People's Government waived farm loans up to ₹2 lakh, unmatched anywhere else in the country. The farm loan waiver scheme relieved over 25 lakh farming families from the mounting debt burden. Over ₹36,000 crore investment support provided under the 'Rythu Bharosa' scheme. Nearly ₹9,000 crore was credited in a single phase over just 9 days. A bonus of ₹500 per quintal for fine-variety paddy, continuous assurance through free electricity for agriculture and farmer insurance were part of the welfare of the farming community. The state government spent approximately Rs 1.68 lakh crore on agriculture and farmer welfare over the past 32 months. In a major achievement, the Telangana State surpassed Punjab to become the country's leader in paddy cultivation and production, setting a new record by procuring 81.12 lakh metric tonnes of grain during the last Yasangi (rabi) season. The government is fighting an uncompromising struggle for Telangana's rightful share of Krishna and Godavari waters. Special thanks to the farmers who

understood challenging situations, such as the urea shortage and cooperated with the government. A NEW CHAPTER IN WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT Free travel for women on RTC buses was being implemented under Mahalakshmi scheme. over 335 crore free trips taken, resulting in travel cost savings of nearly ₹11,000 crore for women. Free electricity up to 200 units for over 53 lakh families under the Gruha Jyothi scheme. Domestic LPG cylinders provided for ₹500 to 43 lakh families. Loans worth ₹60,487 crore extended via bank linkages to 4.54 lakh women's groups in the state, along with an interest subsidy of ₹1,900 crore. New business opportunities were created for women's groups which included stitching of school uniforms and sarees, operation of petrol bunks and RTC buses. The government is striving to transform women into key partners in Telangana's economic progress, with the goal of making ten million women 'corepatis' (millionaires). FOOD SECURITY - ASSURANCE TO EVERY POOR FAMILY Ending the years of waiting, Over 1.5 million (15 lakh) new ration cards have already been issued. Food security provided to approximately 33.8 million (3.38 crore) people through the Public Distribution System. Telangana sets a new national benchmark by distributing high-quality fine rice to ration cardholders. Distribution of smart ration cards to make the Public Distribution System (PDS) more transparent and accessible. Social security measures strengthened by sanctioning of new pensions for 225,000 (2.25 lakh) people. The state government is providing social security pensions to a total of over 4.3 million (43 lakh) beneficiaries, including the elderly, widows, persons with disabilities, and other eligible individuals. INDIRAMMA HOUSES - FULFILLING DREAM OF OWNING HOUSE BY POOR 4.50 lakh Indiramma houses were constructed in the first phase. Financial assistance of ₹5 lakh per eligible family for house construction is being provided to the beneficiary. Special priority given to tribal communities - Chenchu tribe and extremely backward families. Massive plan was envisaged to construct 1 lakh Indiramma housing units (in multi-story towers) within the Hyderabad urban limits. SOCIAL JUSTICE - HISTORICAL DECISIONS The state government conducted a comprehensive state-wide survey covering social, economic, educational, employment, political, and caste as-

'Institutionalised corruption' in Punjab: HC seeks state response, ED letters to DGP



The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday sought to know from the Punjab government what action it proposed to take on allegations of "large-scale and institutionalised corruption" involving senior state officials, observing that the "nature of allegations made are serious" and would require a "careful response from the respondents". A Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Justice Rohit Kapoor also directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to place before it the communications allegedly sent to the Punjab Director-General of Police (DGP) and sought the State's stand on the matter.

"Before we proceed to take cognizance of the grievance raised...it would be appropriate to call upon the counsel representing ED, to place before the court the communications sent to the DGP...as is alleged by the petitioner. If such communication is sent, we would also like to know from the Advocate-General, Punjab, as to what stand/action is proposed to be taken by the State police and the State itself," the bench said while listing the matter for September 3. The directions came on a petition filed by Advocate Nikhil Saraf alleging abuse of official position, criminal conspiracy and manipulation of governmental, tender and administrative processes. The petition alleges that senior Punjab officials were involved in various scams, including "cash for transfers; cash for getting favourable policies; cash for tenders, and such other illegal activities".

The petitioner claimed that the ED had sent communications under Section 66(2) of the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002, to the State authorities, but alleged that no action had followed despite the allegations of corruption in high public office. Appearing for ED, Additional Solicitor General of India Satya Pal Jain, assisted by Senior Panel Counsel Lokesh Narang, told the court that three communications had been sent to the Punjab DGP on July 24, July 31 and August 7, 2026. The counsel said the communications were on similar lines to the allegations made in the petition...the nature of allegations made are serious and would require a careful response from the respondents," the Bench observed and subsequently issued notice of motion, with counsel accepting notice for the State, the Union of India, the ED and the CBI. Advocate General, Punjab, however, questioned the maintainability of the writ petition and raised objections regarding the petitioner's credentials. The plea seeks an independent investigation into vehicle procurements, alleged illegal gratification and related offences. The petitioner has contended that the existing investigating machinery is "institutionally connected to the persons against whom allegations are made", creating a potential conflict of interest. The petitioner has sought transfer of the investigation to an independent agency, preferably the CBI, along with a comprehensive probe into vehicle procurements during the relevant period. The petitioner further alleged that a detailed complaint submitted to the Punjab Vigilance Bureau on October 31, 2025, along with invoices, comparative analysis and supporting documents, had not led to registration of an FIR or a meaningful investigation. Relying on the Supreme Court's judgment in Lalita Kumari v Government of Uttar Pradesh, the petitioner argued that registration of an FIR is mandatory when information discloses the commission of a cognizable offence.

How terror handlers turned Punjab's vulnerable youth into foot soldiers



At that exact moment – 9:40 AM on January 1, 2026 – Nalagarh appeared on the radar of the country's counter terrorism grid. It was a Thursday and the residents of this languid town were busy with their familiar routines. Once a princely state set up by Chandel Rajputs, Nalagarh is now a major industrial hub and the gateway to Himachal Pradesh that lies closer to neighbouring Chandigarh than the capital Shimla. Suddenly, a deafening explosion shattered the morning calm. Triggered by an improvised explosive device (IED), the blast was powerful enough to shatter the window panes of the police station and damage an under-construction Retired Army Personnel Association building some 45 metres away. The explosion, later claimed by banned Khalistani outfits such as Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Punjab Sovereignty Alliance (PSA) through an Instagram post, caused no casualties, officials say. But in a state that rarely sees terrorist attacks, it did what it set out to do – send shockwaves across Himachal's security establishment. "It was not aimed at killing," one officer of the Punjab Police, who was part of the investigation, told The Indian Express. "But it was intended to create fear, demonstrate the operational reach of the terror outfit and send a threatening message to the police establishment."

The attack was Himachal's second terror attack in two decades and the first time the state had seen a bomb blast. But the investigation that followed showed something even more alarming: it revealed how cross-border terror networks had changed tack, recruiting Punjab's drug-addicted youth to be foot soldiers for a strike engineered abroad. This terror attack was also significant because it was a breach in the security in Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh industrial corridor. Nalagarh police gathering For investigators, the attack signalled the vulnerability of India's security system against such sneak attacks. (Express Photo) On August 13, India's premier anti-terror agency, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), formally arrested three people, Mahavir Kumar alias Kaka, Ajay Mehra and Manpreet Singh alias Mani, in connection with the attack. Although all three had already been in judicial custody in Punjab, the arrests came on the back of a new FIR by the NIA. Mahavir Singh alias Kaka and Manpreet Singh alias Mani, both residents of what was Punjab's Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, are alleged to have executed the attack. For investigators of the Himachal and Punjab Police, the explosion – and the subsequent findings – posed a new security challenge: how to prevent attacks planned abroad but executed by vulnerable local recruits with no past criminal records? In many cases, these people are not ideologically-driven terrorists," one officer of the Punjab Police said. "They are often individuals trapped in drug addiction or financial desperation, and are persuaded to carry out specific assignments in exchange for money. The masterminds remain outside India, communicate through encrypted applications or intermediaries and ensure that the persons actually carrying out the operation know very little about the larger conspiracy." Baddi SP Vinod Kumar Dhiman – under whose jurisdiction Nalagarh falls – declined to comment. STF operation STF personnel seized narcotics during a checking operation and weighed the seized narcotics on an electronic scaling device. The Nalagarh attack Hours after the blast at Nalagarh, both Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Punjab Sovereignty Alliance (PSA) claimed it through an Instagram post. In it, the two outfits claimed that the attack was to "protest" the alleged manufacture of synthetic drugs in Himachal Pradesh and their supply to Punjab. The post claimed that the attack "was not against innocent people but against a corrupt system". "Despite the police administration being aware of such activities, no action was being taken, and young people were losing their lives because of drug addiction," the post said. STF operation Special Task Force (STF) of Himachal Pradesh Police conducted search operation in the area of Nalagarh and Baddi in Solan district. For the Himachal Police, the attack was an anomaly. The state had last seen a terrorist attack in 1998, when the proscribed Hizbul Mujahideen lined up and killed 35 Hindu villagers and injured 11 others in two separate late-night strikes inside Himachal Pradesh, prompting the long-term deployment of security forces like the ITBP along the remote border. The social media post led Himachal police to seek help from their Punjab counterparts. On February 22, police made their first arrests — Mahavir Singh and Manpreet Singh. "Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused were acting on the directions of foreign-based mas-

terminds Gopi Nawanshahria, Jassi Kulam and Sushant Chopra, who are associated with the banned terrorist outfit Babbar Khalsa International," Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said at a press briefing, adding that a 9MM Glock pistol and four live cartridges were found with the two arrested suspects.

But it was allegedly during the subsequent recovery that the police found what they thought was clinching evidence — a fully assembled 2.5-kilogram RDX-laden IED fitted with dual remote- and timer-based detonation mechanisms. Investigators from the Punjab Police say that led them to a layered narco-terror module in which explosive consignments allegedly moved through a chain of low-level operatives before reaching the two men, now being seen as the suspects who planted the bomb. Soon, the police made four more arrests, all from SBS Nagar, like Kaka and Mani. "Police of both states concluded that Nalagarh was chosen for the attack because of proximity to both Punjab and Haryana. Two suspects managed to enter Punjab within 1.5 hours of the attack," one police officer said. "The other three helped move the explosives and arrange for motorcycles." The purported Instagram post from January 1 provided the next clue. The post mentioned two names — Gopi Nawanshahria and Kabal Singh — as having planned the attack. Investigators were already familiar with those names, especially that of Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi Nawanshahria — a fugitive gangster allegedly connected with several firing incidents in Punjab's Hoshiarpur and Mahilpur in December last year, and linked to one of the most notorious Khalistani terrorists, Harwinder Singh Rinda. What was striking about the attack was how compartmentalised the network was. According to a senior Punjab police officer, several suspects arrested for transporting the explosives were simply carriers and were unaware of what their deliveries contained. Investigators also found that the suspects were selected from a drug network that Nawanshahria allegedly ran in SBS Nagar. "The movement of the explosives appears to have involved multiple persons, each performing a limited task," the officer said. "One person receives the consignment, another transports it, a third arranges a motorcycle, and another identifies a drop-off before the material finally reaches its executors. This compartmentalised system is designed to make tracking the origin harder."

Payment, too, was allegedly handled similarly. "The arrested were given hard cash for each task. The first suspect was left a packet of money and asked to drop it off for the second, and so on. Here, too, the suspects did not know what the packets contained," the Punjab Police officer said. What stunned investigators more were the assailants themselves: young, poor and, for the most part, with no criminal record. "All five suspects were between 18 and 20 years and belonged to families of labourers," the Punjab Police investigator said. "We found that they were substance abusers who had no recorded criminal antecedents. All suspects – including the two who executed the blast – were carefully handpicked."

The brains behind the attack For investigators, the attack signalled the vulnerability of India's security system against such sneak attacks. What was especially concerning were the brains behind the attack: the so-called foreign-based handlers such as Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi Nawanshahria, Jaspreet Singh alias Jassi Kulam and Sushant Chopra, all from SBS Nagar.

The most prominent among them, according to investigators, was Gopi Nawanshahria, long considered a close associate of Pakistan-based BKI terrorist Harwinder Singh alias Rinda. Investigators claim that Nawanshahria could have more than 25 criminal cases — including murder, robbery and dacoity — and is now stated to be hiding abroad while continuing his Punjab operations. Among the most significant killings linked to him was the April 2024 murder of Rattandeep Singh, a prominent Khalistani terrorist and the former chief of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFF). Singh was shot dead in Punjab's SBS Nagar, with the police still investigating the killing. The second alleged handler, Jaspreet Singh alias Jassi Kulam, is believed to be a close associate of Nawanshahria. Originally from Kulam in SBS Nagar district's Nawanshahr tehsil, Jassi is also suspected to have been involved in the April 2024 killing of Rattandeep Singh before fleeing to the United Arab Emirates. The third suspect, Sushant Chopra, is believed to be living in the US. Investigators claim that Chopra, a resident of Rahon in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, ran drug operations for Nawanshahria, and has also been suspected of having played a role in the movement of terrorist hardware through Punjab-based associates. A crucial part of the investigation now is to determine whether the explosives came from across the border. At the same time, the Punjab Police now also have another problem to resolve: how to stop Punjab's vulnerable youth from playing into the hands of terrorist networks. The significance of this case lies in understanding the ecosystem rather than merely identifying the two persons accused of planting the IED," the senior Himachal Pradesh police officer said.

Cops attacked, tear gas shells fired: Worker's death sparks violence in Gujarat

A gathering of villagers demanding compensation for a factory worker's death in a village in Gujarat's Anand district escalated into violence, stone-pelting, and vandalism on Thursday, prompting the police to fire tear-gas shells and carry out a lathi-charge. Five people, including three policemen, were injured in the incident. The clash in Kalamsar village in Khambhat taluka centred on the death of Ranjitsinh Natubhai Singha, who had joined Rohan Dyes and Intermediates Ltd 15 days ago. He died after an iron pole allegedly fell on him and another tribal worker, Shaktisinh, while they were working on Thursday. While Shaktisinh suffered minor injuries, Singha sustained serious injuries to his leg. He was first shifted to a hospital in Khambhat and later referred to a hospital in Karamsad, where he died late on Thursday. As news of his death reached Kalamsar, villagers gathered and moved towards the factory, demanding justice and compensation for his wife and two children. Anger mounts, 8 tear gas shells fired. The police, who stopped the crowd before it could proceed further, said that Singha's family and villagers initially demanded Rs 50 lakh from the company. As negotiations continued, anger at the site mounted. According to the police, some people began pelting stones. Deputy Superintendent of Police HB Vaghela said the situation rapidly spun out of control. "The people started pelting stones heavily and the situation escalated... the police released eight tear gas shells to disperse the mob. Three policemen suffered simple injuries," Vaghela said. Windows of police vehicles and private vehicles were damaged in the violence. The



standoff ended after the company agreed to pay Rs 30 lakh in compensation, police officials said. Gujarat Anand factory worker death Police and private vehicles were damaged during the violence in Kalamsar.

The police said a separate case will be registered in connection with the vandalism. (Photo: Screenshot) Police presence ramped up Additional police teams were rushed to Kalamsar from Khambhat and neighbouring areas. Personnel from the Local Crime Branch, Special Operations Group, Parole Furlough Squad and nearby police stations were deployed. Senior officers also reached the village late at night to bring the situation under control. "Tight security has been arranged in the village as well as at the company, and night patrolling was intensified," Vaghela said. Prant Officer Kunjal Shah, along with police, local officials, and the village sarpanch, met Singha's family and handed over a Rs 30 lakh cheque.

6-month plot, 3 states, iCloud use: CBI joins dots on Adhikari aide killing



The killing in May of Chandranath Rath, personal assistant to Suwendu Adhikari, days before he took charge as West Bengal Chief Minister, was the culmination of an alleged conspiracy hatched over six months. The CBI uncovered the plot using digital evidence, including a photo on iCloud, and by joining the dots between CCTV footage, road tolls and multiple phones, including one at the bottom of the Hooghly river. The CBI filed a chargesheet before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's court in Barasat on August 7. The probe, it is learnt, states that the man who allegedly pulled the strings was Sagar Sonkar, Rath's 29-year-old assistant.

Rath was shot inside his vehicle in Madhyamgram in Kolkata around 10 pm on May 6. His associate Buddhadeb Bera was injured in the attack. The chargesheet names 12 people, of whom all but Krishna Kumar Singh (from Bihar) have been apprehended. The arrested include Sagar and his brother Saheb Sonkar (both from Kolkata); Uttar Pradesh residents Vikash Mishra, Vinay Rai, Sanjay Rai, Gyanendra Singh, Raj Kumar Singh, Golu Singh and Naveen Kumar Singh; and Bihar's Mayank Raj Mishra and Vicky Maurya.

Sagar and Saheb, 20, were arrested on July 31, more than two months after the CBI held 11 people, including four alleged sharpshooters. The parents of the two brothers told The Indian Express earlier that they did not believe the police charges, as the two worked closely with not just Rath but also Adhikari, in his personal office, and played an active role in Adhikari's Bhabanipur Assembly seat during the polls. "Sagar was like Chandranath's shadow. He looked after the financial transactions, even handled payments. Later, he took Saheb along and he too was employed by Chandranath," said a relative. According to the CBI probe, Sagar had allegedly come to resent Rath as he saw himself as his equal and believed that getting him out of the way was the only way he could get close to Adhikari. Sometime in November 2025, the probe found, he allegedly "roped in his brother Saheb to procure phones and SIM cards in the names of other persons". Next, Sagar allegedly brought in Vikash Mishra, a school friend, who in turn knew Vinay Rai. The CBI claims WhatsApp call records show Sagar and Mishra, a resident of Salempur in Deoria, were in constant touch from January 20, 2026, onwards, allegedly "with the intent to hire contract killers".

On January 30 this year, Vikash Mishra called Vinay Rai over WhatsApp, the probe found. According to the CBI, Rai has criminal antecedents with five criminal cases registered or pending against him, including that of murder. There were more calls between Sagar, Mishra and Rai, investigators said, alleging that on February 6, "in order to arrange the shooters... Vinay Rai contacted his acquaintance, Sanjay Rai, who was at Surat... and asked him to come to Dhanbad immediately". According to the CBI, after Sanjay Rai came to Dhanbad, Mishra arranged a meeting between him, Vinay Rai and Sagar, where "the modalities for committing the murder were allegedly discussed". Investigators say this was followed by repeated trips between Dhanbad, Kolkata, Ballia, Ghazipur and other locations. Not long after his meeting with Sagar, Sanjay Rai allegedly arrived in Kolkata and checked into a hotel under the name 'Pankaj Singh'. The CBI says Sagar paid for his hotel stay and, later, for his accommodation in Salt Lake. On February 18, says the agency, Sagar allegedly took Sanjay Rai on a recce of Madhyamgram, and of Rath's office, the Assembly and High Court areas. An Uber driver allegedly identified the two. Sanjay Rai went back to Dhanbad the same day, but reportedly came back for reconnaissance in March and April.

On April 7, Sanjay Rai, Gyanendra Singh and Raj

Kumar Singh visited a vehicle dealer in Patuli (Kolkata) and examined a Maruti Swift, as per CCTV footage procured by the CBI. On April 18, the vehicle was purchased for Rs 3.80 lakh, with CCTV footage and road toll records allegedly showing trips made in it to Dhanbad. The CBI says that the accused also acquired a Nissan Micra and a Hero Super Splendor motorcycle, with the engine and chassis numbers of both obliterated. All the vehicles were subsequently fitted with fake registration plates, as per the agency. On May 3, CCTV footage and FASTag records purportedly show the accused travelling from Dhanbad to Kolkata, a distance of 275 km, and then going back via Birati. The next two days, further arrangements were allegedly made, including the preparation of another number plate for the Nissan Micra.

The day of the murder The shooters allegedly travelled to Kolkata from Dhanbad the same day, i.e. May 6. As per the reconstruction, via call-detail records, CCTV footage, and alleged communication between the men, before leaving Dhanbad, they split up. "Krishna Kumar Singh, Gyanendra Singh and Sanjay Rai left for Kolkata in a Swift Car, whereas Mayank Raj Mishra, Vicky Maurya, Golu Singh and Raj Kumar Singh left in Nissan Micra," the probe says, recording a toll tax payment enroute. The CBI claims that Sagar informed Sanjay Rai of Rath's location over FaceTime, and that Rai passed the information on to Gyanendra and Krishna. As Rath's car, a Scorpio, entered the Doharia Lane in Madhyamgram, Raj allegedly parked the Nissan Micra across to block it. Then, the probe agency alleges, Krishna and Gyanendra "committed murder of Chandranath Rath and attempted to murder Buddhadeb Bera". After the shooting, Raj, Krishna and Gyanendra allegedly got onto the Hero Honda Splendor parked nearby, and fled. The motorcycle was found abandoned near the Gouri Kali Bari Bus Stand, and the CBI believes the men allegedly used the Swift next to drive back to Ballia, destroying or disposing of phones and SIM cards along the way. The evidence

The CBI claims it has mobile tower-dump data from several locations, including Dhanbad, Birati, Jessore Road, Doharia Lane and Barasat Railway Junction, to place the accused there. It also claims evidence that several SIM cards were procured in other people's names and repeatedly moved between handsets. One significant finding, as per the CBI, was a photograph of Rath on an iCloud account linked to one of the numbers, loaded onto the cloud on March 18, when the phone was at Madhyamgram. The CBI claims to have found at least one FaceTime communication between phones allegedly being used by Sagar and Sanjay Rai shortly after the killing, at 10.16 pm on May 6. Another call followed soon after, and the CBI believes Sagar placed it to ascertain Rath's condition. Ballistic examination showed that two pistols recovered from Naveen were allegedly used to shoot Rath and Bera. Eight firearm injuries were found on Rath's body, and two bullets recovered. The agency also claims to have found a financial trail, with Rs 30 lakh allegedly handed over on February 24 by Saheb and a friend, Raja Das, to Sanjay Rai at Jamtara, Jharkhand. This was allegedly shared between the accused, with more payments made for vehicles and logistics, as per the CBI. After the murder, around 10.30 pm on May 6, the investigators claim, "Sagar Sonkar handed over an iPhone to Rishabh Sonkar, his cousin, with the direction to dispose of the same... in the Hooghly river... In CCTV footage of Howrah bridge... Rishabh Sonkar is seen throwing something from the bridge at 22.53 hrs."

The CBI says that it used divers to try and retrieve the iPhone but was not successful. According to the agency, after the murder, Raj, Gyanendra, Golu, Krishna and Sanjay Rai drove in the Swift to the house of Manoj Rai at Tajpur Manjha village in UP's Ghazipur, with Krishna getting off at Buxar en route. At the residence of Manoj Rai, Gyanendra Singh collected the remaining amount, which was kept there for safe custody on 13.03.2026," investigators say, adding that Manoj got Rs 50,000 for his alleged part in the plot. After this, the CBI claims, Gyanendra, Raj and Golu went to Naveen's house in Ballia and handed over a bag containing the firearms used in the crime. Out of Rs 30 lakh, Mannu Singh (Gyanendra) gave Rs 5 lakh to Raj Kumar Singh at the house of Naveen Kumar Singh and dropped him there," says the agency, adding that Rs 2.85 lakh was later seized from Raj's father, Tribhuvan Narayan Singh.

Jamia Millia Islamia suspends four students, bars them from entering campus

According to the order, the university alleged that protesters blocked access to the billing counter and the girls' common room, put up material on walls and continued the sit-in despite repeated directions from the proctorial department to disperse. According to the order, the university alleged that protesters blocked access to the billing counter and the girls' common room, put up material on walls and continued the sit-in despite repeated directions from the proctorial department to disperse. Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) has suspended four students and barred them from entering the campus following protests over alleged irregularities in the university's 2026-27 spot admission process, with student body National Students' Union of India (NSUI) demanding that the disciplinary action be withdrawn and the administration hold an open dialogue with the protesters.

The disciplinary notices issued by the university identified those suspended as JMI's NSUI office-bearers Dhruv Chauhan, Tabrez Afsar and Ebin Basil. The fourth is a student named Mohd Jasim. The NSUI is the student wing of the Congress. The protests were triggered by allegations that candidates lower down the waiting lists had been admitted while students with higher ranks were denied seats. Students have also questioned the decision to conduct offline spot admissions this year, based on which vacant seats were allotted and merit and waiting lists were published. The university, however, has rejected the allegations, describing them as baseless. It has maintained that its admission process is transparent. The JMI's admission portal shows that it has issued notices for offline spot registration for the 2026-27 session in July and August.

The disciplinary action has particularly focused on the conduct of the protesters and their interaction with JMI officials. In a showcause-cum-suspension-cum-campus-ban order dated August 26, the chief proctor alleged that Tabrez Afsar and Ebin Basil had helped organise the protest at the central canteen on August 24 despite a university notification designating Gate 18 as the place for student congregations and protests. According to the order, the university alleged that protesters blocked access to the billing counter and the girls' common room, put up material on walls and continued the sit-in despite repeated directions from the proctorial department to disperse. It also alleged that some outsiders and former students participated in the gathering



and that politically motivated slogans were raised. The university's order has alleged that attempts had been made from August 24 to contact the protesters and facilitate discussions, including a meeting with the proctorial department. It said the chief proctor went to the North Campus around midnight after students sought a meeting there and subsequently met them at the central canteen. The order accused the protesters of disrupting academic and administrative functioning and said complaints had been received from several departments and centres, including Psychology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Economics and the University Polytechnic. The JMI said the protests affected routine functioning of departments, libraries, laboratories and other facilities.

The NSUI has opposed the action against all four students. In a statement on Thursday, it demanded the immediate withdrawal of their suspension and campus ban, saying disciplinary action affecting students' academic and campus rights should follow due process and provide them an opportunity to be heard. It also demanded that the university address the students' admission-related concerns through an "open and transparent dialogue". The admission controversy centres on complaints submitted by students to the Controller of Examinations questioning the basis of spot admissions, the publication of merit and waiting lists and the criteria used for filling vacant seats. Students have also raised concerns about seats reserved for Jammu and Kashmir residents and Kashmiri migrants and seats for persons with disabilities.

Channi supporters disrupt Warring speech, expose Punjab Congress rift



In an embarrassment for the Congress, supporters of former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi raised slogans in his favour in the presence of state Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring and All India Congress Committee general secretary in charge of the state, Bhupesh Baghel, at a party event in the Patiala region on Saturday.

Channi's supporters repeatedly chanted "Charanjit Singh Channi Zindabad" and "Channi liaao, Punjab bachao (bring Channi, save Punjab)" slogans as Warring started speaking, creating a disruption. There was also some hooting directed at the state unit chief. Warring became visibly upset, demanded to know why the slogans were being raised, and warned that disciplinary action would be taken against those disrupting party programmes. He could be seen asking "koi problem hai, koi problem hai (is there any problem)" while pointing towards someone in the crowd that had gathered close to the dais. There was some jostling between the supporters of Channi and Warring even as

speakers on the dais kept asking everyone "not to spoil the atmosphere".

The sharp differences within the party cadres spilt into the open at the 'Har Booth Congress Mazboot' event, which was projected as one in a series of weeklong events to launch the Congress's 2027 election mission. Baghel is on a 10-day visit to Punjab and is holding meetings in various cities to launch the poll campaign. 'Important not to lose cool' Warring sought to maintain calm as the event continued and requested everyone who loved Congress to sit down even as the shouting continued. In his speech, Warring said that in the coming days all leaders of the party will be seen on one platform. "I will make efforts in coming days to ensure that everyone is on the same stage... It is also important not to lose cool in the enthusiasm," he said. Warring appealed to the cadres to maintain amity among themselves too. He repeated his past statement that all senior leaders, be it Partap Singh Bajwa, Charanjit Singh Channi or Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, were better than him. The episode highlights ongoing factional tensions within the Punjab Congress unit ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. These stem from the high command's July decision to retain Warring as state president while appointing Channi as chairman of the campaign committee. Channi's camp has held meetings expressing dissatisfaction, with some leaders and workers pushing for a larger leadership role for the former CM, amid claims of broader support among cadres. Channi and allies such as Randhawa have stayed away from certain programmes led by Warring or Baghel. The incident in Patiala has fuelled further discussion about internal differences, even as party leaders have previously sought to project unity under the high command.

After Karnataka amends Bengaluru mobility law, BJP's Tejasvi Surya writes to Governor



A day after the Karnataka Assembly passed an amendment to the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) Act, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya Tuesday wrote to Governor Thawarachand Gehlot expressing his concerns about the law. The BMLTA (Amendment) Bill, 2026, to amend Section 19 of the BMLTA Act of 2022, which came into force in 2023 after being introduced by the previous BJP government, was passed by the Karnataka legislature Monday without a debate. "It has been reported that this provision would have the effect of retrospectively legitimising mega projects valued at nearly Rs 1 lakh crore, including the Tunnel Road Project, estimated to cost over Rs 40,000 crore, without the institutional scrutiny and due process envisaged under the BMLTA framework," the BJP MP said in the letter to the Governor. "The intent of the parent legislation enacted in 2022 cannot be retrospectively altered in a manner that defeats the safeguards and institutional oversight it was intended to establish," Surya further contended.

The amended BMLTA Act, 2026, which introduces a new Subsection 6 under Section 19, is seen as facilitating major Bengaluru infrastructure projects that had previously been criticised by BMLTA, like a 16.75 km-long city road tunnel project pushed by Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar. According to the amended Section 19 of the BMLTA Act, "all projects initiated during the period commencing from the date of commencement of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority Act, 2022 (Karnataka Act 6 of 2023) and ending immediately before the date of notification of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority Rules, 2026... shall be deemed to have been taken, prepared, undertaken or instituted, as the case may

be, under this Act." The amendment is necessary "to ensure continuity in administrative decision-making in view of the imminent and pressing need to decongest traffic and address the mounting mobility challenges in Bengaluru," the new law states in its statement of reasons. Prior to the recent amendment, Section 19 of the BMLTA Act, 2022, said the BMLTA had the power "to approve all major Urban Transport projects proposed" for Bengaluru "from the perspective of consistency with the Comprehensive Mobility Plan" in a time-bound manner. "No authority, agency, department under the state government shall initiate any public, private or public-private partnership project concerning Urban Mobility without obtaining prior approval of the Authority. The Approval of the Authority shall be necessary to seek any financial assistance... from the state government, external aid agencies and the Centre," says Subsection 2 of Section 19 of the BMLTA Act of 2022. The Bengaluru tunnel road project incidentally envisages 40 per cent government funding. The amended law is seen as also circumventing controversial rules issued by the BMLTA on January 3, 2026, to facilitate retrospective clearances for big-ticket Bengaluru mobility projects – flyovers, tunnel roads, etc – that did not undergo the due process of scrutiny and analysis by state urban mobility experts and agencies. Last year, the BMLTA, in a review of the feasibility of the 16.75 km tunnel road project, had slammed the proposal – first floated by the then deputy CM and Bengaluru development minister D K Shivakumar – for allegedly not aligning with the Metro-centric Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Bengaluru, the city's Climate Action Plan or the National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP). The BMLTA review of the tunnel road said the Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Bengaluru targets a 70 per cent share for public transport by 2035 and that tunnel roads would encourage car-based commuting instead of usage of public transport. One of the major criticisms of the proposed north-south tunnel road project in Bengaluru is the absence of a scientific travel demand assessment. The BMLTA said the feasibility study ignored interactions with other major infrastructure projects, such as Metro Phases 2A, 2B, 3, and 3A, suburban rail corridors, and the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) policy. "I hope BMLTA's sound advice is heeded and the government drops the unscientific car-only Tunnel Road. Strengthening public transport is the only proven way forward for Bengaluru," urban mobility expert Satya Arikutharam said at the time.

CM Suvendu Adhikari says infiltrators will be sent back as digital census begins in Bengal

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday said it is not India's responsibility to take care of infiltrators and that such people will be sent back to their homeland. Speaking at an event in Bidhannagar to mark the launch of the fortnight-long digital self-enumeration phase of the census exercise in the state, the chief minister also assured the audience that personal information collected during this period would not be misused.

"The data is completely confidential and legally protected. It will be used only for statistics, planning, and development. There is no chance of anyone's personal information being made public or misused," Adhikari remarked. Explaining the details of the enumeration system, the chief minister said, "Those who are unable to use the online system or who live in remote areas need not worry. Government representatives will reach their homes directly. The entire process will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Census Authority of India. Completing this census work is the constitutional duty of every government employee." Thereafter, delivering a stern message on border security, Adhikari said, "Illegal infiltrators will not remain in this state or in this country. Through the prescribed legal process, they are being identified and sent back with due caution, and this will continue in the days ahead as well. It is not India's responsibility to take care of illegal infiltrators." The Bengal chief minister also claimed that "out of 27 lakh deleted electors in Special Intensive Revision (SIR), only 7 lakh applied to the tribunal." Drawing a clear distinction between infiltrators and refugees, the chief minister remarked that under the provisions of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), people from the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian communities who have come from Bangladesh are not infiltrators but refugees.

"According to the Government of India's notification dated September 1, 2025, the rules are clear. No case may be filed against any refugee who came to this country by December 31, 2014, after suffering religious persecution or to save their life, and the police also cannot harass them



West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said illegal infiltrators will be identified and sent back while assuring that data collected during the census self-enumeration process will remain confidential.

in any way." After the digital enumeration phase, physical house listing and house enumeration exercise under the census will be conducted from August 16 to September 14. During this period, detailed information related to the condition of the household, such as drinking water, toilets, electricity, cooking fuel, and internet connectivity, will be collected. Information on assets such as radios, televisions, computers, and two- and four-wheelers will also be gathered. The second phase of the census will be held in February next year. In that phase, officials will collect information on the name, age, gender, caste, and religion of each family member.

CAG flags acute staff shortages, drug shortages in Bengal's public health system



Acute shortage of doctors and frontline health workers, inadequate infrastructure, poor availability of essential medicines and deficiencies in patient care have plagued West Bengal's public healthcare system, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has said in its report on the state's health services. In its report, Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services in West Bengal, tabled in the Assembly on Saturday, the CAG flagged significant gaps in the three-tier system, comprising primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare facilities despite the state's extensive public health network.

The Sub-Centres (SCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs), also known as Rural Hospitals (RHs)/ Block Primary Health Centres (BPHCs) in West Bengal, are primary level healthcare units, which provide healthcare services to the rural population. As of March 2022, 10,368 SCs, 916 PHCs and 348 CHCs, had been created in the State. Patients requiring more serious healthcare attention are referred to the second tier of the healthcare system, by the primary healthcare units, which comprises District Hospitals (DHs), Sub-divisional Hospitals (SDHs) and State General Hospitals (SGHs). At present 18 DHs, 36 SDHs and 24 SGHs, are functioning.

Among its most serious findings, the audit reported a 54.27% shortage of medical officers (general duty) and a 91.14% shortage of specialist medical officers in Community Health Centres (CHCs). At the state level, shortages stood at 36% for specialist MOs and 49% for general duty MOs, while the sampled districts recorded an overall shortage of about 41%. In the District Hospitals, the shortage of General Duty Attendants was 63.20%. The report also pointed to severe shortages of other healthcare personnel. Nearly 89% sub-centres (SCs) had no male healthcare worker, 46% of staff nurse posts at Primary Health Centres (PHCs) were vacant, and 75% of laboratory technician posts remained unfilled. More than 92% of PHCs were functioning without either a male or female health assistant, while 251 of the state's 348 CHCs had no radiographer; and no staff nurses were posted in 51 CHCs. Twenty-nine CHCs had no Pharmacists, 30 CHCs had no laboratory technicians and 341 (almost 98%) CHCs had no O.T. attendants posted.

The audit also highlighted major infrastructure gaps. Though 55,000 deliveries had been conducted at homes

across the state, in the last three years, none of the SCs had been upgraded with facilities for conducting deliveries. The CAG mentioned that the MOs had not visited 45% of the SCs, even once a month.

It found that 71% of PHCs lacked emergency or casualty services, while 90% were not equipped to provide emergency obstetric care, including Caesarean sections. Around 70% of PHCs had no functional beds, and labour rooms were unavailable in more than half of them. Only 11 new sub-centres and three new Primary Health Centres had been set up in the State in the last six years. At the CHC level, 285 of the state's 348 centres did not have a blood storage unit, while emergency newborn care was unavailable in several facilities. The report also noted that super-speciality services, barring oncology, were absent in 89 to 100 per cent of district hospitals.

The CAG also questioned the availability of medicines. It found that 63% of notified essential drugs had never been procured by district hospitals, while several others remained out of stock for prolonged periods. The report flagged deficiencies in maternal healthcare, noting that 35% of registered pregnant women did not receive even one check-up by a medical officer during their four scheduled antenatal visits. It also found that 99.56% of home deliveries were not assisted by skilled birth attendants. Traditional birth attendants and ASHA had not even been trained in 1,294 SCs. Against 454 cases of home deliveries, in areas covered by the sampled SCs, only 49 home deliveries had been assisted by ANMs. Reviewing the implementation of centrally sponsored health programmes, the CAG said progress under the National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment had not been adequately assessed, while screening under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme remained inadequate. It noted that leprosy prevalence exceeded prescribed norms in six districts. The audit also criticised food services at Kolkata's SSKM Hospital, designated by the state government as a "Centre of Excellence". It found there had been no dietician at the hospital since 2018, no system for regular quality checks of food, and poor hygiene in the kitchen and storage areas. Implementation of centrally sponsored scheme CAG report stated, "Progress under the National Programme for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI) had not been assessed. Adequate Vision Centres had not been set up. Vacancies of 44.26 per cent existed in the cadre of Medical Technologist (Optometry). Insufficient number of cataract surgeries and inadequate Corneal transplantation, were observed." It further added, "Adequate screening of the population was not done, as prescribed under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme. A considerable number of persons, prima facie suspected for leprosy during the screening, were not medically examined for confirmation. The prevalence rate of leprosy was more than the norms prescribed, in six districts of the State." During a joint inspection conducted in 2022, auditors found damaged flooring with stagnant dirty water, food grains stored directly on the floor, poor ventilation in the storeroom and rodent-damaged sacks of rice and wheat.

SIT to probe Gujarat man's 'custodial death' after Supreme Court order

The Gujarat Police has constituted a three-member special investigation team (SIT) to investigate the alleged custodial death of 70-year-old Zahiruddin Shaikh at Ahmedabad's Vejalpur police station, days after the Supreme Court directed the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) and ordered an independent probe.

The SIT has been constituted by Gujarat Director General of Police G S Malik in compliance with the Supreme Court's July 23 order. The team will be headed by Superintendent of Police (CID Crime) Rohan Anand and comprise CID Crime Deputy SP P D Vala and CID Crime Police Inspector N H Siddiqui. The officers have been directed to take over the investigation immediately after the FIR is registered at the concerned police station and submit a final report before the jurisdictional magistrate in accordance with the Supreme Court's directions.

In a communication to the Ahmedabad police commissioner, the DGP has directed that an FIR be registered on charges of murder and abetment of suicide, in accordance with the Supreme Court order. The DGP's direction also states that all necessary police assistance be extended to the SIT. Subsequently, the in-charge Ahmedabad City Commissioner of Police, Sharad Singhal, on July 31 instructed the concerned police station to "register the FIR without delay, transfer the case papers to the SIT and provide full cooperation to the investigating officers". What the Supreme Court said

The SIT was constituted following a July 23 Supreme Court order by a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana. The bench observed that there was a prima facie case for registration of an FIR after considering the submissions made by Senior Advocate I H Syed, appearing for the petitioner's family. "We are satisfied that a prima facie case for registration of an FIR under Sections 103 and 108 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, without naming any suspects at this stage, is made out. Consequently, the said FIR shall be investigated by an Special Investigation Team, comprising of a police officer of the rank of deputy commissioner of police along with two more officers, to be nominated by the director general of police, Gujarat...", the order states.

The Supreme Court order further directed, "The members of the SIT must be those who are not posted in the district where the alleged occurrence took place. The SIT is directed to file the final report after investigation before the jurisdictional magistrate as early as possible, and preferably within two months." The court also directed that, if the appellant remained dissatisfied after the investigation, he would be at liberty to file a protest petition before the jurisdictional magistrate seeking further investigation. It also directed the police commissioner to inquire into the family's allegation of threat perception and take appropriate action in accordance with law. 'Was forcibly given tablets'

The Supreme Court's intervention came on an appeal filed by Zahiruddin Shaikh's son, Tofik, challenging the failure of the authorities to register a criminal case over his father's death after he was taken into custody by the Vejalpur police. Shaikh was arrested on May 18 in connection with an alleged cow slaughter case registered by the Vejalpur police. His family has alleged in their petition that police personnel forcibly administered 30 to 40 tablets of prescription medicines to Shaikh, resulting in a fatal overdose on May 20. It also alleged that before his death, Shaikh made two dying declarations, one recorded in medico-legal papers



at SVP Hospital and another in two videos allegedly recorded by the petitioner, in which he named police personnel and described the alleged assault. The Supreme Court's directions came nearly two months after the Gujarat High Court declined to order registration of an FIR, holding that the petitioner must first exhaust the statutory remedies available under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. Even while dismissing the petition on May 29, the High Court had observed that it was "ironic" that an alleged violation of the Supreme Court's Constitution bench judgment in Lalita Kumari vs Government of Uttar Pradesh on mandatory registration of FIRs in cognisable offences could not be directly enforced through a writ petition because of the doctrine of alternative statutory remedy.

Singareni ready to partner with Karnataka GENCO in captive coal mines: Bhatti

Hyderabad: Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has proposed that Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) and Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) work together as a joint venture (JV) to ensure adequate coal availability amid growing electricity demand. In view of Karnataka's rising power requirements, he suggested that KPCL and Singareni jointly undertake mining operations in the captive coal blocks secured by KPCL in Chhattisgarh and Odisha. He said Singareni, with nearly 137 years of experience in coal mining, could undertake mining operations in the blocks. Bhatti Vikramarka met Karnataka Energy Minister KJ George in Bengaluru on Thursday. The two discussed issues related to the energy sector in both States, including coal supplies, payments for coal purchases and technology exchange. The Deputy Chief Minister said Singareni could also benefit from Karnataka's extensive experience in the power sector in operating the power plants it proposes to undertake. The possibility of establishing a joint venture between Singareni and KPCL, with the participation of the two State-owned enterprises, should be studied," Bhatti Vikramarka said. He said the objective was to promote mutual cooperation, development and expansion. KJ George responded positively to the proposal. The two Ministers also discussed coal supplied by Singareni to Karnataka. George said rapid industrial growth in the State had led to a substantial increase in electricity demand. He requested Telangana to ensure uninterrupted coal supplies for thermal power projects in Karnataka.

Six months on, Iran war changed West Asia, but not how its architects hoped



Dubai: It's been six months since the United States and Israel attacked Iran with the perennial goal of transforming the Middle East through military force. The region has changed, but not in the way they had hoped. The Islamic Republic survived the assassination of its top leaders and weeks of heavy bombing, and found a potent form of leverage in the Strait of Hormuz. Gulf Arab nations saw worrying gaps open up in the American security umbrella they have relied on for decades — and some are looking at alternatives.

Israel has once again thrashed its enemies without defeating them, and after nearly three years of war in Gaza and new land seizures, is at risk of a generational rupture with the US, its closest ally. Hopes of normalising relations with Saudi Arabia — another enduring US and Israeli aspiration — have dimmed even further. When they attacked Iran on February 28, the US and Israel hoped to topple its clerical leadership and replace it with a pro-Western government. Instead, they've ended up with a "hardened and very radical regime," said Barbara Leaf, a former ambassador who served as assistant secretary of state for the Middle East in the Biden administration. "That is going to be exceptionally difficult to deal with, to say the least," she said. Iran's "confidence has grown over the months that it cannot only survive, but it can prevail, it can reset the regional landscape." In the runup to the war, the Islamic Republic appeared more vulnerable than at any point since Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded in 1980. Iran's currency had cratered, setting off some of the biggest anti-government protests in its history, which were brutally suppressed in January, with thousands killed. Israel and the US had pounded its military and nuclear sites during a 12-day war the previous summer, and its militant allies had been throttled in the wars that followed Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack out of Gaza. But the tide changed shortly after the initial US and Israeli strikes, as Iran's leaders were quickly replaced and its people — sheltering from the war — ignored exhortations from the attackers to rise up again. Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a critical trade route for oil and gas, and attacked Gulf countries hosting US troops, rattling the global economy. US President Donald Trump agreed to a ceasefire in April and signed a deal with Iran in June, which crumbled weeks later. Iran is now determined to exert permanent control over the strait, to use it to ward off future attacks and secure other concessions, while giving no ground on its disputed nuclear programme. It's a risky gamble, especially as the US tightens its blockade and

vows new sanctions on Iran's already battered economy.

"Iran has demonstrated that Hormuz gives it significant leverage, but prolonged disruption also hurts its neighbours, China, and the global economy, while encouraging alternatives to the strait," said Yoel Guzansky, an expert on Iran and the Gulf at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies. "Tehran's danger is confusing its ability to survive with victory and demanding more than its leverage can deliver," he said. Gulf nations doubt US security guarantees. For decades, the US has been committed to protecting wealthy Gulf oil exporters from external aggression, using a sprawling network of bases across the region. The arrangement helped secure global energy markets, deterred Saddam's Iraq and later Iran, and contributed to the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf nations becoming havens of prosperity in a volatile region. It's been tested before, but never like this. Iran retaliated against Israel, but it also trained its missiles and drones on Gulf nations that had hoped to stay out of the war. It struck US bases and critical energy infrastructure, stretching air defences and drawing down American supplies of sophisticated interceptors. Iran responded to attacks on its civilian infrastructure by striking its neighbours' desalination plants. That raised fears that a war begun without consultation with Gulf nations could lead to catastrophic attacks on their water and electricity. "The fact that the war began without a clear political objective and against the advice of key regional partners, and that there has not been clear evidence of a Plan B once the initial attacks failed to dislodge the Iranian regime, is likely to undermine confidence in the US across the region and may take some time to repair," said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a Gulf expert at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. Last month, Saudi Arabia entered into a new defence pact with Pakistan and Türkiye, an early indication that stalwart American allies might seek new security arrangements. Their options are limited, however. "The dilemma facing Gulf states is there is no viable alternative to the full range of defence and security networks with the US," Ulrichsen said. Israel batters its enemies but risks losing its closest friend. Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah launched missiles into Israel days after the outbreak of the war, triggering heavy retaliatory airstrikes and another ground invasion. Israel has reoccupied large parts of southern Lebanon, adding to its wider seizure of territory following the October 7 attack. Its many tactical victories have come at a mounting cost in international isolation. Israel has been widely accused of genocide in Gaza, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, all of which Israel adamantly denies. Of greater concern for Israel is its unprecedented erosion of support in the United States. That accelerated as some critics came to see it as having led the US into another Mideast war, something to which the Trump administration has at times lent credence. As the war settled into a stalemate over the summer, outspoken critics of Israel won some key Democratic primaries across the United States and more than half of House Democrats voted to cut aid to Israel. Israel has also come in for growing criticism from the right. In addition to deteriorating sentiment in the US, there's less chance of forming stronger ties with other countries. Normalisation of ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia appears increasingly distant. The conflicts that have swept across the region since October 7 have led officials in Saudi Arabia to view the current Israeli leadership as contributing to regional instability and not therefore a viable diplomatic partner at the moment," Ulrichsen said.

Opposition leaders slam govt over energy crisis, economic hardship, worsening law and order

Dhaka: Bangladesh's opposition leaders have rejected the BNP government's claims of success during its first 180 days in office, citing continuing energy crisis, frequent load shedding, industrial plant closures, rising unemployment concerns and the deteriorating law and order situation in the country, local media reported. Speaking at the national Parliament on Thursday, independent lawmaker Rumeen Farhana criticised the government and highlighted growing public frustration over the ongoing gas and electricity crisis, saying people sarcastically remark, "Here comes Tuku, there goes Tuku," referring to the country's Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood and the prolonged crisis. "Fuel prices are rising, there is an outcry over electricity, and gas is unavailable... this is the same government that promised one crore new jobs during the election. Yet within six months of coming to power, 62,000 people have lost their jobs. More than 900 factories have shut down. Will new jobs be created? Those who are employed, only God knows how long their jobs will last," Bangladesh's leading newspaper the Daily Star quoted Rumeen as saying.

She recalled that the government had set improving law and order, controlling commodity prices and ensuring energy security as three major priorities for its first 180 days. Referring to the worsening law-and-order situation across Bangladesh, Rumeen said, "It is difficult to speak about it. Our home minister either mocks the issue or hides behind wordplay." "But if you talk to ordinary people, you will hear them say that, just as the foreign ministry has three ministers, even if Bangladesh had 64 home ministers for 64 districts, the situation could hardly be any worse. That is the state of law and order," the lawmaker added. Meanwhile,



the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance also slammed the government, saying the latter could not claim success amid the crisis confronting people in their daily lives and the deteriorating law-and-order situation. Jamaat's Assistant Secretary-General Hamidur Rahman Azad made these remarks while addressing journalists following a meeting of the alliance leaders, "Public suffering, deterioration of law and order, and insecurity have increased in the country, Bangladeshi daily Prothom Alo quoted Hamidur as saying. He further said: "The electricity and gas crises, the closure of industrial plants, unemployment, the deterioration of law and order, and the failure to ensure people's security must be viewed as failures of the government." Highlighting the law and order situation, Hamidur cited figures on abductions, enforced disappearances and killings. He claimed that about 512 people had been abducted or subjected to enforced disappearance over nearly six months, while roughly 1,800 had been killed, without identifying the source of the data.

100 Chinese nationals remain missing on the Nepali side following Wednesday's mudslide. Among those out of contact, 127 Nepalis residing abroad are also missing, according to the authority. The latest update also said that those out of contact include 28 Nepal Police personnel, 45 Nepal Army personnel, 13 Armed Police Force personnel, 15 Customs Office staff and four Immigration Office staff. At least 73 people have been injured in the disaster, including 43 in Rasuwa, three in Dhading and 27 in Nuwakot, the authority said. A total of 13,295 security personnel have been mobilised for search, rescue and relief operations, including personnel from Nepal Police, the Nepal Army and the Armed Police Force. Rescue teams have so far rescued 3,353 people, while helicopters have also been deployed to evacuate stranded people and transport relief materials to affected areas. Meanwhile, Nepal's Prime Minister's Office has called on individuals and organisations wishing to assist in relief distribution or rescue operations to contact the District Administration Office in their respective districts and coordinate in advance before delivering or mobilising relief materials. "The concerned Chief District Officer's office will make integrated arrangements to deliver the materials directly to the affected locations based on regional needs .

Apple CEO Tim Cook announces donation for Nepal-Tibet flood relief and rebuilding



New Delhi: Apple CEO Tim Cook on Friday expressed solidarity with people affected by the devastating flash floods and mudslides that have caused widespread destruction along the Nepal-Tibet border, saying the company will make a donation to support relief and rebuilding efforts. The disaster began on Wednesday after the lower portion of a glacier in the Himalayas collapsed. The debris briefly blocked the river before giving way, sending floodwaters and mud downstream, killing hundreds of people, displacing others, and damaging villages, roads, bridges, and other infrastructure.

In a post on social media platform X, Cook said that our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragic flash floods and mudslides in Nepal and Tibet. "Our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragic flash floods and mudslides in Nepal and Tibet. Apple is making a donation

to support relief and rebuilding efforts on the ground," he stated. Cook did not disclose the amount of Apple's contribution or specify the organisations through which the funds would be channelled. The announcement comes as Nepal continues to grapple with the aftermath of a massive flash flood that swept through the transboundary Bhote Koshi River after an ice-rock avalanche in the Tibetan region triggered a sudden surge of water and debris. The disaster has devastated settlements, roads, bridges, hydropower facilities and other critical infrastructure in several districts of Nepal. According to the latest reports, the death toll in Nepal has continued to rise, with hundreds of bodies recovered from districts along the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli river systems. More than 800 people have also remained unaccounted for, including security personnel, tourists and local residents. The disaster has also affected foreign nationals, including Indian tourists. Nepalese authorities have been carrying out search, rescue and relief operations across the affected areas, while helicopters have been deployed to evacuate stranded people and deliver essential supplies. Earlier, the Indian Embassy in Nepal issued emergency contact numbers to assist Indian nationals affected by the floods. More than 100 Indians were among tourists initially reported missing in the affected region, although authorities have continued to verify and update the figures. The Nepal government has declared severely affected areas as disaster crisis-hit zones and launched efforts to restore damaged infrastructure and provide relief to displaced and affected communities. India, China and international institutions have also indicated support for rescue, relief and reconstruction efforts.

UK offers £5 million and emergency responders to flood-hit Nepal



London: The UK has offered £5 million and emergency responders to Nepal after flash floods in the country claimed hundreds of lives and left more than a thousand people missing, including around 33 British nationals. British Prime Minister Andy Burnham on Thursday described the scenes emerging from the region as "devastating" and urged British nationals caught up in the crisis to follow guidance from local authorities. He said the immediate action already taken by the UK included deploying consular support staff to the affected area to facilitate round-the-clock assistance for British nationals.

"It's a devastating picture that is emerging from what has happened in Nepal," Burnham told reporters during a visit to South Wales. "An offer has been made to send emergency responders to the region, but that's obviously a matter for the Nepalese government. We've also offered £5 million to help with the response effort." Obviously, there are a number of British nationals who are currently thought to be missing, and we'll be providing all the support we can to their families in what is a very distressing and devastating situation," he said. King Charles III and Queen Camilla said they were "heartbroken" to hear of the devastating flooding and expressed their "profound sympathy" with all those who have lost loved ones and those anxiously awaiting news of friends and relatives. "Many in the United Kingdom have strong, deep and personal ties to this part of the world," the royals said in a statement. "Our hearts also go out to the families of all the police and Armed Forces personnel who lost their lives while carrying out their courageous duty in the service of others, and we give our deepest thanks to those who have responded so selflessly in undertaking rescue efforts.

"Our special thoughts and prayers remain with all those affected and, as always, the United Kingdom stands ready to help support those in need," they said. The Prince and Princess of Wales, William and Catherine, also expressed their heartbreak at the "shocking" scale of the devastation. "We are thinking of everyone caught up in this terrible disaster. Our thoughts are especially with the families facing an unbearable wait for news and with the communities confronting such immense loss. "We are incred-

he world's deadliest glacier disasters

BEIJING, A glacial collapse triggered a massive flash flood on Wednesday in the Himalayan border areas of Nepal and adjoining Tibet, killing at least 270 people, with authorities fearing more casualties. Here are some of the deadliest glacial disasters in history. Stay up to date on the key companies, data, and decisions in the ESG world with the Reuters Sustainable Finance newsletter. Sign up here.

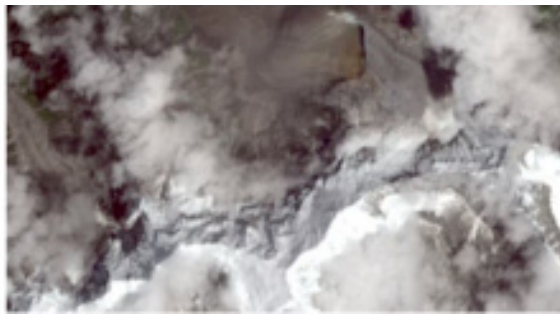
1941 — HUARAZ, PERUA glacial lake outburst flood destroyed one-third of the city of Huaraz in the high Andes of northern Peru, killing an estimated 5,000 people. It remains one of the deadliest glacier lake outbursts known in history.

1962 — RANRAHIRCA, PERUA colossal block of ice broke away from Peru's tallest mountain, Mount Huascarán, causing 10 million cubic metres of rock, ice and snow to slide down the mountain in just seven minutes. It buried the village of Ranrahirca and several nearby settlements under 12 metres of mud and debris, killing an estimated 4,000 people.

1970 — YUNGAY, PERUA magnitude 7.9 earthquake destabilised the northern wall of Mount Huascarán, triggering the deadliest glacier-related disaster in history. The mass of glacial ice and rock hurtled toward the towns of Yungay and Ranrahirca at speeds of up to 335 kph (208 mph), burying them in sludge. The avalanche killed an estimated 25,000 people, contributing to an overall earthquake death toll that exceeded 50,000. 1981 — CIRENMA CO, TIBET An overhanging glacial ice mass plunged into Cirenma Co, a glacial lake 14 km from the China-Nepal border, sending a huge wave over its moraine dam. The impact sent nearly 20 million cubic metres of water, ice and debris rushing down into Nepal. The incident killed an estimated 200 people in Nepal and led to up to \$4 million in damage to bridges, roads, a hydropower plant and other infrastructure.

2021 — CHAMOLI, INDIA A large section of ice dislodged from Ronti Peak near Nanda Devi, India's second-highest peak, sending a destructive torrent of rocks, dust and ice 1,500 metres down the valley. It triggered a massive flash flood in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand that killed more than 200 people, destroyed villages, and swept away two hydroelectric projects.

2026 — NEPAL-TIBET BORDER More than 1,000 people are missing across Nepal and Tibet after the lower section of a Himalayan glacier collapsed and crashed onto the valley floor, sending an avalanche of ice and rock down the Lhunde Khola river along the mountainous borders. The mudslide slammed into Gyirong port in Tibet and on into Nepal, creating high-speed flash floods that



washed away entire roads and power projects and inundated villages. Police are expecting the death toll to rise beyond 270.

NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani a 'radical' on 'wrong path', says US singer Mary Millben

Washington: Popular American singer Mary Millben has described New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani as a "radical" who is on the "wrong path", accusing him of embracing a socialist movement that does not represent American democratic ideals. "He is a radical, you know, that's what this DSA movement is," Millben said in an interview with IANS, referring to the Democratic Socialists of America. "There's just a bunch of radicals who don't understand how the world works. They don't understand how America works, and they certainly don't understand how New York works. He doesn't," she said. Millben was responding to questions about Mamdani's opposition to the New York visit of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat. The RSS leader is scheduled to address an August 29 gathering built around the themes of oneness and unity. The singer said Mamdani's criticism should be viewed in the context of his association with the socialist wing of the Democratic Party. "The real meat and potatoes of the controversy is Mamdani's association with the DSA," she said. "That is this democratic socialist organisation in the United States that is a part of the Democratic Party." Millben said she had several Democratic friends in elected office who did not subscribe to the socialist movement or its agenda. "But Mamdani has attached himself to that sect of the Democratic Party and that agenda," she said.

What is the One Nation One Subscription explained



The story so far: The Union Cabinet on Monday, November 25, 2024, approved the 'One Nation One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative for centralised access to research articles and journal publication for government higher education institutions and research and development (R&D) laboratories of the central government. The central government has allocated ₹6,000 crore for ONOS until 2027. All higher education institutions under central or State governments and R&D institutions of central government can avail the benefits of the initiative through a national subscription.

What is ONOS?

ONOS is a plan to consolidate researchers' subscriptions to prominent academic journals and other similar publications. Once in place, the ONOS initiative will provide access to journal articles to all individuals in India for one "centrally negotiated payment". The ONOS will replace individual institutional journal subscriptions. Subscriptions to scientific journals are a costly affair. According to research conducted by S. Chakraborty of the National Institute of Plant Genome Research, New Delhi, and other researchers and published in Current Science in April 2020, India spent around ₹1,500 crore on subscription for electronic and print journals in 2018. Institutions also spent around ₹30-50 crore on access to SCOPUS and Web of Science, which are popular citation databases. "One is looking at very large numbers in terms of financial outlays," the paper noted.

In a response to a query raised in the Lok Sabha in

August 2023, Subhas Sarkar, then Minister of State for the Education Ministry, said the Indian government spent around ₹995 crore on journal subscriptions in 2022. This included "the spending by the ten library consortia funded by different ministries/departments and self-subscriptions by individual government academic and R&D institutions". Overall, the total expenditure for 2019-2022 was estimated to be around ₹2,985 crore, Mr. Sarkar said. The ONOS initiative is also expected to include concessions on fees that authors have to pay to have their work published in open access journals. History of the scheme ONOS was recommended as one of the objectives of the Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2020 to facilitate knowledge-sharing on an "equal partnership basis". A plan for ONOS was presented at a stakeholder consultation in August 2021, which was endorsed by the concerned ministries. Another round of negotiations for ONOS took place on October 11-12, and October 25, 2023. The negotiations were held with 41 publishers, which included journals and citation databases, according to the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor. Popular STEM and social science publishers like Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley were a part of the process. In his Lok Sabha response in 2023, Mr. Sarkar said a core committee had been constituted to implement ONOS. This committee consists of a secretary each from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Science and Technology, and a scientific secretary, and will be chaired by the Principal Scientific Advisor of the government of India.

Challenges of implementation The ONOS core committee notified two more blocs for the transition to ONOS: the planning and execution committee (PEC) and the cost negotiation committee (CNC). The PEC includes library consortia coordinators and representatives from government academic and R&D institutions.

The main responsibility of this committee is to prepare a strategy to implement ONOS. The CNC is responsible to finalise membership terms and conditions and pricing details for the subscription. Its members are from the negotiation committees of the existing library consortia.

Why is there a row over climate finance?



The story so far: The 29th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP), arguably the most important of the UN's climate conferences, was scheduled to end on November 22, after 11 days of negotiations, and take a collective step forward in addressing rising carbon emissions. However, deliberations are expected to carry on beyond the deadline with several sticking points outstanding.

What is the significance of COP29?

Going into the talks, developing countries had stated that at least a trillion dollars per year from 2025-35 would be necessary to meet emission targets. This was seen to be the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance which refers to money that will be given to developing countries by developed countries to help the former meet their goals to transition away from the continued use of fossil fuels and curb greenhouse gas emissions. Developing countries have been repeatedly saying that the figure should be "trillions of dollars." To this end, developed countries have mobilised and transferred \$115 billion in 2021-22 — a controversial clause that has yet to be resolved in the universal agreement — but per the Paris Agreement, a new target higher than \$100 billion must be agreed upon by 2025. The talks in Baku were expected to conclusively agree upon a number but there continues to be a sharp split between developed and developing countries on the quantum and other basic aspects of what this NCQG should look like.

What do developing countries want?

This block of countries include China, India and the Group of 77 countries. There are also other coalitions such as the Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC), Least Developing Countries (LDC), Small Island Developing Countries (SIDS) etc. Nearly all developing countries fall into one or multiple groupings and while they have differences, they are largely agreed on the point that it is the developed countries that should pay the bulk of climate finance. More importantly, they specified that this money had to be provided not only to help countries meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) but also buffer against existing threats of climate change, and make good for climate damage already wrought. The NDCs are targeted, voluntary plans by all countries to reduce carbon emissions by certain quantities until 2030. The NCQG, the developing countries say,

should also reflect contributions by developed countries on the basis of their historical contribution to existing carbon concentrations in the atmosphere as well as their per capita GDP. To put this in perspective, it is important to note that even if all countries fulfilled their stated voluntary commitments, it would as of now only translate to a 2% cut, and this year — the latest scientific assessments suggest — carbon emissions will likely increase 0.8% over 2023.

What does the developed world say?

However developed countries, led by the European Union, say these demands are unreasonably high. They aver that "all actors" (read countries) should collectively work to hike up climate finance to \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035. While agreeing that they must "take the lead" they have only a set goal of \$250-300 billion by 2035 per year. Moreover this would consist of a "variety of sources," including "public and private, bilateral and multilateral, and alternative sources." This suggests that another major demand of the developing world, of ensuring most of the money is in the form of grants or low-cost loans, remains unmet.

Have any concrete agreements been made?

A week before the conference began, China had petitioned the Presidency of COP29 to discuss "climate-change related unilateral restrictive trade measures" at the conference. This is an unusual request as trade issues are discussed on forums such as the World Trade Organization. China proposed this as part of a grouping of countries called BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China).

The petition is primarily directed at a European Union proposal called the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which imposes a tax on products imported into the EU that don't conform to carbon-emission norms required by the Union. The CBAM is currently operating in a "transitional phase" but will come into full effect from January 1, 2026. The first day of the conference saw an agreement on carbon markets to be supervised by the UN. Such a market would allow countries to trade carbon credits — certified reductions of carbon emissions — among themselves and whose prices are determined as a consequence of emission caps imposed by countries. The market itself follows from a section in the Paris Agreement, called Article 6. Subsections within the Article spell out how countries can bilaterally trade carbon among themselves (Art 6.2) and participate in a global carbon market (6.4). Though most of the necessary nuts and bolts to make operational such a carbon market, supervised by a United Nations body, were in place since 2022, there were several niggles, particularly on ensuring that the carbon credits generated are genuine and its antecedents are transparent. While there is criticism among environmentalist groups that enough discussions on this didn't take place, this is supposed to be a mechanism to facilitate climate finance. India has been discussing bilateral deals to trade carbon with several countries. An agreement such as the one in Baku could be a catalyst, and activate India's own carbon-trading market.

How should India tackle its diabetes load?

The story so far: On International Diabetes Day (November 14), a paper published in The Lancet, based on a global study, recorded over 800 million adults living with diabetes, with more than half not receiving treatment. According to the study, the total number of adults living with either Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes in the world has surpassed 800 million — over four times the total number in 1990. Of this, over a quarter (212 million) live in India, with another 148 million in China. The estimate came as a bit of a shock, because the last scientific countrywide estimate by the Indian Council of Medical Research-INDIAB study last year had pegged the number at slightly over 100 million.

Why is there a discrepancy in numbers?

The nub of it is in the means used to measure blood sugar, experts have pointed out. The Lancet study, conducted by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), along with the World Health Organization (WHO), used data from over 140 million people (18+ years) culled from more than 1,000 studies in different countries. They estimated trends from 1990 to 2022 in diabetes prevalence and treatment for 200 countries and territories. As such they had to use what was available as data in these nations — picking fasting glucose or HbA1c or a three-month glycated haemoglobin average. The ICMR study, however, used a fasting measure and a two-hour post prandial value to come up with the number of people who have elevated blood sugar levels. It is the use of differing measures to estimate diabetes that has led to the variation. V. Mohan, chairman, Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, who was part of the ICMR-INDIAB study says, while a number of countries have moved to measuring HbA1c, India still sticks to the measure of the fasting and two-hour post prandial readings with an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT) as the gold standard. "If they had taken the OGTT values alone, then the number would be half of what was recorded," he says. "Using HbA1c, they preferred a single cut-off point to determine diabetes — 6.5 %. Even in those with normal glucose, a small percentage will spill over into the 6.5% HbA1c value, depending on whether individuals are 'fast' or 'normal glycolators'. Glycation is influenced by many things, including anaemia, and advancing age. Someone who is nondiabetic too, but is older, may have a high A1c value. In some earlier studies, when we used HbA1c, we found a doubling of the figures," he adds, reasoning out why the OGTT figures are considered the gold standard. However, he adds that a global study the size of what was attempted as part of this exercise would have to use the information already available in countries, and not all nations have OGTT fasting and post prandial values. Anoop Mishra, chairperson, Fortis CDOT Hospital for Diabetes and Allied Sciences, adds that sources of data are multiple here, thereby giving rise to apparent differences in total numbers. Also, he adds that Type 1 diabetes is a small proportion of the total diabetes cases in India, and it is Type 2 diabetes that poses problems for the future.

What are the areas of concern?

Whether 100 million or 200 million, the fact remains that India already has a large number of people requiring treatment for their diabetes, and who, as a consequence are prone to several life-threatening complications involving the heart, eyes, kidneys, and peripheral nervous system. Quibbling over numbers apart, the Lancet study must be seen as yet another reminder that in India, diabetes has grown — and is growing — across populations, and efforts should be made on a war footing to both prevent diabetes and treat persons with the condition. Another aspect that the study highlighted was the lack of access to treatment for people with diabetes. Senior author of the paper, Majid Ezzati, of the Imperial College, London, says: "Our study highlights widening global inequalities in diabetes, with treatment rates stagnating in many low- and middle-income countries, where numbers of adults with diabetes are drastically increasing. This is especially concerning as people with diabetes tend to be younger in low-income countries, and in the absence of effective treatment, are at risk of life-long complications, including amputation, heart disease, kidney damage or vision loss, or in some cases, premature death." "No country in the world can afford to treat patients when the complications of diabetes set in," explains Dr. Mohan. "Even if we assume we have 100 million people with diabetes and 20% of them move to kidney failure, then that is 20 million people who will need a kidney transplant. How are we going to help all those people?" Dr. Mishra invokes a war metaphor, to stress the urgency of the fight ahead for challenges that might seem, like the labours of Hercules, impossible to achieve and yet only require near superhuman effort. "Unless war-like efforts, using mass media for raising awareness on nutrition, physical activity,



are put in, and more legal provisions to cut down carbs and sugar-sweetened beverages, it will be a tall order to keep the numbers from rising," he says. Speaking ahead of World Diabetes Day, International Diabetes Federation Peter Schwarz spoke about prevention as the primary, crucial aspect in this game: "My heart is beating for prevention. And then the next step is prevention, and then prevention again." Dr. Mishra adds that nations such as India have a duty to focus on the vulnerable, lower middle class, semi-urban and rural people. "We have to majorly educate women since they are prone to obesity post pregnancy and have a heightened risk at menopause. We need to cut off the rising trend of obesity, [Abdominal obesity has been identified as one of the key causes of diabetes among Indians] with all these efforts. A long-term vision for about 10 years is required," he explains.

What can individuals do?

The Lancet paper identifies obesity and poor diets as important drivers of the rise in Type 2 diabetes rates. Diabetes rate was either already high or increased more in some of the regions where obesity was or became prevalent between 1990 and 2022, compared to many high-income countries, especially those in the Pacific and western Europe, where, in general, obesity and diabetes rates did not rise or rose by a relatively small amount. The writing is on the wall: a measure of mindful eating and exercising have a proven effect in preventing diabetes, and controlling blood sugar levels. The challenge for governments, however, is to make it possible for people to exercise these healthy choices, and for people to demand it of their rulers. As Anjana Ranjit, a collaborator on the ICMR-INDIAB study, says: "We need to see more ambitious policies that restrict unhealthy foods, make healthy foods affordable. Opportunities to exercise must be ensured, besides promoting safe places for walking and exercising, including access to public parks and fitness centres, subsidies provided for healthy foods and free, healthy school meals."

An experience unworthy of the franchise

This year has been a year of experimentation within the real-time strategy genre, with game makers exploring new takes, from the unremarkable Elder Scrolls: Castles to the highly impressive Heroes of History. Joining this lineup is Age of Empires Mobile, developed by TiMi Studio, the team behind Call of Duty Mobile. With TiMi promising a 4X experience aimed at introducing younger generations to the charm of the iconic franchise, fans had high expectations. Unfortunately, the result is a mishmash of game modes, offering little more than a glorified city builder that is weighed down by an endless stream of microtransactions. The heart and soul of Age of Empires (AoE) is unmistakably absent. The game begins with the tale of a holy sword that must be charged, following Princess Josephine on her quest to establish an empire. Right from the opening sequence, the game abandons the classic AoE controls in favor of a dated city-builder system, reminiscent of Clash of Clans. As you summon heroes and construct buildings to raise an army, it becomes evident that the game leaves no room for strategy, tactics, variety, or even basic army formations. Across the many game modes on offer, originality is scarce — you're either engaged in auto-battles or playing as Princess Josephine in combat sequences reminiscent of the classic Demon Star. While it's hard to justify playing a real-time strategy game that requires no actual strategy, it's equally important to acknowledge that the game does offer several game modes. Unfortunately, none of them are enjoyable or worth your time. In this scattered approach, what remains is an over-cluttered UI/menu system that provides little to no guidance on how to navigate or play the game effectively.

The Hows, Whys and the What Nows

Now that the Byju's chapter has come to a sad close with the founder himself declaring that the company is worthless, it is time to examine what went wrong with juggernaut? What does this teacher's journey teach us? Are there any early warning signals to watch for in the future to avoid such episodes from recurring, which leave a lot of employees unemployed, a lot of debts unpaid and several investors a lot poorer?

The damage and repercussions of such big failures are not yet fully understood by the sector but readers must keep in mind that while it might be the most prominent, Byju's is far from alone: many companies in the K12 edtech space have shut shop post pandemic and several have been in a rocky boat including large players like Unacademy and Vedantu. Layoffs have been a daily feature and several companies have been scrambling to keep themselves afloat. As per industry estimates, at least 25 Indian edtech startups, including all seven edtech unicorns, have fired close to 15,000 employees in the last couple of years.

This is a dramatic change from 2020 and 2021 when these very same businesses were the darlings of the media and money was flowing like water into the sector. The more aggressive players went onto a frenzied growth trip and on a shopping spree. But the bubble burst after the pandemic ended and many are now struggling with the new reality. It is worth examining how much of this debacle is self created and how much is outside anyone's control. Are there steps new entrepreneurs can take early in the game to ensure they don't end up the Byju's way or are debacles such as this inevitable? As the pandemic tightened its grip on India and the world in 2020, a lot of the K12 companies stared at a never before opportunity. Here was a country with 250-odd million school going children at home staring at a future ahead with no avenues for learning or entertainment. No matter which segment a company was previously operating in, this was too juicy an opportunity to let go by. A few things happened in combination to set off what we witnessed. The availability of cheap money made it possible so practically everyone entered every possible space and segment available: companies that were specialising in tutoring jumped headlong and with virtually no preparation into test prep or those who were focussed on math and science learning enhancement honed into coding and other fields. Buy, buy, buy became the mantra. In the case of Byju's for instance it bought White Hat Jr., Akash and Great Learning and while the latter two do have value even today, the first was probably not the ideal buy for the company in hindsight. Similar mistakes were made by almost everyone vested in the game. Almost all the players who have been in trouble have three or four factors in common. One, almost all started out with the kernel of a strong idea or proposition, which attracted a lot of easy money that was available at the time. It is the hunger to grow faster that has led some players astray or made them lose focus on their core proposition.

As a result, a chunk of the free cash in the hands of the founders went into securing or buying businesses which they felt could help them achieve a far higher revenue than organic growth would allow. Some of these buys added value and some boomeranged. Several of them were egged on by investors who had little on their mind barring how to quadruple their investment in as short a time frame as possible. Even at the time this frenzy was unfolding, many in the space warned that these good times may not last but these were brushed aside or ignored by those who could only see dollar bills. A large chunk of the money was also spent on indiscriminate hiring with extravagant salary packages, which had little to do with the new recruits previous experience or expertise. Industry representatives and others point out that even as one feels some sympathy for fired employees, they too are culpable as many of them left their more stable and perhaps lower paid jobs for the lure of better pay packages and ESOPs even as they knew that the boats they were boarding were rockier and in some cases far less ethical in approach. An almost equally large amount was being spent by these companies on drumming up deci-

bel levels so full page advertisements in dailies, sponsoring events that got them the maximum eyeballs like the IPL and other cricket related event, and videos and short clips on YouTube and other platforms exhorting customers to try their offerings became quite the rage. The fuzzier the business model and weaker the proposition on offer, the higher the amounts squandered on advertising and luring customers. Then, almost all these businesses were losing money, almost like it was going out of fashion. In many cases, the losses were so many multiples of the revenue of the company and many serious players in the sector and external observers were circumspect even back then on how such losses could ever be covered. They never were. An indiscriminate quest for growth led to them spending large amounts on acquiring businesses. Where they couldn't add a new vertical they saw a fish doing well in, these companies bought smaller fish to fill any possible gaps, often at valuations that made little sense. As these companies kept going in for a new series of funding at stratospheric valuations, the promoters or founders fell prey to their own game, began to believe in their own invincibility and felt that they were "too big to fail". Lower revenues, poor returns and other uncomfortable truths were brushed under the carpet with an overriding belief that all these small problems could be fixed at some stage. The hype that had been created around whatever they were offering strengthened this belief.

Some external factors too have added to the pain of the K-12 edtech industry. Other than the drying up of easy money, a return to the normal world of physical classes and interaction has made many parents aware of how important social and peer interaction is for any learning to happen. The same is true for tutoring and test prep. This has meant a return to physical classes across segments and many pure online players have ventured into physical classes, albeit belatedly. Another reason why higher ed edtech players don't face the same problems as K-12 is their market reach and accessibility. Many of the players can offer their programmes and courses across the globe with equal ease as syllabus or language barriers are far lower. Players like Simplilearn and Emeritus have 60% and 75% of their present learners overseas. This is also a luxury K12 doesn't enjoy since children typically follow the national curriculums and pedagogies and these vary widely across countries. Even before the pandemic, the value proposition for this segment was weaker since a lot of high quality free content (Khan Academy and similar offerings) is also available, both through a range of government and private platforms. Many experts in the education sector believe that the K12 dilemmas and problems have not been solved effectively by any player in India or globally as yet. Last but not the least, children are by nature more fickle and harder to discipline than those in the age groups that the higher-ed players target. Getting a child hooked and remaining there is a Herculean task as any parent will testify.

Word of mouth only takes you so far unlike with an adult who sees his contemporary better his situation after finishing an upskilling course or learning a new one. Neither are children interested in keeping up with the Joneses especially when it comes to learning math nor are they beset with anxieties for the future to the same degree. This ensures that the cost of acquiring and retaining a new learner is much higher for the K12 space.

Can it be avoided in the future?

The bubble that was created in the edtech sector was the sum of many parts and it is unlikely that all the same parts will come together to create a similar situation. However, founders and new entrepreneurs need to keep a few things in mind. A good idea is the biggest security you have. Sell your idea only when you have absolutely no other avenues for organic growth. Bring on an investor who sees value in the core proposition and is not looking only to grow his money 5X or 10X in as quick a time frame as possible. Use the money raised to grow in a disciplined fashion, finding a healthy rate of growth that doesn't make you trip upon your own pace.

U.S.-China trade truce leaves military-use rare earth issue unresolved, sources say



The renewed U.S.-China trade truce struck in London left a key area of export restrictions tied to national security untouched, an unresolved conflict that threatens a more comprehensive deal, two people briefed on detailed outcomes of the talks told Reuters. Beijing has not committed to granting export clearance for some specialised rare-earth magnets that U.S. military suppliers need for fighter jets and missile systems, the people said. The United States maintains export curbs on China's purchases of advanced artificial intelligence chips out of concern that they also have military applications. At talks in London last week, China's negotiators appeared to link progress in lifting export controls on military-use rare earth magnets with the longstanding U.S. curbs on exports of the most advanced AI chips to China. That marked a new twist in trade talks that began with opioid trafficking, tariff rates and China's trade surplus, but have since shifted to focus on export controls. In addition, U.S. officials also signalled they are looking to extend existing tariffs on China for a further 90 days beyond the August 10 deadline agreed in Geneva last month, both sources said, suggesting a more permanent trade deal between the world's two largest economies is unlikely before then. The two people who spoke to Reuters about the London talks requested not to be named because both sides have tightly controlled disclosure. The White House, State Department and Department of Commerce did not immediately respond to requests for comment. China's Foreign and Commerce ministries did not respond to faxed requests for comment. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday the handshake deal reached in London between American and Chinese negotiators was a "great deal," adding, "we have everything we need, and we're going to do very well with it. And hopefully they are too." And U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said there would be no "quid pro quo" on easing curbs on exports of AI chips to China in exchange for access to rare earths. China Chokehold But China's chokehold on the rare earth magnets needed for weapons systems remains a potential flashpoint. China dominates global production of rare earths and holds a virtual monopoly on refining and processing. A

deal reached in Geneva last month to reduce bilateral tariffs from crushing triple-digit levels had faltered over Beijing's restrictions on critical minerals exports that took shape in April. That prompted the Trump administration to respond with export controls preventing shipments of semiconductor design software, jet engines for Chinese-made planes and other goods to China. At the London talks, China promised to fast-track approval of rare-earth export applications from non-military U.S. manufacturers out of the tens of thousands currently pending, one of the sources said. Those licenses will have a six-month term. Beijing also offered to set up a "green channel" for expediting license approvals from trusted U.S. companies. Initial signals were positive, with Chinese rare-earth's magnet producer JL MAG Rare-Earth, saying on Wednesday it had obtained export licences that included the United States, while China's Commerce Ministry confirmed it had approved some "compliant applications" for export licences.

But China has not budged on specialized rare earths, including samarium, which are needed for military applications and are outside the fast-track agreed in London, the two people said. Automakers and other manufacturers largely need other rare earth magnets, including dysprosium and terbium. Big Issues Remain The rushed trade meeting in London followed a call last week between Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Trump said U.S. tariffs would be set at 55% for China, while China had agreed to 10% from the United States. Trump initially imposed tariffs on China as punishment for its massive trade surplus to the United States and over what he says is Beijing's failure to stem the flow of the powerful opioid fentanyl into the U.S. Chinese analysts are pessimistic about the likelihood of further breakthroughs before the August 10 deadline agreed in Geneva. "Temporary mutual accommodation of some concerns is possible but the fundamental issue of the trade imbalance cannot be resolved within this timeframe, and possibly during Trump's remaining term," said Liu Weidong, a U.S.-China expert at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. An extension of the August deadline could allow the Trump administration more time to establish an alternative legal claim for setting higher tariffs on China under the Section 301 authority of the USTR in case Trump loses the ongoing legal challenge to the tariffs in U.S. court, one of the people with knowledge of the London talks said. The unresolved issues underscore the difficulty the Trump administration faces in pushing its trade agenda with China because of Beijing's control of rare earths and its willingness to use that as leverage with Washington, said Ryan Hass, director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution. "It has taken the Trump team a few punches in the nose to recognise that they will no longer be able to secure another trade agreement with China that disproportionately addresses Trump's priorities," Hass said.

AI and biomanufacturing: can India's policies match its ambitions?

India stands at a pivotal juncture in its quest to harness artificial intelligence (AI) for biotechnology innovation. On one hand, initiatives like the BioE3 Policy and the IndiaAI Mission reflect a bold vision to position the country as a global leader in AI-driven biomanufacturing and ethical AI development. On the other, fragmented regulations and lagging safeguards threaten to undermine this progress. As India races to capitalise on AI's transformative potential, a critical question emerges: can it balance ambition with accountability? India's biomanufacturing sector is abuzz with possibilities. For decades, the country has been the world's go-to supplier for generic medicines and vaccines, a reputation it has built on scale, cost, and reliability. But now, as AI sweeps through the global life sciences industry, there's a sense that something much bigger is in the works. Many modern biomanufacturing facilities already have robots running precision tasks, biosensors streaming real-time data, and AI models quietly optimising everything from fermentation to packaging.

Biocon, one of India's largest biotechnology firms, is integrating AI to improve drug screening and its biologics manufacturing processes. By leveraging AI-based predictive analytics, Biocon will enhance the efficiency of fermentation and quality control, reducing production costs while maintaining global standards. Similarly, Bengaluru-based Strand Life Sciences uses AI in genomics and personalised medicine, helping accelerate drug discovery and clinical diagnostics. Their platforms use machine learning to analyse complex biological data, making it easier to identify drug targets and predict treatment responses. These efforts illustrate how AI is already reshaping biomanufacturing and healthcare delivery in India. It's not just about swapping out people for machines. AI is transforming the very DNA of biomanufacturing. Imagine a production line where sensors feed thousands of data points every second into an AI system that can spot the faintest hint of trouble, like a temperature drift, a pH blip or a subtle change in cell growth. Before a human operator even notices, the AI predicts a deviation, tweaks the process, and keeps the batch on track. Digital twins, which are virtual replicas of entire manufacturing plants allow engineers to run simulations, test changes, and foresee problems without ever touching a real fermenter. The result? Fewer failed batches, less waste, and products that consistently meet the gold standard for quality. For a country like India, where every rupee and every dose counts, these gains can be transformative. The Government of India has clearly recognised this potential. The BioE3 Policy, rolled out in 2024, is a playbook for the future. The policy lays out plans for state-of-the-art biomanufacturing hubs, biofoundries, and "Bio-AI Hubs" that will bring together the best minds in science, engineering, and data. There's real money on the table too, with funding and grants designed to help startups and established players alike leap from the lab bench to the market shelf. Equally important is the IndiaAI Mission, which is working alongside BioE3 to ensure India's AI revolution is both innovative and ethical. The Mission is as much about building technical capacity as about building trust. By supporting projects that focus on explainable and responsible AI — such as efforts to reduce algorithmic bias or frameworks for "machine unlearning" — the Mission is helping set the standards for how AI should be developed and deployed in sensitive sectors like health and biotechnology.

But here's where things get interesting and complicated. While India's ambitions are sky-high, its regulatory framework is still catching its breath. The rules that govern how new drugs, biologics, and manufacturing processes come to market were written for a different era. Today's AI-driven systems don't always fit neatly into those boxes. For example, when an AI model is used to control a bioreactor or predict the yield of a vaccine batch, how do we know it's reliable? Who checks that the data it was trained on is representative of India's diverse conditions, or that it won't make a catastrophic error if something unexpected happens?



These aren't just technical questions. They are matters of public trust and safety. Globally, the rules are changing. The European Union's AI Act, effective since August 2024, classifies AI tools into four risk tiers. High-risk applications like genetic editing face strict audits while the U.S. FDA's 2025 guidance mandates a seven-step framework for AI credibility. These models emphasise two things India lacks: context-specific risk evaluation and adaptive regulation. For instance, the FDA's 'Predetermined Change Control Plans' allow iterative AI updates that are critical for evolving cancer therapies without compromising safety. India needs this kind of risk-based, context-aware oversight as it moves from pilot projects to full-scale, AI-powered manufacturing.

Picture an Indian biotech startup that develops an AI platform to optimise enzyme production for the specialty chemicals industry. This sector is already worth \$32 billion (Rs 2.74 lakh crore) and growing fast. If this AI is trained only on data from large, urban manufacturing sites, it might fail to account for the quirks of smaller plants in semi-urban or rural areas, like differences in water quality, ambient temperature or even local power fluctuations. Without clear standards for dataset diversity and model validation, the tool could recommend process tweaks that work beautifully in Bengaluru but flop in Baddi. The result: lost revenue, wasted resources, and a blow to India's reputation for quality. This is why the context of use and credibility assessment that are core pillars in the FDA's approach are so important. We need to be clear exactly what question the AI is answering, how it's being used, and how strict our oversight should be, depending on the risks involved. Of course, biomanufacturing is only one piece of the puzzle. Imagine a future where India not only supplies 60% of the world's vaccines but also designs them using algorithms that predict viral mutations. A future where farmers in Bihar receive AI-generated advisories to combat pest outbreaks and patients in rural Tamil Nadu are diagnosed by tools trained on India's genetic diversity. This isn't science fiction — it's the promise of AI-driven biomanufacturing, a field where India is making bold strides. Yet beneath this optimism lies a critical question: can our policies keep up with science?

With great power comes... The intersections are multiplying. In drug discovery, AI platforms can screen millions of compounds in silico, slashing the time and cost needed to find new treatments. Molecular design tools are helping researchers fine-tune drug candidates for maximum efficacy and minimal side effects. Clinical trials that were once notorious for delays and inefficiencies are being streamlined by AI systems that optimise patient recruitment and trial design, making studies faster and more representative. Even the supply chain is getting an upgrade: AI-powered predictive maintenance keeps manufacturing lines humming, while demand forecasting ensures that medicines reach the right place at the right time, reducing shortages and waste. Another unique application of AI is Wipro's work in developing AI-powered solutions for pharmaceutical companies to streamline drug discovery. By combining machine learning algorithms with computational biology, Wipro has helped reduce the time required to identify viable drug candidates. Similarly, Tata Consultancy Services is leveraging AI in its 'Advanced

India needs a sincere aircraft accident investigation



In a country where every life lost in an aircraft accident should result in justice, transparency, and reform, we find ourselves, instead, battling a system that is seemingly designed to obscure the truth. On paper, India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is a statutory and autonomous investigative body. In reality, it is anything but independent. It functions as an office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), the very same authority that oversees airlines, regulates aviation through the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), and, crucially, appoints the leadership of the AAIB and the DGCA. This structure presents an apparent conflict of interest. In railway accidents, investigations are typically carried out by the Commissioner of Railway Safety or, occasionally, a judicial authority, and not by the Ministry of Railways. Although, technically, under the MoCA, the Commissioner is functionally independent of railway operators, this ensures that those running trains are not the ones investigating the derailments. But in aviation, the MoCA controls airline operations and accident investigations.

The accident on June 12, 2025, at Ahmedabad was not just an operational occurrence. It was a full-fledged aircraft accident that should serve as a wake-up call. Is India's aviation safety framework keeping pace with its exponential growth? There have been a number of helicopter crashes, accidents involving flying schools, there was a weather-related incident in May 2025 that affected a Delhi-Srinagar IndiGo flight, and, in addition, troubling ground handling lapses, that include the cancellation of ground handler Çelebi Aviation's permit over security concerns. These are not isolated incidents but point to something more profound. Are we identifying and fixing risks before they become headlines? Or are we merely reacting? We cannot keep firefighting. We need a system that prevents failures, and not just manages the damage. The high-level committee appointed to investigate the Air India AI171 crash must go beyond reviewing a single event. It must recognise that India's aviation ecosystem has outgrown the current National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP). In a complete revamp of the NCAP, 'safety' should be deeply woven into every regulation, operation and decision. That is how we prepare for the responsibilities that come with being one of the largest aviation markets in the world. A report that told inconvenient truths The Air Marshal J.K. Seth Committee Report in 1997 was India's most honest and far-reaching review of aviation safety. But it was quietly buried because it told the truth. It highlighted key systemic flaws: fragmented oversight; lack of independence; inadequate training and resources, and regulatory capture. These issues remain largely unresolved. Any new committee must reckon with these truths and not repeat the pattern of superficial reviews and buried reports. Too many accident reports have internal contradictions. In an accident in 2001, that claimed the life of a former Union Minister, 'entry into the cloud' was

cited as the cause, while the meteorology section confirmed that there were no clouds around. Was it a mistake or does it point to something else? Overloading was evident in the Indian Airlines crash (IC491) in Aurangabad in 1993. Yet, the final report did not spell it out so clearly. This writer has pursued data for years in another case of suspected overloading on an Air India Express flight (IX611), in October 2018, from Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu to Dubai, only to be denied access. What is being protected? The Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017 make one point clear — that the purpose of an investigation is to prevent future accidents, and not to assign blame. Yet, law enforcement and courts routinely misuse the AAIB's findings. The police, lacking the expertise and jurisdiction in aviation matters, rely almost entirely on the AAIB's reports, treating them as conclusive. The AAIB's findings are meant for safety learning, and not legal prosecution. When these reports are interpreted outside their technical scope, truth becomes a casualty. Investigating officers unfamiliar with aviation treat the AAIB's "probable cause" as a legal verdict. The judiciary focuses on what is immediately visible, while the AAIB is meant to dig deeper. But both often end up blaming the pilot, the case is closed and the truth is left behind. Why is pilot error so often the conclusion? Because it is convenient. Legally, it simplifies matters. From an insurance standpoint, a conclusion of pilot error helps expedite payouts. It closes the loop quickly, shielding other accountable entities — airlines, maintenance providers, and air traffic control, from scrutiny. The pilot becomes the system's scapegoat, even in death. A front to protect people Too often, accident investigations in India are reshaped to protect institutions, and not the people they serve. The MoCA holds all the levers, policy, regulation, appointments and investigations. With that much control, real accountability becomes a myth. Each time a family receives a hollow, contradictory report instead of honest answers, the system not only fails but also breaks faith. At times, the structure is so well-insulated from responsibility that it has perfected the art of getting away with murder — through delay, dilution and the quiet deletion of truth. The International Civil Aviation Organization's State Safety Briefing (2022) says that India has had zero fatal accidents recently. But 21 lives were lost in the Kozhikode air crash in August 2020. The recommendations in the investigation and those of the committee to review the accident report have not been implemented duly. There is no accountability. No systemic change. Just silence. India cannot claim global leadership in aviation while hiding behind data. Absolute safety comes from integrity. These are the steps needed. First, move the AAIB and DGCA to an independent statutory body that reports to Parliament. Second, stop having parallel committees that bypass or undermine established investigative bodies. Third, take legal steps to prevent the AAIB's findings from being used in criminal trials unless independently validated. Fourth, amend Rule 19(3) of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, which holds the powers to penalise a pilot for any mistake. There is a need to protect a pilot with a genuine no-blame culture, unless gross negligence is proven. Fifth, appoint an independent ombudsman to review how accident reports have been handled and mishandled. It is not that India lacks the talent or the tools to investigate accidents. What it lacks is the institutional courage to tell the truth. Therefore, this writer's plea. Have an honest, sincere aircraft accident investigation; one that shows that India values truth and precious lives over image. Let that be India's legacy for those lives lost, not only in the skies but also in the silence. Captain Amit Singh is an aviation safety expert, author, and Royal Aeronautical Society Fellow, pioneering human factors and cultural integration in aviation

How Vani Kapoor rediscovered her authentic golf self and reclaimed the joy of playing

Vani Kapoor's golf career started in Delhi with something as simple as wanting to spend more time with her father on Sunday afternoons. "We didn't think it would become a profession or anything," she said. Vani is on a high, having won the eighth leg of the HWPGT at the Bengaluru Golf Club (BGC) last week. "This is probably the best start I have had to the year in my entire career," she said, in reference to claiming four of the eight legs. The 31-year-old is the runaway leader on the HWPGT Order of Merit, with total winnings of ₹11,88,000.

The path to this latest title was not easy. She was trailing early in the third round, but key moments — a birdie on the ninth and a hot streak of birdies on holes 12 through 15 — put her back in the lead. "I just kept rolling, and by the time I reached the final two holes, I knew I had a cushion. I just needed to finish the job." Vani turned professional in 2012 at just 18 years old and quickly became a dominant force on the Indian domestic circuit. Her debut season brought three victories, a sign of things to come. Since then, she's steadily built a stellar record.

In 2019, she became the first Indian woman to earn a card on the Australian Ladies PGA Tour. That milestone opened doors to the Ladies European Tour (LET) and the prestigious Vic Open. She continued to rise and, in 2022, posted a career-best tied-third finish at the Big Green Egg Open in the Netherlands, ending five under par overall. In the 2025 season of the HWPGT, Vani opened with runner-up finishes in the second and third legs, followed by a dominant three-win streak in the fourth, fifth, and sixth legs. Ahead of her latest win, there was pressure, no doubt. But Vani remained unfazed. All-around player: Vani sees her long and short games as strengths, but putting is her biggest asset. She might not be the longest driver on the circuit, but her consistency off the tee and sharp play inside 100 yards makes her a regular on the leaderboard. All-around player: Vani sees her long and short games as strengths, but putting is her biggest asset. She might not be the longest driver on the circuit, but her consistency off the tee and sharp play inside 100 yards makes her a regular on the leaderboard. | Photo Credit: Getty Images "Everyone here is a good golfer, and anyone can have a great day. Whatever my result, it's a by-product of my own effort, and that's the only thing I can possibly control," said Vani. That kind of composure doesn't come out of nowhere. Vani identifies working with a sports psychologist, which she began doing seven years ago, as a turning point. "A few things were bothering me, so I got that out of the way and got more clarity," she said. Vani called her performance in 2024 average — an honest self-assessment for someone used to being at the top. She plied her trade primarily on the LET, where she managed only one top-ten finish. Vani competed in three HWPGT events and won once. "Something had to change. I took some time off and worked on myself from all angles," she said. Vani attributes her 2024 season to internal pressure and expectations. "I tried very hard to do things the right way while keeping certain people in mind. What really changed was that I gave myself an opportunity to just play for myself, without any expectations internally or from other people, and just



go back to basics. It's nice that everything is coming together now. I have started enjoying the game so much more, which I feel is the most important thing," she said. Vani sees her long and short games as strengths, but her putting is her biggest asset. While she might not be the longest driver on the tour, her consistency off the tee and sharp play inside 100 yards makes her a regular on the leaderboard. "I'm not one of the longest hitters, but I'm very accurate. So, I don't really have to worry that much off the tee. I've worked more on my short game, 100 yards in, to compensate. Putting has always been a strong point that I've had," she said. Off the course, Vani focuses equally on training both body and mind. Her approach blends mental clarity with a practice routine that's tailored to her needs. "You have to love the way you practise. It has to be your way — not someone else's version of what's right," she said. Her fitness regimen includes strength training to prevent injury and maintain swing-speed. This isn't just about being physically strong; it's about endurance. And then there's the gym, of course. You must work on strength. We swing at such fast speeds — you have to always be consistent and injury-free. We also need stability," Vani said. Need of the hour: Vani strongly feels that women's golf requires better structural support and more visibility. 'It's not just about us players,' she says. 'Our sponsors need visibility too.' Need of the hour: Vani strongly feels that women's golf requires better structural support and more visibility. 'It's not just about us players,' she says. 'Our sponsors need visibility too.' | Photo Credit: Getty Images Tournament days can stretch long, and one loose shot late in the round can cost a title. Vani explained that staying in good physical shape helps train her mind to stay focused on the course. Vani's mindset was tested when she returned to the BGC, a course that she hadn't played in for six or seven years. "I didn't remember anything," she said with a laugh. "I was going on the wrong tee boxes and wrong greens during the practice round. I told my caddy, 'Just get me to the right tee and the right green — I'll handle the rest.' Now over a decade into her professional career, Vani is still charting new territory. Vani has her sights set on a good show at the Hero Women's Indian Open, which will be held at her home course of DLF Golf and Country Club later this year. Asked about her long-term goals, Vani stated that she would like to win a medal at the 2028 Olympics. She sees the sport's future in India with cautious optimism. "Coaching has changed so much from when I started.

All you need to know about: cervical cancer



The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. Cervical cancer starts when the cells in the cervix begin to grow abnormally. These changes in the cells often take years to develop, which is why regular check-ups are very important. Early changes, known as precancerous conditions, can be detected through a routine pap smear. Cervical cancer is a major health issue for women around the world. However, it is one of the easiest cancers to prevent and treat if diagnosed early. With the right knowledge about its causes, symptoms, and prevention, women can reduce the risk of cervical cancer. The main cause of cervical cancer is a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV). This virus spreads through sexual contact. Most people who get HPV never even know they have it because the body usually fights it off on its own. But sometimes, the virus doesn't go away and can cause abnormal changes in the cervix that might turn into cancer later.

Certain factors increase a woman's risk of cervical cancer. Unprotected sexual intercourse, smoking, hormonal contraceptives, and sexually transmitted diseases can all contribute to this risk.

In the early stages, cervical cancer usually doesn't cause symptoms, which is why regular screenings are vital. As it progresses, women might notice signs such as an unusual discharge or bleeding between periods, bleeding after sexual intercourse, or bleeding after menopause. Other symptoms can include pelvic pain, pain during sexual intercourse, heavier-than-usual periods, or unexplained weight loss. If you have any of these symptoms, it is recommended to see a doctor right away. Cervical cancer screening is essential for prevention and early detection. The two main tests used are the Papanicolaou (Pap) test and the HPV

screening. The pap test looks for abnormal changes in cervical cells, while the HPV screening checks for the virus that can cause these changes. Doctors recommend that women start getting pap tests at age 21 and continue every few years based on their age and medical history. For women aged 30 to 65, combining a pap test with an HPV test every five years is another effective option. Regular screenings can help catch any issues early, making treatment more successful and significantly reducing the risk of developing cervical cancer. When it comes to cervical cancer, one of the best ways to prevent it is by getting the HPV vaccine. This vaccine works best when given before exposure to the virus, usually between the ages of 9 and 12. However, it is still helpful for people up to age 45 and, in some cases, even older. Boys also receive the HPV vaccine, as it not only protects them from penile, anal, and throat cancers, but also contributes to reducing the overall transmission of the virus, benefiting public health.

Healthy habits also go a long way in reducing the risk of cervical cancer. Quitting smoking, eating a balanced diet, practicing safe sex, and staying physically active can all help. It is also crucial to follow up on any abnormal test results and get regular check-ups. If a woman is diagnosed with cervical cancer, treatment will depend on how far the cancer has progressed. In the early stages, surgery may be enough to remove the cancer. For more advanced cases, radiation therapy or chemotherapy (or both) may be given. These treatments work to destroy cancer cells and stop them from spreading. Being diagnosed with cervical cancer can feel overwhelming, but it is important to remember that many women recover and go on to lead full, healthy lives. Having support from family, friends, and healthcare providers can make a big difference. There are also many support groups and organisations that offer help and resources for women and their families during this time. Early detection through regular screenings, HPV vaccinations, and healthy lifestyle choices can significantly reduce risks. By staying informed about the importance of these measures, women can take proactive steps to protect their health and prevent cervical cancer. Scheduling regular screenings and discussing the HPV vaccine with your doctor are crucial actions to take. Early detection can lead to more effective treatments, improve outcomes and save lives. Together, we can work towards a future where cervical cancer is no longer a threat. Empower yourself today by prioritising your health and making informed decisions that can lead to a healthier tomorrow.

With high ultraviolet index reported over parts of Kerala, concerns rise over health impacts

EMS News Agency, August 29

Several districts in Kerala have been reporting a high ultraviolet index (UVI), which is the level of UV radiation from the sun on a scale of one to 11, over the past few days, raising concerns about its possible health impacts. According to the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), Munnar in Idukki recorded a UVI of 12 and Konni in Pathanamthitta recorded 11 on March 17. Kottarakkara in Kollam and Changanassery in Kottayam reported 10, Ponnani in Malappuram recorded nine, and Thrithala in Palakkad eight. Bepore in Kozhikode, Kalamassery in Ernakulam, Vilappilsala in Thiruvananthapuram, and Chengannur in Alappuzha reported seven each. Mananthavady in Wayanad and Ollur in Thrissur recorded six each. The high UVI is recorded between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The World Health Organization says that a purple alert needs to be issued if the radiation level is at 11 and above (extreme), and there are increased health risks. If it is between eight and 10 (very high), a red alert is issued, calling for extra precautions. If the UV index is between six and seven (high), an orange alert is issued and precautions will have to be taken.

T. Jayakrishnan, public health expert, says that high exposure to UV rays may lead to a gradual loss of skin elasticity, cause premature ageing, wrinkling, and skin pigmentation. It can damage the skin, eye, and the body's defence mechanism. On the skin, it can lead to sun tan, sun burn, redness, swelling, blisters, allergic reactions, and itching. Photo-toxic reactions may occur in people who use certain cosmetic products, soaps, and herbal remedies. On a long-term basis, there is a possibility of skin cancer and melanoma, a type of tumour. UV ray exposure may also suppress the immunity, affecting the body's ability to defend certain diseases. There are two types of UV rays: UVA rays and UVB rays. The former penetrate deep into the skin and even to the blood vessels. Sun burn is mainly caused by UVB rays. They also stimulate melanin pigmentation, resulting in sun tan marks, which can last forever.

Dr. Jayakrishnan points out that a small amount of



UV rays could reach the retina of the eyes too. This penetration could be severe in the case of children. Prolonged exposure could damage the retina at a later stage. "Photokeratitis, a painful condition of the eye, and pterygium, a non-cancerous growth that occurs on the conjunctiva, are some of the other possibilities," he says. Idukki, Palakkad, and Malappuram had experienced high UVIs of 11 on March 14; Kollam recorded 10, and Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode had a UV index of nine. Dr. Jayakrishnan says that dark-skinned people genetically have enough melanin to protect them from the sun. Wearing sunglasses would help. "Those working in sand banks, waterbodies are more at risk due to reflections. Fishermen and those engaged in the construction of buildings and roads need to be careful. Hats and UV protected umbrella can be used," he adds. According to a study published in the journal Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, covering the period between 2004 and 2022, more than 79% of the UV measurements in Kerala were in the 'very high' and 'extreme' categories. High values were noticed during the southwest monsoon and in the summer. Thrissur, Palakkad, parts of Ernakulam, Idukki, parts of Kollam, and Thiruvananthapuram were found to be more vulnerable in terms of high UV exposure. A cyclical increasing and decreasing pattern was shown, with peaks in March, April and September and lower indices in June, July and December.

Telangana health budget up by 8%, focus on dialysis and medical education

The Telangana government has allocated ₹12,393 crore for the Health, Medical, and Family Welfare Department in the state budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, marking an increase of ₹925 crore (8% increase) from the previous year's allocation of ₹11,468 crore. The allocation also surpasses the ₹12,161 crore budgeted by the BRS government in 2023-24. Presenting the budget on Wednesday (March 19, 2025), Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka underscored the government's commitment to strengthening the healthcare sector and enhancing medical services. Since December 2023, the government has disbursed ₹1,215 crore to various hospitals under the AarogyaSri scheme, reflecting a 50% increase compared to previous allocations, he noted. The scheme aims to provide uninterrupted healthcare access to 2.84 crore citizens across



Telangana. "Additionally, to secure increased funding under the National Health Mission (NHM), the state government has ensured the timely release of its share, thereby maximising financial support from the central government," he said. As part of its efforts to improve critical care services, the state has expanded free dialysis facilities to 102 centres, benefiting over one lakh patients and alleviating the financial burden by ₹48 crore. To fur-

ther extend these services, 95 new dialysis centres have been sanctioned. Emergency medical response has also been bolstered with the deployment of 136 new ambulances in mandals that previously lacked such services. Medical education and infrastructure development have been given a boost with the addition of 400 MBBS seats in newly established medical colleges. The government has also sanctioned 16 new nursing col-

leges and 28 allied health sciences colleges, creating opportunities for 2,640 additional students to pursue medical education annually.

The government has committed ₹2,700 crore for the construction of a modern Osmania General Hospital (OGH) medical facility on a 27-acre site, aiming to enhance healthcare services and upgrade infrastructure at the century-old institution, the minister said.

Study finds prior flu exposure may boost immunity against H5N1 bird flu

New Delhi: Younger adults and children would benefit more from H5N1 vaccines, even those not tailored specifically to the current strain circulating in birds and cattle, finds a study. Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania in the US showed that prior exposures to specific types of seasonal influenza viruses promote cross-reactive immunity against the H5N1 avian influenza virus.

In the study, published in the journal Nature Medicine, older adults who were exposed to seasonal flu viruses that circulated before 1968 were found to be more likely to have antibodies that bind to the H5N1 avian flu virus. "We know that early childhood influenza exposures can elicit immune responses that last a lifetime," said Scott Hensley, Professor of Microbiology at the varsity. "We found that antibody responses that were primed by H1N1 and H3N2 viruses decades ago can cross-react to H5N1 avian viruses circulating today. Most of these cross-reactive antibodies cannot prevent infections, but they will likely limit disease if we have an H5N1 pandemic," he added. H5N1 viruses have circulated in birds for many years, but a new version — clade 2.3.4.4b H5N1 virus — emerged more recently and has since spread among cattle. This current H5N1 strain does not bind

well to receptors in the human upper airway, but widespread circulation in mammals could lead to mutations that help the virus infect human airway cells and increase transmission. If this occurs, H5N1 could potentially start spreading from human to human. Current influenza vaccines primarily elicit antibodies that recognise hemagglutinin proteins and prevent them from infecting a person's cells. The team tested blood samples from over 150 people born between 1927 and 2016 for antibodies targeting the stalk proteins of different influenza viruses, including H5N1.

They found that blood samples from older adults born before 1968 who were likely first exposed to H1N1 or H2N2 in childhood had higher levels of antibodies that could bind to the stalk of the H5N1 virus. They found that an individual's birth year was closely linked to the amount of H5N1-fighting antibodies in their blood. Young children who were not exposed to seasonal flu viruses possessed low levels of antibodies that could fight H5N1. Hensley said that in cases of an H5N1 pandemic, all age groups will likely be highly susceptible. But, the highest disease burden may be in children. "If this is the case, children should be prioritised for H5N1 vaccinations," the expert said.

What made Boeing 787s popular – and later a cause for concern



Air India flight AI171 bound for London from Ahmedabad crashed five minutes after taking off just outside the Ahmedabad airport. The flight had 230 passengers and 12 crew. Videos of the incident showed a large orange fireball erupting moments after the crash at the site in Meghaninagar. The exact cause has yet to be identified or ascertained.

The AI171 flight was a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, a wide-bodied aircraft powered by twin jet engines. The design, introduced in the late 2000s, was part of the wider aircraft industry's trend towards aircraft with more electrical parts in order to improve operational efficiency. Earlier this year, Boeing celebrated its 787 aircraft fleet worldwide carrying 1 billion passengers in 30 million flight-hours. There are currently more than 1,170 aircraft of this variety operating around the world. Air India 171 represents the first hull loss involving a 787-8 flight. When it was first introduced in 2011, the 787-8 was touted as a gamechanger because it had specific advantages that promised to move the industry in a new direction. Later, however, its reputation came to be marred by problems with the carbon composites used for the aircraft, grounding orders over lithium-ion battery packs onboard, and concerns over the company's quality control practices. In fact, on June 12, U.S. President Donald Trump's new nominee to head the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Bryan Bedford, vowed to hold Boeing accountable over "the failure of a key safety system tied to two fatal Boeing 737 MAX crashes in 2018 and 2019 that killed 346 people." Dreamliner 787-8 aircraft use the General Electric GEnx or the Rolls Royce Trent 1000 engines. Both these engines are turbofans: they combine an air-breathing jet engine with a ducted fan. Air India flight AI171 had been using the General Electric Engines. The engine design is an important reason for 787-8 aircraft's higher fuel-efficiency per seat (over other aircraft at the time of its introduction). The other factors contributing to this feature include the use of carbon composite structures of lower weight and low-drag aerodynamics. Thanks to the engines, a 787-8 aircraft burnt around 20% less fuel than earlier twinjet models of a similar size. This allowed the aircraft to undertake nonstop flights between cities with lower passenger traffic than that required to fill Boeing 777 or Boeing 747 aircraft. In fact, Boeing had explicitly marketed this change in efficiency as a way for carriers to "open new, nonstop routes". The use of these particular engines was also responsible for the 787-8 being called an "electric aircraft". Before the 787-8, it was typical for aircraft to divert some compressed air from the engines to hydraulic systems that in turn powered onboard facilities like maintaining cabin pressure. The 787-8 instead powered aircraft from generators (which drew power from the engine) and auxiliary systems. Thus engines that generated around 250 kW onboard a Boeing 767 had to produce around 1,500 kW on board a Boeing 787-8. This in turn led to the use of larger starter-generators, high-capacity distribution boxes, and a strict new battery safety regime. It also reduced the specific fuel burn by around 4%. How the engines work During flight, the engines draw air from the surrounding atmosphere into a duct. There, a large fan slightly increases their pressure. Then about 20% of the air passes through the core of the duct into the turbine while the remaining 80% bypasses the core and flows in a separate channel around it. The air mass that flows through the turbine is pressurised in two stages — first in the low-pressure compressor and then in the high-pressure compressor. As the air is compressed by up to 40-times more than the surrounding air, it's sent into the combustion chamber. Here, it's sprayed with jet fuel and the mixture is set aflame, producing a high-speed stream of gas at 1,600° C. A two-spool, high-bypass turbofan. A: Low-pressure spool; B: high-pressure spool; and C: stationary components. 1. Nacelle; 2. front fan; 3. low-pressure compressor; 4. high-pressure compressor; 5. combustion chamber; 6. high-pressure turbine; 7. low-pressure turbine; 8. core nozzle; and 9. fan nozzle. A two-spool, high-bypass turbofan. A: Low-pressure spool; B: high-pressure spool; and C: stationary components. 1. Nacelle; 2. front fan; 3. low-pressure compressor; 4. high-pressure compressor; 5. combustion chamber; 6. high-pressure turbine; 7. low-pressure turbine; 8. core nozzle; and 9. fan nozzle. | Photo Credit: Richard Wheeler (CC BY-SA) The high-energy gas emerging from the combustion chamber is flowed over the high-pressure turbine, which spins very fast, generating electric power. Energy from this stage is used to drive the high-pressure compressor at about 10,000 rpm. Then the gas passes through the low-pressure turbine, generating more power; and energy from this stage is used to drive the low-pressure compressor and the front fan (~3,000 rpm). Finally the gas exits via the core nozzle at the rear. The nozzle is shaped such that the air is accelerated as it moves towards the rear. The nozzle through which the air bypassing the turbine is also shaped to have the same effect. In fact, the latter process generates the bulk of the thrust. Splitting the incoming

air mass into two streams allows the front fan and the compressors to spin at different speeds, separately maximising their efficiency. The mixer ducts and the shaped nozzle edges also blend the hot core and cool bypass streams and control the way in which they interact with the surrounding air. The result is lower shear noise. This is important because the aircraft needs less noise-insulating material as a result, further lowering its weight and improving fuel efficiency. It also improved the in-flight passenger experience. Wired reported in 2009 that Boeing also installed a "computer-controlled turbulence-reduction system to ... provide an eight-fold reduction in the number of people experiencing motion sickness." This was achieved by sensors around the aircraft that tracked changes in air pressure and sent signals to structures on the wings that controlled the craft's vertical motion. In the 2000s, Airbus was promoting its A380 — a large, voluminous double-decker sporting luxury amenities — as the future of passenger flights because the company had also assumed the industry's hub-and-spoke model of travel would continue. Here, passengers take flights to large airports (the hubs) and from there fly in smaller aircraft to smaller airports (the spokes). This in turn presumed high traffic between the hubs, thus the A380 could seat 500-800 passengers. Boeing overturned this assumption with the 787-8 design, which focused less on lowering ticket prices and more on reducing travel time. In 2009, the delivery of the first 787-8 units had been delayed by two years. One reason was that Boeing was no longer making the aircraft body with aluminium and switched instead to carbon-based plastic composites for the weight advantage. For the first units, Boeing's suppliers had been expected to deliver the aircraft's fuselage and wings with all the systems installed, with Boeing simply having to snap them together on its assembly floor. But this hadn't been the case: the New York Times reported then that the suppliers had been "too overwhelmed". The delay in deliveries resulted in at least 60 orders being cancelled. Then, in early 2013, commercial air travel regulators in Chile, India, Europe, Japan, Qatar, and the U.S., among others, ordered all their Boeing 787 aircraft to be grounded after a new kind of battery onboard two aircraft, one each in the U.S. and Japan, failed. The regulators said the grounding order would be in effect until they could determine the cause(s) of failure. The issue was considered serious because of the 787's greater dependence on electric power. Onboard the aircraft that had made an emergency landing in Japan, a corrosive liquid had appeared to leak out of a lithium-ion battery pack. There were also significant quality control issues in 2019 that forced Boeing to slow production and altogether cease delivering new aircraft between January 2021 and August 2022. This said, the most significant red flags over 787 aircraft safety emerged when an engineer at Boeing named Sam Salehpour alleged that parts of the fuselage were being joined together in a subpar way that could cause them to come undone after thousands of flights. In April 2024, the U.S. FAA said it would take a closer look at Mr. Salehpour's claims. While Boeing staunchly refused the allegations, Mr. Salehpour had also said that after he repeatedly flagged the problem, the company had transferred him to working on Boeing 777 aircraft instead. A month earlier, another Boeing whistleblower named John Barnett — who had raised multiple concerns about "shoddy production and weak oversight", in the New York Times' words, at the company's South Carolina facility where it manufactured its 787s — had been found dead with a seemingly self-inflicted gunshot wound. Barnett had worked at Boeing for almost three decades and had retired in 2017. He had previously also reported the presence of "clusters of metal slivers hanging over the wiring that commands the flight controls". According to him, if the slivers had penetrated the wiring, the effects would be "catastrophic". Following this, the FAA directed Boeing to remove these slivers from all 787 aircraft prior to delivery. Boeing said it could comply while continuing to maintain that the metal pieces' presence didn't compromise the safety of the aircraft. These problems with the 787s together with those dogging the 737 Max, another company workhorse, set off alarm bells among regulators, airline operators, and aviators alike as to whether Boeing was systematically cutting corners in order to not cede ground to Airbus and to keep up its hectic delivery schedule.

Indian Rat Snake vying for official reptile of Kerala status

Rat snakes, also known as friends of farmers, have great conservation value and shall be protected by declaring it as the State Reptile. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu Indian Rat Snake (Ptyas mucosa), regionally known as Chera, may be notified as the Official Reptile of Kerala. The State Board for Wildlife, which will meet next week, will consider a proposal for notifying the snake, also known as Manja Chera and Karinchera as the official reptile. Only 25% of all snakes are poisonous, and it's important to protect them, say snake lover The non-venomous snake, which has been included in Schedule One of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, has been accorded the highest legal protection. The species, which is commonly found in human habitations, plays a major role in controlling the rodent population that damages agricultural crops including grains and tubers in fields and farmlands that spread infectious diseases.

The perception shift against the AAP in the Delhi election



The 2025 Delhi Assembly election was nothing short of a political turning point, reshaping the electoral landscape of India's capital in ways few had anticipated. Data from Codemo and PeoplesPulse's survey reveal major shifts in voter behaviour, gender-based voting patterns, and the underlying factors that influenced the outcome at the polls. The survey was conducted over more than two months with a sample size of 30,000. Samples were collected from a telephone survey. Post-stratification, a statistical modelling technique was employed where a large poll sample was combined with Census data and analysed using multi-level regression to estimate voter preferences. In the early days of campaigning, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) remained ahead of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in perception vote share (voters' perception of which party would win), indicating that a larger section of voters believed it could return to power.

The AAP's perception vote share surged in the initial days following the announcement of schemes such as the Mahila Samman Yojana and Sanjeevani Yojana, rising to 58.1% till January 1 (Chart 1). However, its fortunes started declining after the BJP's campaign machinery was set in motion ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first rally on January 5. From January 1, AAP's perception vote share margin over the BJP dropped from +19.8% points to -11.8% points. The AAP's vote share peaked at 49.2% on January 1 and steadily declined thereafter, dropping to 40.5% by February 4. Meanwhile, the BJP and Congress improved their vote share by 4.7% points and 2.3% points respectively to reach 48.5% and 7% over the same period (Chart 2).

The AAP had huge electoral success in 2015 and 2020 banking on its promise of providing corruption-free governance and populist schemes. In 2025, the BJP and Congress capitalised on the alleged corruption in the Delhi excise policy, significantly damaging the AAP's corruption-free party image. Additionally, the BJP was successful in convincing voters that it wouldn't stop the welfare schemes and financial incentives provided by the AAP government if voted to power. Female and male voters The AAP announced the

Mahila Samman Yojana scheme and opened registrations for it, which provided the party with an initial boost with female voters. Till January 10, the party received more than 67% of the female vote share, whereas the BJP managed 28%. However, all the gains were undone in the final phase, with the AAP's vote share among women dropping to 50.2%, while the BJP and Congress gained at its expense, rising to 41.8% and 6.1%, respectively. This decline could be attributed to the lack of financial assistance for female voters before the election, unlike in the Maharashtra and Jharkhand elections. Additionally, the BJP and Congress countered the AAP by promising similar schemes and financial incentives. In the survey, the AAP's vote share among female voters was 50.2% in 2025 compared to 62.4% in the 2020 Delhi election.

The BJP had an edge among male voters from the beginning and increased its margin over the AAP with time. In the survey, the BJP increased its vote share margin over the AAP from +4.3% points on January 1 to +17.5% points on February 4. The AAP had a 59% vote share among male voters in the 2020 election, which declined to 35.5% in 2025. The AAP managed to secure more than 55% of the general category vote share in the 2020 Delhi election. However, in 2025, the BJP got 57.3% of the general category vote share and the AAP's vote share dwindled to 31.9%. Other Backward Classes (OBC) votes were traditionally split between different parties. However, during this election, the BJP gained ground among OBCs with a vote share of 48.6%, while the AAP got 41.1%. The AAP had an initial lead of +5.4% points over the BJP on January 1, but its margin with the BJP reduced significantly to -7.5% points by February 4. In the final phase of the election, AAP witnessed a significant decline in the Scheduled Caste (SC) vote share while the BJP and Congress made gains, largely due to a targeted outreach towards SC voters. On February 4, the AAP's lead over the BJP narrowed to +8.5% points, a sharp drop from its margin of +25.9% points on January 1. Voters with origins in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, also known as Purvanchali voters, were a decisive factor in many constituencies. The AAP had a lead of +3.5% points over the BJP a month before the election. A month later, the AAP capitulated to Purvanchali voters as its margin with the BJP reduced to -16.7% points (Chart 3).

While the Congress was not seen as a major player in this election, its impact was felt in key constituencies where it managed to cut into the AAP's voter base. Among SC voters, its vote share was 7.8%, an improvement from 6.1% in the 2020 Delhi election survey. Among Muslim voters, the Congress' vote share was 19%, a significant improvement from 12% in the 2020 Delhi election survey. Though the AAP managed to win six out of the seven Muslim-dominated seats, its win margin dropped significantly.

out policies with the twin objectives of first, building the confidence of the medical community in the safety and efficacy of biosimilars and second, towards ensuring greater competition. Unfortunately, that has not been the case with India. Countries such as the United States have been debating and legislating on this issue for more than a decade now, with laws such as The Biologics Price Competition and Innovation Act which was enacted in 2009. In India, however, for a little over a decade now, since Indian pharmaceutical companies first began introducing biosimilars into the Indian market, there have been several controversies related to the regulatory process for the approval of biosimilars. For example, in 2015, an Indian manufacturer of a biosimilar for Razumab, used to treat macular degeneration, had to recall the biosimilar from the market after doctors prescribing the drug reported that it caused serious adverse events amongst some patients. The issue received barely any attention from the Indian media and the Indian drug regulator was, as usual, opaque in its handling of the issue. To date, there has been no clarity on what went wrong with that biosimilar. Equally worrying have been tactics used by Swiss pharmaceutical company, Hoffmann La Roche, which has litigated extensively against Indian pharmaceutical companies introducing biosimilars that are copies of Roche's products. Breaking from the usual strategy of suing for patent infringement, Roche has complained to the drug regulator about the safety and efficacy of biosimilars – these complaints were then amplified by the press and likely undermined the credibility of the biosimilars in question. The Indian drug regulator has done little to rebut the issues raised by Roche, despite the fact that these biosimilars have been approved by the regulator. On another occasion, Roche sued Indian pharmaceutical companies launching biosimilars for its blockbuster drug Herceptin for breast cancer, claiming misrepresentations about their biosimilars being as effective as Roche's drug. This, despite the fact that the competing biosimilars had been approved by the drug regulator. These scare tactics likely impacted the credibility of the biosimilars in the eyes of doctors who prescribe these drugs. At the core of the problem is the fact that India does not have a well thought-out regulatory law for biosimilars. As of today, biosimilars are approved under certain guidelines formulated by the drug regulator and the Department of Biotechnology, except that these non-binding guidelines do not have the force of the law. Even if these guidelines were backed by the force of law, the situation would not be remedied because these guidelines are poorly drafted. Law aside, there are also doubts about whether the Indian drug regulator has the expertise and the technical capabilities to regulate the exceptionally complicated biotech sector. It is crucial that the government gives this issue urgent attention because in a country like India, where much of healthcare costs are met out of pocket, the cost of medicine has a direct impact on the accessibility of medicine.

Smuggled PDS rice from Telangana gets recycled in Maharashtra, returns to State

Mancherial: Rice grains meant for the Public Distribution System (PDS), smuggled from Telangana to Maharashtra, are being allegedly recycled in the neighbouring State and then being sold to millers back in Telangana. It is an open secret that the PDS rice grains are being smuggled from different parts of Telangana to Sironcha, Wirur and Podsa and other towns of Maharashtra. The smugglers are procuring the grains from dealers of fair price shops and middlemen who purchase the rice from beneficiaries of the food security scheme.

Innovation, as a solution to the growing crisis of antimicrobial resistance



Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an escalating public health crisis with the potential to undermine the effectiveness of current antibiotics, leading to longer hospital stays, more intensive care, and higher mortality rates. To address AMR, we must recognise that it is a multifaceted issue influenced by various sectors such as human health, animal husbandry, agriculture, and environmental factors. While the challenge is immense, innovation in both technology and strategy holds the key to mitigating this global health threat.

Understanding the complexity of AMR is not simply the result of overprescribing antibiotics in hospitals. It stems from numerous factors that include irrational antibiotic use in humans, animals and in agriculture. Inappropriate prescriptions, the use of antibiotics in animal feed for growth promotion and agricultural practices that encourage the use of antibiotics contribute significantly to the development of resistant pathogens. Once resistance develops, these microbes can spread rapidly, especially in healthcare settings where infection prevention measures may be inadequate. Sanitation and infection control in hospitals are also critical to reducing the spread of resistant bacteria. Inadequate sanitation in communities, especially in low-income areas, further fuels the problem by allowing resistant pathogens to proliferate and spread. Socio-economic factors such as poverty, lack of clean water, and insufficient access to healthcare exacerbate the issue, making it a complex, multifactorial challenge.

Given the complexity of AMR, addressing it requires more than just conventional strategies. Innovation plays a central role in tackling this global challenge, not only through new devices but also by developing new approaches to influence behaviour and improve systems. One of the most important areas where innovation can make a difference is in antibiotic stewardship. Ensuring rational antibiotic use in hospitals is critical to prevent the development of AMR. Technology can support healthcare providers with real-time data to guide antibiotic prescriptions and reduce unnecessary use. AI-powered decision support systems and digital health tools are increasingly being developed to assist clinicians in selecting the appropriate antibiotic, determining the correct dosage and setting the right treatment duration. These innovations enable healthcare providers to make informed decisions that minimise the risk of resistance and ensure that antibiotics are used only when absolutely necessary. In addition to technological innovations, behavioural

innovations are essential in the fight against AMR. Prescribers often face significant challenges in convincing patients to limit their demand for antibiotics, particularly when it comes to conditions like the common cold or flu, where antibiotics are ineffective. Public health campaigns and education programmes that raise awareness about the dangers of unnecessary antibiotic use can help shift public perception. By empowering patients to understand that antibiotics are not always the answer, and encouraging prescribers to resist pressure to overprescribe, we can foster a culture of responsibility in both the prescribing and consuming of antibiotics. Innovations in diagnostics and vaccines

In addition to improving antibiotic stewardship, innovations in rapid diagnostics and vaccines are crucial in the battle against AMR. Rapid point-of-care diagnostic tools can help clinicians quickly identify the pathogen causing an infection and determine its antibiotic resistance profile. By providing immediate insights into the specific infection, these diagnostic tools allow for targeted treatments, reducing the use of broad-spectrum antibiotics and minimising the risk of resistance. These diagnostic innovations are particularly important in resource-limited settings where access to laboratories and timely test results may be restricted. Along with diagnostics, the development of new vaccines can help prevent infections that often lead to the unnecessary use of antibiotics. Vaccines reduce the incidence of infections such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, and certain types of urinary tract infections, thereby reducing the need for antibiotics. Innovative vaccines can also target antibiotic-resistant pathogens, further contributing to the reduction of AMR. Over the past two decades, my perspective on AMR has evolved significantly. Initially, I focused on policy changes, regulations, and stewardship programmes. However, through my work with the Longitude Prize, I came to realise that innovation is the true catalyst for change. While policies and regulations are important, they often face slow implementation and resistance. It is innovation that disrupts the status quo, providing practical, scalable solutions to complex challenges like AMR.

India, with its massive population, diverse healthcare infrastructure and socio-economic challenges, faces unique hurdles in combating AMR. However, the country's sheer scale presents it with an opportunity to become a leader in AMR innovation. India has more than one million doctors, hundreds of thousands of pharmacies, and a large number of hospitals. The government's commitment to addressing AMR through policy frameworks like the National Action Plan on AMR is commendable, but effective implementation requires innovation in healthcare practices, sanitation, and technology. The Chennai Declaration on AMR has already made significant strides in raising awareness and engaging stakeholders from across sectors. However, to truly tackle AMR in India, we must integrate innovation at every level — be it in the development of new antibiotics, diagnostics, vaccines, or sanitation technologies. India has the potential to become a global leader in the fight against AMR by prioritising innovation in both policy and practice. The path forward in combating AMR involves embracing a multi-pronged approach that integrates technological innovation, behavioural change, improved infection control practices, and better sanitation. By fostering a culture of innovation — at all levels of healthcare, governance, and society — India can make significant strides in mitigating the impact of AMR. India's leadership in the global fight against AMR will depend on how well we harness the power of innovation. With the right policies, infrastructure and support for entrepreneurs, India can set an example for the world in the fight against one of the most significant public health threats of our time.

Edinburgh to Ernakulum: Strategies for wooing investors

Through "Global Investor Meets", State governments compete with each other every year to show-case themselves before the investor community and the elite, thereby giving the indication that employment promotion through new investments stands out as their policy plank. In the early part of the present century, the economic cold war between Gujarat and Maharashtra led to a search for new strategies of attracting investments. In 2003, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, came up with the idea of 'Vibrant Gujarat' as an experimental project, offering a meeting place for potential investors. Various State governments including Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab followed the path. Today, most States in the country organise "Investor Meets" periodically.

The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, has been conducting various road shows and investor meetings within and outside India, with a view of providing sufficient clarity to potential investors and to improve their interests for participating in India's growth story. The Ministry has created a common service point to help the initiatives by the States as well. Besides, as part of the "Start-up India" and "Make in India" programmes, such meets have been supported by the DPIIT. Hence, beyond the political vision and programme of the States concerned, such Meets are part of a national agenda of investor facilitation. While today State governments organise 'Investor Meets' on a regular basis, and make competitive claims on their positive outcomes, an enquiry into global practices would be educative and useful.

Historically, I can trace it back to the history of the 'Business Birth rate Strategy' (BBRS) that was implemented in Scotland in the 1990s. The BBRS was started with an overarching aim of making Scotland one of the most entrepreneurial destinations in the world. It had the specific objective to close the start-up gap with the southeast of England. While only one percent of people in Scotland were committed to starting a business, it was 4% in the south of England. The Scottish experiment was often criticized those days as "wasting public money". Despite all such criticism, the strength and contribution of the BBRS was the 'campaign mode' under which it was implemented, and its ability to mobilize all major stakeholders such as leading universities, industry associations, promotional agencies, media, and financial Institutions under a single umbrella that was set up by a powerful nodal agency, the Scottish Enterprise, in 1994. Subsequently, when in 2016 the Industries & Commerce Department of the Government of Kerala approached me requesting a comprehensive study on the investment scene in the State, I had no hesitation to recommend a "campaign mode" intervention in the State, on lines of the Scottish Model.

Development of entrepreneurship and MSMEs is a state subject in India. Therefore, the national policy regime has only a restricted role and background. Though the States are expected to make good use of such a background, this does not often happen. Rather than creating regional success stories to be show cased at the national level, the States often compete against each other in favour of national rankings and fund flows. The results accruing from State level efforts need to be scientifically understood at the national



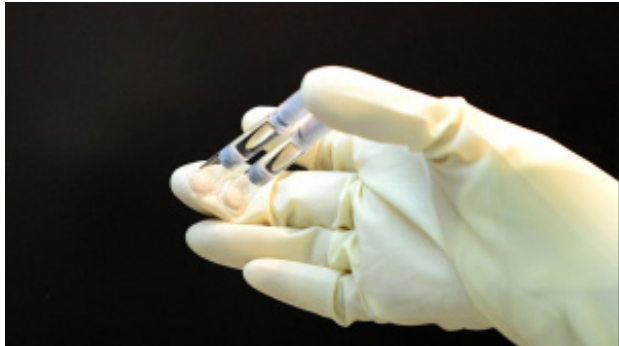
level, as each State is a stakeholder at the national level in the development process. This is the rationale for national level ranking of States, originally done under the 'Ease of Doing Business' (EoDB) ranking, and subsequently under the new regime of the Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP). These rankings are based on the value of an index; it can act as an information tool at the national level, but it does not tell the full story. Available literature shows that, in the race to become top-performing at the national level ranking, various State governments follow their beaten-track strategies, neatly repacked. Yet despite their drawbacks, such rankings act as a method for reputational incentivisation that has a crucial role in a democratic federal system. Index numbers, while useful for tracking trends, have limitations, considering the qualitative aspects of the variables chosen. Therefore, they can, at best, be used as approximate indicators rather than as precise measures.

Ultimately, market-friendliness is the acid test of investment resilience and the sustainability of individual States. Public policy interventions, such as Investor Meets, need to be contributory and supportive to creation of such a market-friendly environment. An analysis based on 'Udyam' data shows, such a reasonable balance in seen in the case of States such as Gujarat, Telangana, Odisha, Punjab, Kerala and Uttaranchal. The demand for business-centric reforms often arise from an elite business community.

Their interests are often not representative of that of the larger electorate. This conflict of interests is obviously the ground for corruption and unfair business practices. Investment promotion, in essence, means private sector development. Private sector development means fostering a vibrant and fair market system that creates economic opportunities and drives sustainable growth.

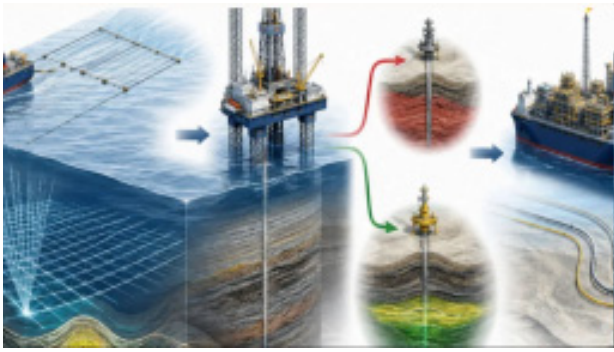
This essentially means sound economic governance, for which a country like India still has to travel a lot. In developing and emerging economies, a necessary first step is a 'rights-based approach', which holds institutions and powerful people accountable for their responsibilities to those with less power. Such an approach differs from a 'needs-based' or 'welfare' approach that create dependency on development agencies. For this to happen, there need to be new reforms and legislations that can add value to every subsequent Investor Meet. This will help to enhance investor confidence and foster genuine competition between States.

Biosimilars and the need for a policy prescription



To understand the class of drugs known as biosimilars, it is first necessary to understand the class of drugs described as biologics. Traditionally, biologics were derived through natural processes from living organisms. For example, one of the earliest biological drugs dating back to the 19th century was the anti-diphtheria serum, which was manufactured from the serum extracted from horses that contained antibodies to the disease. The biotechnology revolution spurred by the invention of gene-splicing technology by Cohen-Boyer opened the door for the creation of more effective biologicals like trastuzumab, which revolutionised the treatment of a specific type of breast cancer by targeting cancerous cells. The more recent biologicals, starting with trastuzumab, typically contain monoclonal antibodies which are manufactured in the cells of genetically-modified organisms. These monoclonal antibodies are adapted with the help of biotechnology to target specific types of cells associated with cancer or other diseases for which these drugs are developed. Given the complexity of developing and manufacturing biologicals, especially monoclonal antibodies, it is no surprise that biologicals are astronomically priced. Countries around the world have been keen to ensure more competition in the market by allowing competitors to manufacture and market copies of biologicals. These copies are called biosimilars. There is plenty of empirical evidence demonstrating that increased competition in the case of small molecule drugs leads to significant price erosion, thereby improving accessibility and reducing costs to patients. These small-molecule drugs, unlike biologicals, are not manufactured in living organisms and therefore, it is easier to control their manufacturing process. Countries like India have an abundance of talent with the skills to reverse-engineer these drugs to manufacture generic copies of novel small molecule drugs (for e.g. paracetamol) leading to more competition and reduced prices. Replicating the success story of generic small molecule drugs in India will be tougher in the context of biosimilars for many reasons. To begin with, competitors who do not have access to the original cell lines of the innovator have to develop their own. This is far more complicated than reverse-engineering small molecule drugs. Given the uncertainty associated with the manufacture of biosimilars, the legal requirements to secure regulatory approval are more complicated and expensive than they are for small molecule drugs. A competitor seeking to introduce a generic version of a small molecule drug can avoid replicating clinical trials in virtually all jurisdictions as long as they can submit proof of bioequivalence, for which data can be generated through relatively inexpensive bioavailability studies. However, in the case of biosimilars, because of the science involved, competitors have to repeat clinical trials for their product to prove safety and efficacy. This can be an expensive exercise. The cost, uncertainty and risk associated with clinical trials will typically be reflected in the cost of a biosimilar. Combine this with the fact that only a few companies have the capability to develop biosimilars — it is unlikely that any country will see the same degree of price erosion as was the case with small molecule generics. Given these complexities surrounding the regulation and pricing of biosimilars, it is vital that countries put in place well thought-

Government greenlights Rs 84,000-crore scheme to boost offshore oil & gas exploration, production



The Union Cabinet on Friday gave its nod to a Rs 84,084-crore scheme aimed at boosting oil and gas exploration and production from the country's offshore basins, and reducing the dependence on imported energy. The ambitious 'Samudra Manthan' scheme, or the National Off-shore Exploration Scheme, will provide financial support for exploratory drilling in deep-sea and ultra-deep-sea areas and support building of common infrastructure for production of discovered hydrocarbons in offshore areas, apart from funding offshore data acquisition and developing hydrocarbon manufacturing and services zones. The outlay is for implementation till financial year 2030-31.

The Centre expects the Samudra Manthan scheme to catalyse reserve accretion of over 600 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas (mtoe), while stimulating significant investments across the oil and gas exploration and production value chain. India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and also a major consumer of natural gas, but has a high degree of import dependency — over 88% for oil and about 50% in the case of natural gas. This makes the country's economy vulnerable to global energy market volatility, and even poses supply risks, as has been witnessed during the ongoing West Asia crisis. Moreover, the country's energy demand is on the rise, while domestic production is stagnant. Subject to exploration success, the scheme aims to increase India's domestic oil and gas production from around 62 mtoe to 80 mtoe annually and expand the country's hydrocarbon resource base from 1,600 mtoe to 2,200 mtoe. The additional production has the potential to reduce crude oil imports by nearly Rs 1 lakh crore annually, strengthening India's energy security and reducing import dependence, as per the government.

"The Scheme encompasses a comprehensive set of interventions across the offshore exploration value chain. It provides for large-scale acquisition, processing and interpretation of high-quality seismic data, accelerated deepwater and ultra-deepwater exploratory drilling, scientific drilling in frontier basins, development of common offshore production and evacuation infrastructure, and establishment of an integrated Oil & Gas Manufacturing and Services Zone," the government said in a release. "It also includes dedicated provisions for digital programme management, capacity building, technology adoption, stakeholder engagement and international outreach, creating an integrated ecosystem to accelerate offshore exploration and production in the country," it added. The initiative was first indicated last year by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address. He had called for a modern-day 'Samudra Manthan' to unlock India's vast offshore energy

potential. Under the Samudra Manthan scheme, Rs 43,200 crore will be allocated to support deep-sea exploratory drilling, which involves significant costs and risks, while Rs 28,534 crore will be earmarked for offshore data acquisition. Another Rs 10,000 crore will be used to partially fund building of common infrastructure to bring the discovered oil and gas reserves into production, while Rs 2,000 crore will be earmarked for developing oil and gas manufacturing and services zones.

The scheme will provide support of up to 50% of drilling cost or Rs 675 crore, whichever is lower, for every well drilled in deep-sea and ultra-deep-sea areas. Drilling at such depths is an expensive proposition, costing between \$100 million and \$250 million per well, as per industry estimates. It is also risky as the drilling activity may not lead to any oil or natural gas discovery. In certain cases, even if hydrocarbons are discovered, it may not be commercially viable to exploit them. The scheme, officials expect, will mitigate some of the investment risks for upstream oil and gas players, and increase investment into the sector. "India's future hydrocarbon potential lies largely in deepwater and ultra-deepwater basins such as Krishna-Godavari, Cauvery, Mahanadi and the Andaman region. Exploration in these frontier areas requires advanced technology and significant investment... Recognising the high-risk, high-cost nature of such exploration, the Government is adopting a risk-sharing approach to encourage sustained investment, accelerate exploration, and unlock India's offshore hydrocarbon resources" the government said.

Hydrocarbon exploration is a capital-intensive and long-gestation activity, with a typical period of five to 10 years from the award of an exploration block to the commencement of commercial production. Further, existing oil and gas fields witness a natural production decline of around 6-7% every year, making continuous exploration and new discoveries essential to sustain domestic hydrocarbon production, as per the government.

According to Prashant Vashisht, senior vice president and co group head at ICRA, the scheme is a positive for India's upstream oil and gas sector, and could lead to some reduction in oil and gas import dependency. "The scheme provides funds for offshore seismic data acquisition especially in erstwhile no-go zones, which is a key issue hampering commercial exploitation of oil and gas reserves in these areas due to lack of good prospectivity data," he said. "Additionally, the scheme provides support for drilling deepwater/ultra-deepwater wells where the domestic upstream sector has limited experience and technical expertise and exploitation of the same remains highly capital intensive and risky. The scheme aims to add incremental annual production of 10-15 million tonnes of oil equivalent which would reduce the dependence on imports of oil and gas but only to the extent of 3-5%," Vashisht added. "Over the past decade, the Government has undertaken transformative reforms across the upstream sector, including opening almost the entire offshore acreage for exploration, modernising the legislative and contractual framework, and strengthening the National Data Repository. Building on these reforms, Samudra Manthan will usher in a new era of accelerated offshore exploration through strategic public investment, cutting-edge technologies and world-class infrastructure," the government said.

Over-leveraged borrowers jump 3-fold, credit expansion loses pace: Cibil

A TransUnion CIBIL study highlights that rising indebtedness and declining first-time borrower growth pose new challenges for India's retail credit sector. A TransUnion CIBIL study highlights that rising indebtedness and declining first-time borrower growth pose new challenges for India's retail credit sector. (Representational) India's decade-long expansion in formal credit has brought millions of first-time borrowers into the banking system, but the next phase of growth could be far more challenging as rising consumer indebtedness, slowing borrower growth and shrinking participation by first-time borrowers emerge as key concerns, according to a TransUnion CIBIL study.

A big warning sign is the steady increase in financially stretched borrowers. The share of over-leveraged consumers rose threefold — from 5% in the financial year 2017 (FY17) to 18% in FY24 — before easing marginally to 15% in FY26 after industry intervention, says the Cibil report, Unlocking Access: Journey of Credit Expansion in India. The excessive borrowing is concentrated largely among younger consumers, who have also been the fastest-growing segment of India's retail credit market. Another concern is the sharp slowdown in the pace of expansion of active borrowers.

The proportion of credit-active consumers within the credit-eligible population also increased during this period, from 11% in March 2017 to 28% in March 2026. However, the compounded annual growth rate of the credit-active consumer base moderated from 14% during the March 2017-March 2019 period to 9% during March 2024-March 2026 period, suggesting that the easy gains from financial inclusion may be tapering off, Cibil said. The pipeline of new borrowers is also shrinking. New-to-credit (NTC) consumers accounted for 32% of retail loan originations in 2017 but their share has fallen to just 13% by 2026. This indicates that lenders are increasingly relying on repeat borrowers instead of expanding the formal credit net to households that have never borrowed before. "These numbers indicate significant opportunity to both deepen engagement with those already within the credit fold, and to bring new consumers into the formal credit ecosystem," Cibil said. The nature of borrowing has also undergone a significant shift. Consumption credit — including personal loans, credit cards and consumer durable finance — has emerged as the dominant segment, with the share of active borrowers holding such products increasing from 34% to 51% over the period. Commercial lending The study also flags concerns in the commercial lending ecosystem. The share of entities that have accessed commercial credit declined from 50% to 41%, the credit-active share dipped from 10% to 9% and NTC also went down from 60% to 39% between quarter ended March 2021 and quarter ended March 2026. This indicates further capacity to bring eligible enterprises and medium, small and micro entrepreneurs into formal credit, it said.

This also shows that millions of micro and small enterprises continue to remain outside the organised credit system despite improved creditworthiness. Geographically, the report finds that India's credit map is undergoing a structural shift. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have recorded faster growth in credit participation than traditional markets such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. While this reflects widening financial inclusion beyond the country's established economic centres, it also places greater responsibility on lenders to maintain underwriting standards



as lending expands rapidly into relatively newer markets. The report nevertheless highlights the remarkable expansion of formal finance. The share of credit-eligible Indians who have borrowed at least once has increased from 35% in 2017 to 74% in 2026, while credit monitoring has risen sharply, pointing to growing financial awareness. Women borrowers increased their share from 22% in March 2017 to 30% in March 2026, while that of young borrowers rose from 33% to 39% in the same period. "What also stands out is how India's state-wise credit heatmap has undergone a gradual but clear shift. While the traditionally dominant states in west and south India continue their strong credit uptake, states in north and central India have seen a remarkable rise in credit participation," said Bhavesh Jain, MD and CEO, TransUnion CIBIL. The changes in wallet composition point to how credit is being increasingly seen as a means to drive a lifestyle-driven approach today, compared to the asset-based approach seen a decade ago, he said.

Gold prices fall for fourth straight session, down 3.25 pc in four days

Mumbai: Gold prices in India continued their downward trend on Friday, extending losses for the fourth consecutive trading session amid sustained selling pressure in the precious metal.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for October delivery declined by Rs 896, or 0.56 per cent, to trade at Rs 1,58,100 per 10 grams. During the session, prices fell as much as 0.68 per cent, or Rs 1,085, to touch an intraday low of Rs 1,57,911 per 10 grams.

With Friday's decline, gold prices have fallen by Rs 5,318, or 3.25 per cent, over the past four trading sessions on the MCX, reflecting continued pressure on the yellow metal. In the international market, gold prices also remained under pressure as investors awaited a speech by US Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh at the Jackson Hole symposium. Market participants are closely watching signals from the US central bank on the future course of interest rates, which could influence demand for gold. Spot gold declined 0.5 per cent to \$4,576.30 an ounce after touching a more than three-month high earlier this week. US gold futures were also down 0.8 per cent at \$4,629 an ounce.

Unusual lung cancer symptoms: When breathlessness, hoarseness or back pain are red flags



A 50-year-old woman walked into my clinic seeking a second opinion. For several weeks, she had been treated for asthma because of an occasional cough and episodes of breathlessness. She had faithfully used her inhalers, yet her symptoms showed no sign of improvement. Instead of simply changing her medication, we decided to start from the beginning. A routine chest X-ray revealed something completely unexpected—massive fluid accumulation around the lung. Further investigations confirmed the real diagnosis: lung cancer that had spread to the pleura, the membrane surrounding the lungs. The diagnosis came as a shock to the patient and her family. They had never imagined that symptoms resembling asthma could actually be masking lung cancer. This case reinforces an important lesson in medicine — not every persistent cough or episode of breathlessness is asthma, bronchitis or an infection. When symptoms continue despite appropriate treatment, they deserve a fresh evaluation rather than repeated prescriptions.

Fluid accumulation around the lung or pleural effusion itself may be the first sign of an underlying lung cancer. Patients often present with progressive breathlessness, chest heaviness or a persistent dry cough, symptoms that can easily be mistaken for more common respiratory illnesses. We are also witnessing a significant shift in the profile of lung cancer patients. It is no longer a disease seen only in older male smokers. In our own practice, we diagnose nearly two to three new cases of primary lung cancer every three months, and almost 40% of these patients are either women or people who have never smoked.

Lung cancer doesn't always present with typical symptoms. When most people think of lung cancer, they associate it with a persistent cough, coughing up blood, chest pain or breathlessness. These remain the most common warning signs. However, lung cancer does not always follow a textbook presentation. Breathlessness itself can occur for several reasons. It may result from airway obstruction caused by the tumour, fluid around the lungs, collapse of a portion of the lung, or reduced lung function. In some patients, breathlessness develops even before a persistent cough appears. In many cases, the first symptoms appear in completely different parts of the body and are often mistaken for stress, ageing, nutritional deficiencies, infections or common health conditions. Sometimes these symptoms occur because the tumour affects nearby nerves, blood vessels or surrounding structures. In other cases, they develop after the cancer has spread to other organs.

Adding to the challenge, early-stage lung cancer often causes very few noticeable symptoms. As a result, many patients ignore subtle warning signs until the disease has progressed. Unusual symptoms that shouldn't be ignored: A prolonged change in your voice may not immediately suggest a lung problem. However, a tumour in the chest can affect the recurrent laryngeal nerve, which controls the vocal cords, leading to persistent hoarseness. Although allergies, acid reflux and throat infections are far more common causes, any voice change lasting more than a few weeks should be medically evaluated. Difficulty or discomfort while swallowing, medically known as dysphagia, can occur when a tumour in the chest presses against the oesophagus. Patients may initially notice difficulty swallowing solid foods before liquids become affected. Unexplained swelling around

the face, neck or upper chest can occur when a lung tumour compresses the superior vena cava, the large vein responsible for returning blood from the upper body to the heart. This condition, known as Superior Vena Cava (SVC) syndrome, requires prompt medical attention.

A painless swelling or lump above the collarbone or in the neck may occasionally be the first visible sign of lung cancer that has spread to nearby lymph nodes. While enlarged lymph nodes can occur with infections and other illnesses, persistent or unexplained swelling should always be medically assessed. Lung cancer can sometimes present as a deep, persistent ache in the back, shoulders or bones. This may happen due to cancer spreading to the spine and compressing the spinal cord or surrounding nerves, leading to persistent neck or back pain, numbness, stiffness or weakness that may radiate to the arms or legs. Sudden weakness in the limbs requires immediate medical evaluation. In some advanced cases, cancer cells spread to the protective membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. This can cause back pain along with headaches, limb weakness and other neurological symptoms. When lung cancer spreads to the bones, it can raise calcium levels in the blood. Along with bone or back pain, patients may experience excessive thirst, nausea, vomiting, constipation, weakness or headaches. Neurological symptoms Sometimes, lung cancer is diagnosed only after it has spread to the brain. Persistent headaches, dizziness, seizures, blurred vision, difficulty maintaining balance, confusion or weakness affecting one side of the body may be warning signs that require urgent medical evaluation. Although these symptoms can have many causes, they should never be ignored, particularly when accompanied by respiratory symptoms or unexplained weight loss. One of the lesser-known signs of lung cancer is finger clubbing. The fingertips gradually become broader while the nails appear more rounded and curved. Although clubbing can occur in several lung and heart diseases, any new or unexplained changes in the fingers should be evaluated by a doctor.

Recurrent chest infections Repeated episodes of bronchitis or pneumonia, especially affecting the same area of the lung, may signal an underlying blockage. A tumour can partially obstruct an airway, making it difficult to clear mucus and increasing the risk of recurring infections. Rather than repeatedly treating infections with antibiotics, it is important to identify the underlying cause. Unusual hormonal or neurological changes In some patients, lung cancer causes symptoms that are not directly related to the tumour itself. Known as paraneoplastic syndromes, these occur when the cancer produces hormone-like substances or triggers an abnormal immune response. Patients may experience unexplained muscle weakness, low sodium levels, electrolyte imbalances or neurological symptoms before the lung tumour is even detected.

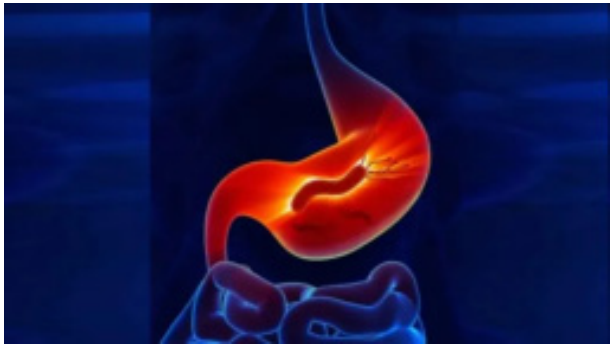
Who is at risk?

While smoking remains the single biggest risk factor for lung cancer, it is important to understand that the disease can affect people who have never smoked. Exposure to second-hand smoke, indoor biomass fuel smoke, cooking fumes, radon gas, asbestos fibres, diesel exhaust, air pollution, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other aerosolised chemicals may also increase the risk. In addition, a family history of lung cancer or previous radiation therapy to the chest can make some individuals more susceptible.

When should you see a specialist?

If you have a persistent cough lasting more than three weeks, unexplained breathlessness, coughing up blood, recurrent chest infections, or any of the unusual symptoms described above that do not improve with routine treatment, it is important to consult a pulmonologist or specialist for a thorough evaluation. The earlier lung cancer is diagnosed, the greater the chances of successful treatment and better long-term outcomes.

Two Mumbai women have rare stomach cancer that mimics ovarian tumour: What not to miss



When a 25-year-old woman arrived at a Mumbai hospital with abdominal pain, irregular periods, loss of appetite and unexplained weight loss, scans revealed what appeared to be a large tumour in her right ovary. The diagnosis initially pointed to ovarian cancer. Further investigations, however, revealed that the ovarian tumour was secondary. The cancer had actually originated in her stomach and spread silently to the ovary. In another case, a 37-year-old mother of two presented with abdominal pain, menstrual irregularities, weight loss and changes in bowel habits. Imaging showed large tumours in both ovaries, but subsequent testing established that they had spread from an underlying stomach cancer.

The two cases, documented by doctors at Mumbai's Government Medical College and Cama and Albless Hospital, highlight an uncommon but important clinical challenge: not every ovarian tumour originates in the ovary. In rare cases, it may represent metastatic cancer from another organ, most commonly the stomach. Distinguishing between the two is critical because treatment is determined by the site where the cancer began, not where it has spread. The findings have been published in the International Journal of Reproduction, Contraception, Obstetrics and Gynaecology in a paper titled 'A gastrointestinal malignancy presenting as an ovarian mass: a case report of Krukenberg tumours' by Dr Pratiksha Dattu Khamkar, Dr Tushar Palve and Dr Anusha Shetty from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the two institutions. A rare form of metastatic cancer

The condition described in the report is called a Krukenberg tumour — a rare and aggressive form of metastatic ovarian cancer in which malignant cells spread to one or both ovaries from another organ, most often the stomach. Less commonly, the primary cancer arises in the colon, appendix, pancreas or breast. Krukenberg tumours account for only 1-2 per cent of all ovarian tumours and are seen more often in women of reproductive age, although they can occur at any age. Cancer cells typically spread through the bloodstream or lymphatic system before implanting in the ovaries. Because the disease has already metastasised by the time it is detected in the ovaries, the prognosis is generally poorer than that of primary ovarian cancer.

Symptoms often mask the underlying disease The condition is particularly difficult to diagnose because its symptoms overlap with those of primary ovarian cancer as well as several common gastrointestinal and gynaecological disorders. Patients may experience abdominal pain, bloating, irregular menstrual cycles, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss, early satiety or changes in bowel habits. Dr Pratiksha Dattu Khamkar, lead author of the study, said

both women initially presented with severe abdominal pain. "We decided to document these cases because both women presented with severe abdominal pain but the diagnosis turned out to be something we don't encounter very often," she said. While ovarian cancer is often the first suspicion, clinicians should also consider whether an ovarian mass could represent metastatic disease from the gastrointestinal tract, she added. "Women who present with ovarian masses, along with persistent symptoms such as abdominal pain, unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite or changes in bowel habits, should undergo further evaluation to rule out an underlying stomach or intestinal cancer." Dr Khamkar said Krukenberg tumours are most commonly diagnosed in women between 25 and 40 years of age. Delayed diagnosis is common because the symptoms are non-specific and the primary stomach cancer often progresses silently before spreading. Although ultrasound and CT scans can detect ovarian masses, they cannot reliably establish where the cancer originated. Doctors often need endoscopy, tissue biopsy and specialised pathological testing to identify the primary tumour. This distinction directly influences treatment. Surgery may be required to remove ovarian tumours or relieve symptoms, but management is centred on the primary stomach cancer. Patients are typically treated with chemotherapy used for advanced gastric cancer, while targeted therapies or immunotherapy may be considered in selected cases based on the tumour's molecular profile. The Mumbai cases Both women sought medical care after nearly 25 days of persistent abdominal pain and underwent surgery. In the first case, imaging detected a large ovarian mass along with thickening of the stomach wall. Endoscopy confirmed stomach cancer, while pathological examination established that the ovarian tumour had originated in the stomach. She subsequently underwent surgery and was referred for further oncological treatment. The second patient had tumours in both ovaries along with abnormalities in the stomach. Following surgery and specialised testing, doctors confirmed the same diagnosis.

‘Only second to World Championship’: Pragganandhaa on historic GCT triumph

Indian Grandmaster R Pragganandhaa created history on Friday, becoming the first Indian to win the Grand Chess Tour after staging a remarkable comeback to defeat defending champion Fabiano Caruana in the final. The Indian takes home a hefty \$200,000 prize and secures a guaranteed spot in next year's tour. Pragganandhaa headed into the final day with a six-point deficit, trailing Caruana 3-9 after the Classical leg, having lost the opening game and drawn the second. But he turned the tide in the Rapid leg, winning both games to earn eight points and take an 11-9 lead into the final Blitz leg.

In the first Blitz game, Pragg had winning chances but blundered in a time scramble. The position turned worse, but Caruana failed to capitalise, and the game ended in a draw. Caruana, the 2018 World Championship challenger and the man with the third-highest Elo rating in history (2844), struck back immediately, winning the second Blitz clash to level the score at 12-12. The Grandmaster from Chennai wasted no time regaining his lead, beating Caruana with the white pieces for his third win of the day. Heading into the final game, Pragganandhaa held a 14-12 lead and needed only a draw to seal the title. He did exactly that, forcing a threefold repetition in a completely winning position to dethrone Caruana. Pragganandhaa admitted he wasn't too hopeful of the title heading into the final day. Across six games against Caruana, he managed to win three, drew two, including the final game where he had a winning position, and lost just one. "Honestly, I didn't think I had much of a chance today. A six-point deficit is a lot. You basically need to do what I did," he laughed. "It's difficult. It's not every day you can get one win against Fabi, but to get two... that was crucial in the Rapid," said Pragganandhaa after his historic title win. "Mainly, what changed from last year is my Rapid and Blitz game. It's much better now, I think, and that's a massive improvement in this format."

Magical run Hopes were high for him at the 2026 Candidates for a potential all-India World Championship final clash, but Pragganandhaa had a cold outing in Cyprus in his second Candidates appearance. However, he stepped up big time after that disappointment, embarking on a magical run that saw him become the first Indian to win the Norway Chess title, beating Magnus Carlsen twice in the same event. His Saint Louis win and Sinquefeld Cup performance only vindicated his true strength. Pragganandhaa and his coach, grandmaster Vaibhav Suri, arrive at Oslo's Deichman Bjørkvik for the round 3 clash with Magnus Carlsen. (Photo: Michal Walusza/Norway Chess) Pragganandhaa and his coach, grandmaster Vaibhav Suri, arrive at Oslo's Deichman Bjørkvik for the round 3 clash with Magnus Carlsen. (Photo: Michal Walusza/Norway Chess) When asked about his incredible run, Pragganandhaa saw the funny side of it. "Yeah, it would have been nice to win the Candidates," he laughed it off. "But winning a tournament like this is still a great achievement. You have to show a lot of character to come



out on top in such an event, and I'm happy that I managed to do that and fight till the very end," he added.

The Grand Chess Tour means a lot to Pragganandhaa, so much so that he called it second only to the World Championship. "Winning this is certainly second only to the World Championship, given the tradition and the stature of the event. The World Championship is obviously at the top, and the Grand Chess Tour is right up there as well, so winning this is amazing. The format is also incredibly tough. You have to prove yourself not just in Classical but also in Rapid and Blitz. I'm happy I was able to do it here," he said. Pragganandhaa has been in Saint Louis for nearly a month, playing continuous chess. The exhaustion is beginning to show, and all he wants to do now is go home and rest. "I just want to go home and rest now, and not look at chess for a week or two ideally. But then there's the Olympiad coming up, so..." he laughed. Pragganandhaa Pragganandhaa celebrates with the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz trophy. (Lennart Ootes/Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz 2026) He credited his team and expressed special gratitude to his travelling partner and trainer, Vaibhav Suri, who managed things for him from India. "My mother and sister were here for the Sinquefeld Cup, but they had to go back. Still, it's great to have them at any tournament. And to my trainers, Ramesh sir and Vaibhav Suri. I think he completely messed up his sleep schedule because of me. He couldn't come here because of some visa issues, but he stayed connected with me despite the massive time difference. His sleep cycle must have been completely ruined. Huge credit to him. He was basically up throughout the night. It's 3-4 AM back in India. So huge thanks to him and my other seconds as well. They have been doing a great job." Pragganandhaa won the highest total prize of \$404,354 from the entire 2026 tour, having earlier won the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and tied for first place in the Sinquefeld Cup. The Grand Chess Tour is an elite circuit spanning Classical, rapid, and blitz events with a \$2 million prize pool. The top four players in the season standings qualify for the GCT finals, a knockout event where the year's best compete for the title. Wesley So defeated Germany's Vincent Keymer in the third-place match to confirm his spot in next year's tour alongside Pragganandhaa and Caruana.

Neeraj Chopra qualifies for Diamond League Finals despite missing three events

India's double Olympic medallist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has qualified for the 2026 Diamond League Finals on Thursday despite missing three of the five meets in the calendar. Chopra qualified for the finals slated to be held in Brussels on September 4 and 5, even after missing the Zurich Diamond League on Thursday. Commonwealth Games champion Rumesh Pathirage secured his top spot among the six finalists after winning the event in Zurich with another massive throw. The Sri Lankan stole the show with a whopping 92.07m effort, his second-best behind a 92.67m throw in the Rome Diamond League in June this year. Besides Pathirage, who accumulated 39 points and Neeraj, who sneaked in at sixth place with 12 points, Anderson Peters, Keshorn Walcott, Curtis Thompson and Julius Yego have made the javelin final. Neeraj came second at the Lausanne Diamond League last week with a season-best throw of 88.05m, finishing behind Pathirage. Chopra led the javelin throw after two throws from all nine competitors, thanks to a season-best throw of 88.05 metres. But Chopra's stay at the top was short-lived. In the third round of throws, Pathirage produced an event-winning effort of 88.14 metres, a lead which was never even threatened. "I didn't realise it was only nine centimetres (apart), it was really close, but I'm happy with the 88-metre throw," Neeraj said afterwards. "To be honest, it didn't feel like it went 88 metres because I felt very relaxed. I tried really hard and later focused on my technique. With every competition, I feel that I'm coming back."

Chopra spent nine months out of the sport with injury



before making a comeback at the Doha Diamond League in June where he had finished fourth with a best of 85.69m. After the Commonwealth Games silver, Chopra had posted a long emotional post on his social media accounts about finishing second and what it meant for him personally. "There are throws that travel far, and then there are moments that carry the weight of an entire journey. This one means so much more than the distance. The past 10 months have tested me in ways I never expected. Recovering from multiple injuries, rebuilding my body, finding my rhythm again, and learning to be patient when all I wanted was to compete. I was training every day without knowing if I would even have a season to compete this year. To be back competing at this level feels good," Chopra had written

‘You could figure out this is Sehwag’s son’: Aaryavir set for India U-19 debut



Fans could be forgiven a jolt of déjà vu three weeks from now, when two iconic surnames return to the blue jersey. India U-19's squad for next month's series against their Australian counterparts was announced on Thursday, featuring Aaryavir Sehwag and Anvay Dravid — sons of Virender Sehwag and Rahul Dravid, respectively. While Anvay has represented India at this level before, it will be the debut series in blue for Aaryavir. The teenager has been a consistent presence for Delhi U-19, most memorably scoring 297 against Meghalaya in the 2024 Cooch Behar Trophy. Had he scored 23 more, he would have surpassed his father's highest Test score of 319 — and, per a pact with his father, earned himself a Ferrari before he became eligible to drive one. Yogesh Nagar, Delhi U-19 coach, could sense the disappointment. Not at missing a Ferrari, but a triple hundred.

"Aaryavir was not satisfied after scoring 297. Anyone else would have been, but he has a hunger for runs that is rarely quenched. He lamented missing a triple century and we had to console him by saying it didn't matter. But moments like those tell you who is going to make it big and who is not," Nagar recalls in a conversation with The Indian Express. "I have had the unique opportunity of playing under Viru bhai's captaincy in the IPL, and am now coaching his son for Delhi U-19. I try to teach my boys what Viru bhai taught me during our Delhi Daredevils days. I have passed on his father's teachings to Aaryavir. "Having seen the two generations of Sehswags from close quarters, Nagar feels there are unmistakable similarities. "Aaryavir's backfoot game is just like his father's. You could figure out that this is Virender Sehwag's son just by his batting technique." Jaswant Rai, Nagar's predecessor with Delhi U-19, had only a handful of training sessions with Aaryavir. Yet, they were enough to stir memories of an old friend.

"Viru and I played a lot of matches together. When I first saw Aaryavir, my immediate reaction was: like father,

like son. The same backfoot punch, the same cut shot," Rai, who is also Arshdeep Singh's childhood coach, tells this newspaper. Aaryavir Sehwag India U19 The teenager has been a consistent presence for Delhi U-19, most memorably scoring 297 against Meghalaya in the 2024 Cooch Behar Trophy. Delhi Lions) Aaryavir carries the surname but not the ego that could easily have accompanied it.

The most important thing is that he does not have the attitude of a star kid. There is no ego whatsoever. He knows that only runs will take him to the big stage," Nagar says. Rai echoes: "He has always had immense potential, but potential alone cannot take you to the top. It's very common for a kid who has come from a position of privilege to lack the determination needed to shine. But that has never been a problem with Aaryavir. "At home with the big boys His temperament has been tested outside age-group cricket too. Aaryavir was part of West Delhi Lions' Delhi Premier League campaign this year, but did not always make the XI. Despite having to wait for almost the entire season to get a chance, Aaryavir would never lack enthusiasm, observed the team's mentor Uday Gupte. "Ideally, Aaryavir should have got more chances, but we had experienced openers, so opportunities were limited. That, though, didn't deter him from giving his best day in and day out in training," Gupte tells The Indian Express. Gupte, a veteran of Delhi cricket who watched Virender Sehwag as a teenager, sees echoes beyond technique. "I had seen Viru when he was 17, and now I have seen Aaryavir at 17. The mentality is similar. Like his father, Aaryavir likes to take down the bowler from the first ball. In only his first game this season, he hit two fours in his first five balls." Aaryavir scored 22 off 14 in that DPL fixture. Gupte remembers his shots, but more than that, he remembers the conversation in the build-up to the game. "It was a must-win game for us. We lost three on the bounce. I told him before the game that he would be getting his chance. 'Are you ready?' I asked. He is just a kid. But he replied: 'Sir, bas ek baar chance deke dekho ki main kya karta hu (just give me one chance and see what I do)." Sources have informed The Indian Express that the aggressive brand of batting is among the reasons why Aaryavir has been selected in the India U-19 team. With neither Vaibhav Scoryavanshi or Ayush Mhatre set to feature at the 2028 ICC U-19 World Cup, the selectors are looking at openers who can score quickly. Not all facets, however, have been explored. "Not many know this, but he is a handy leg-spinner too. He has got a great googly. I have told him that if he hones his bowling skills, in addition to the technically astute batter that he is, he will go to the very top," says Gupte.

India’s women’s hockey report card: One loss to Dutch, but overall team on up

Navneet Kaur dodged past two German defenders, wrong footed goalkeeper Finja Starck, and then dinked the ball into the goal to score India's third and decisive goal in the fifth-sixth classification match of the Women's World Cup on Thursday. It was the pick of the three scored by the Indian women, who defeated Germany 3-1 to finish fifth and register their best-ever finish after the inaugural 1974 World Cup where the team had finished fourth.

"We would have liked to play the semi-final but it is what it is. This fifth place finish gives us more confidence going into the Asian Games," player of the match Neha said after the match. She is right about playing the semi-final. Ranked ninth in the world, the Indian women's team pushed above their weight, holding Olympic silver medallist China, then England to draws and losing 0-2 to Netherlands. In a do-or-die match against the Australians, the Indians finally ran out of steam, but still created a realistic chance to reach the World Cup podium.

Missing finishing touch However, the otherwise flawless finishing in the second half against Germany, was missing against the likes of Netherlands, Australia, and England. "I know things could have been different. Today, we were attacking but not getting anything in the first half. We started going more aggressive in the second half and it resulted in goals," Neha added. The match had a storyline of its own as Sjoerd Marijne's team took on the team coached by India's former coach and Marijne's assistant during Tokyo Olympics, Jannet Schopmann. While Germany had more shots and circle entries to show for, the Indian midfield controlled possession better, which allowed their transition from defence to offence on multiple occasions.

The Indian team was playing on the counter from the first game when Baljeet Kaur and Sakshi Rana combined on the right flank in the fifth minute. However, the German defence denied Indian skipper Salima Tete any chance to reach the ball. Lalremisiam created a great chance in the 13th minute when she found Navneet in the German circle but put too much weight on the pass, which Navneet was unable to reach. In the 15th minute, India lost the video review trying to overturn a penalty corner decision in favour of

the Germans which was thwarted away by Bichu Devi. In the second quarter, the Indian team tested Starck multiple times with the German goalkeeper making three consecutive saves to keep it 0-0 at the half-time. While India attacked more and registered four shots, it was not shown on the scoreboard.

Navneet shines After the half-time, the Indian team not only amped up their attacks but also transitioned smoothly from defence to the final third. The first goal came in the 43rd minute when a calculated pass from Neha cut through the German defence and found Ishika, whose determined run ended with India going a goal up. India doubled the advantage one minute later as the ever-brilliant Navneet scored a thundering hit from penalty corner variation to make it 2-0. Later, Navneet turned poacher in the 47th minute after Salima found her on the baseline and the experienced Indian forward produced one of the most beautiful goals of the World Cup. One would think that had this finish come against the listless attack against Australia or England, India could have lifted themselves onto the podium. After India took a 3-0 lead, the German team attacked desperately in order to salvage something from the match. However, as good as the Indian attack was, the defence also gave a testament to the existing skillset. India's defence handled ten circle entries of the German team and let inside just one goal in the 59th minute with Lynn Krings getting the consolation goal. The India women's team celebrate during the Hockey World Cup match vs Germany. (Hockey India) The India women's team celebrate during the Hockey World Cup match vs Germany. (Hockey India)

Positive show overall Finishing just one place outside of the world's top four is not something many had believed was a realistic target for the women's team. It was expected from the men's team but they faltered big time in both stages with a chance to finish seventh tomorrow against 2018 World Champions Belgium. Marijne will have many positives to look forward to as the Asian Games rolls in fast. A gold medal at the continental event will give India direct Olympic qualification, which the team missed in the 2024 edition. "Yes, the Asian Games is important for us and we will carry the confidence from this tournament," said Neha.

‘That’s the one bias he has’: Former India cricketer on Gill’s captaincy in Sri Lanka

Shubman Gill's Team India faced stubborn resistance on the brink of a series clean sweep on Thursday when Sri Lanka's lower-order eked out a draw in the Colombo Test. Led by a superlative century from Sonal Dinusha, India were denied victory after asking the hosts to follow on. Former India all-rounder Ajay Jadeja highlighted the one quality of Gill's leadership that may have come in the way of India's decisive plans on the final day. Jadeja said that the 26-year-old Gill carries a particular liking towards handling field placements for the shorter deliveries used by his pacers.

"Every captain leads based on how he thinks about the game. One clear thing with Gill is he likes having deep square leg for his pacers, and he loves short-pitched bowling. That's something you don't see as often with others. So that's one bias he has where he uses the seamers with short balls and not just with line and length, with pressure on," Jadeja told Sony Sports. "So he likes to attack with the seamers. Whereas with the spinners, it's the other way around. Maybe because he bats the spinners so comfortably, he feels spinners can't get you out here and there. So invariably, whatever the situation of the game is, one step lower is the field he sets as an attack for the spinners. It's a



standard you set for yourself with defensive fields for the spinners." Despite the series ending 1-0 in India's favour, their World Test Championship final chances took a hit with their points percentage slipping to 51.51 after 11 matches this cycle. "He just loves attacking with short-balls for the pacers, and that's his style, and he will evolve. But at this level, it's the bowler who decides the fields and the captain agrees or disagrees, which is his choice. But it is the bowler who decides, and the captain gets the credit and the blame," added Jadeja.

Rumesh Pathirage becomes fourth Javelin thrower in history to cross 92m twice



Commonwealth champion javelin thrower Rumesh Pathirage recorded 92.07m at the Zurich Diamond League meet to win yet another meet while recording the second-best throw in the world this season. In his fifth Diamond League, Pathirage was leading the Javelin throw competition with a best throw of 89.90m before he hurled the spear to a massive 92.07m in the last attempt. With this throw, he became only the fourth Javelin thrower in history to cross the 92m mark twice. World record holder Jan Zelenzy, 2017 world champion Johannes Vetter of Germany, and 1999 World Champion Aki Parviainen of Finland are the only other three throwers to cross the 92m mark twice.

This is the fourth Diamond League meet win for Pathirage who also won the Rome meet, Lausanne meet, and Doha meet while finishing second in the Rabat meet. Pathirage revealed that he had a bit of headache before the competition. "This season has been fantastic and today, I am very proud of my result. I enjoyed the crowd so much and I have to say thank you for cheering and clapping for us. I was trying for the PB but missed it this time. Technically, everything felt good but I had a little bit of a headache before the competition, so it affected me a bit. Now, Brussels and some more competitions, I keep myself busy," he said. The Sri Lankan is on a dominant run of form win-

ning almost everything that's coming on his way. To put in context, he is the one of the two throwers who have crossed 90m mark this season and has seven out of top ten throws in the world this season. Pathirage has some big competitions to look forward to including Diamond League finale and the Asian Games

Barcelona beats Athletic Bilbao 2-0 to maintain perfect La Liga 2026/27 start

Barcelona: Defending champions FC Barcelona maintained their perfect start to the La Liga 2026/27 season with a 2-0 home win over Athletic Bilbao at Camp Nou on Thursday night. Goals from Raphinha in the 37th minute and Fermin Lopez in the 82nd gave Hansi Flick's side a comfortable victory against a rival that failed to register a shot on target. Lamine Yamal looked more threatening than on Sunday night and tested Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simon after 15 minutes. Despite Barcelona dominating possession, the Catalan club needed a moment of quality from Pedri to thread Raphinha through on goal, allowing the Brazilian to finish in style, reports Xinhua. Simon made several excellent saves in the second half but could do nothing in the 82nd minute, when an error by Spain international Aymeric Laporte allowed Lopez to double Barcelona's lead with his third goal of the campaign. In Thursday's earlier kickoff, Celta Vigo looked to be cruising when Iago Aspas gave them an early lead at home to Osasuna. Celta dominated possession before the break, but everything changed at the start of the second half when defender Marcos Alonso was sent off after a VAR check for a dangerous challenge.

Nimisha Sajayan shines, but weak murder mystery holds it back



Babita Singh Reporting movie review: Babita aka Baby is your average Indian woman, trying to navigate politics at the work-place as well as in her domestic sphere. It could be the story played out in millions of households, but the thing that makes this film different is that Babita is a cop, elevated by circumstances into her position. The fact that hers is a 'compassionate posting' keeps coming up: a death in Baby's family empties up a spot at the police station, which she steps into, with her colleagues expecting her to earn her place over and over again. The fact that it parallels her home situation, as a wife and daughter-in-law, is not hidden either: dutiful bahus are expected to fill empty spots day after day, to keep the family happy.

This duality is captured deftly in Ambiecka Pandit's atmospheric film which threads societal ills through a police procedural, a well-established genre flourishing in the age of streaming. Arriving in small-town Rewa with husband Sharad (Anshuman Pushkar) for her sister-in-law's (Priya Yadav)

godh-bharaai, Baby's focus is split between her domestic duties and the sordid murder of childhood friend Bansi (Barun Sobti). It is when the director and writer Amita Vyas train their sights on the spikiness that happens within the chaar-diwari — mother-in-law (Sunita Rajwar) ruling the roost, sister-in-law behaving like the entitled nanad, and husband doing the passive-aggressive act — that the film works best. Not this sari, that one; haldi doodh at the crack of dawn — all the petulance is saved for the daughter-in-law, who realises that she is being put upon but keeps soldering on regardless.

The ensemble cast is solid, led by a wonderful Nimisha Sajayan, as she does about trying to keep everyone happy, pausing to check in on herself only when she can. But the performances can't paper over the weaknesses of the film. The victim is thinly-written. We never really get a satisfactory sense of who he is. Why does Baby get so involved? Was there something between the two? Why would a woman who is clearly not confident of her own abilities go barreling into tricky situations which are clearly above her pay-grade? This is where Baby, and the film stumbles: her attempts at understanding the weight of patriarchy and her tentative pushing back has more impact, than the unravelling of the mystery. You may get reminded of Sandhya Suri's 'Santosh' in the way an 'anukampa' posting is used to prop up a woman who learns to learn on the job, as well as Rajwar's presence. But the small town woman, and the small town cop, sometimes one playing the other, are in the danger of becoming tropes, if they haven't already: Sudip Sharma (Pataal Lok, Kohrra) is co-producer here, and well-versed in creating atmospheric, grounded crime thrillers. Having liked Pandit's short 'Under The Waters' very much, I was waiting to see what she did with her debut feature. It lags, but there is also no doubt that there is a voice here. Babita Singh Reporting cast: Nimisha Sajayan, Anshuman Pushkar, Sunita Rajwar, Priyanka Setia, Priya Yadav, Barun Sobti, Ravi Jhankal, Geetika Vidya Ohlyan, Rajesh Kumar Babita Singh Reporting director: Ambiecka Pandit Babita Singh Reporting rating: 2.5 stars

Samay Raina turns cyber cell felicitation into a joke, CM Fadnavis can't stop laughing



A video of Samay Raina is going viral on social media — this time, for all the right reasons. The stand-up comedian recently attended the launch event of the cyber-awareness short film Digital Arrest and the 1930 Maharashtra Cyber Anthem, organised by Maharashtra Cyber in Mumbai on Wednesday. The event was a star-studded affair, with actors including Ashish Vidyarthi, Pankaj Tripathi, Sharad Kelkar, Sonali Bendre, Javed Jaffrey and Mangesh Desai, along with singer Sunidhi Chauhan, in attendance. However, it was Raina's quirky comments that stole the show. He joked about the irony of the situation, given that the cyber police, who were after him last year, had now invited him to felicitate him.

Raina, who was felicitated by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for his contribution to cyber-awareness short film, praised Maharashtra Cyber's helpline number 1930 before taking a cheeky dig at his own past association with the department. "Thank you for the felicitation, sir. My association with Maha Cyber has been going on for a very long time," he said. The remark immediately sent the room into laughter, including actors Sharad Kelkar and Pankaj Tripathi, who were seated on either side of him. Fadnavis too was seen bowing his head and laughing, seemingly anticipating where Raina's joke was headed. The co-

median continued, "1930 is really a great number. I have actually saved it because I often get calls from there." He was referring to the controversy that erupted in February 2025 after controversial comments by Ranveer Allahabadi on his YouTube show India's Got Latent went viral. Raina went on to praise the cyber cell for its efficiency, saying, "The Maha Cyber Cell is very active. I can tell you this for sure — whether you are in the US or India, they will catch you. They are brilliant. This is for the first time when a cyber cell officer went to a comedian's house, picked him up, and felicitated him." The comment was met with another round of applause and laughter from the audience, including the chief minister. In another video from the event, Raina was seen being felicitated by Fadnavis when he spotted a plate of biscuits kept on the chief minister's table. He picked one up and cheekily asked, "Can I take this?" Fadnavis immediately replied, "Haan, bilkul," before breaking into laughter. The room soon echoed with laughter as well.

The celebrities were felicitated for their contribution to the Digital Arrest cyber-awareness short film and the 1930 Maharashtra Cyber Anthem. Fadnavis also shared pictures from the event on social media. In February 2025, an episode of Raina's India's Got Latent sparked massive controversy after Ranveer Allahabadi asked a contestant an inappropriate "would you rather" question involving their parents. The episode drew widespread backlash, with critics accusing the show of crossing the line from edgy comedy into obscenity. Multiple FIRs were subsequently filed against Raina, Allahabadi and Apoorva Makhija, among others, following which they issued public apologies. Raina also deleted all episodes of India's Got Latent from YouTube and stayed away from the public eye for a period. He eventually returned to the stage in April 2026 with his stand-up special Still Alive, before bringing back India's Got Latent for its second season in association with Netflix.

Did Amrish Puri slap Govinda for arriving nine hours late? His son Rajeev responds

For years, a story about Amrish Puri reportedly slapping Govinda after the actor turned up nine hours late for a shoot has been part of Bollywood folklore. But Amrish's son, Rajeev Puri, has now questioned the popular anecdote, saying he does not believe his father would have ever slapped anyone. Rajeev appeared on Vickey Lalwani's podcast, where he was asked about the story, often linked to Do Qaidi. According to the widely circulated account, Amrish Puri had reached the set for a 9 am shoot, while Govinda arrived only around 6 pm. Reports over the years have claimed that the long delay led to a heated confrontation and that Amrish slapped Govinda in front of the crew.

However, Rajeev said the story does not sound like the father he knew.

"I don't think that is true. He was never the type to lose his temper. He never lost his temper like that. He would raise his voice only after somebody irritated him twice or thrice, but otherwise, I don't think he would have ever slapped anyone. That is not true. I have also heard and read about it, but it is not significant enough for me to think about as I know that Daddy would never do something like that."

Rajeev Puri on why Govinda may not have worked with Amrish again Rajeev did, however, speculate that Govinda's habit of arriving late may have affected his future working relationship with Amrish. He suggested that Govinda may have realised that his father would not have been comfortable with such delays. "Because of that, perhaps Govinda did not work with Daddy in the future. Maybe he understood that coming late would not work with him, and perhaps that is why he did not work with him again. But I don't think Daddy held any grudges over such things." Amrish and Govinda worked together in Do Qaidi, released in 1989. The film is also widely reported to have been their last collaboration, although different versions of the story have circulated over the years about why the two did not work together again. Govinda recently addressed his reputation for not being punctual on sets. Speaking on a podcast with ANI, Govinda said that during the peak of his career, he was often juggling four or five shifts a day, making it difficult to reach



every set on time.

"Who has the strength to do five shifts and still arrive on time? Nobody can do it. It's simply not possible for anyone. How can you manage that?" "It wasn't only me who did as many shifts. Nobody forced me into doing as many shifts. People would come and insist I work with them, promising they'd somehow manage my time, but they didn't end up doing that," he added.

The actor also joked that his late arrivals benefited some of his frequent co-stars, who were paid for the days they spent on set. "I've done 43 films with Kadar Khan and 42 with Shakti Kapoor. All these people, who used to stay in flats initially, ended up buying bungalows. So, all of their homes and families have run smoothly. They all earned money at that time and advanced in their careers," he added. Govinda further said that while being punctual is important, it should not come at the cost of one's health. "It's good to come on time as long as you're healthy. But if your health isn't great, then everybody would turn into Govinda," he said, laughing. About Amrish Puri Amrish Puri built a remarkable career across theatre and films and became synonymous with some of Hindi cinema's most memorable characters.

'Daayra zaruri hai': Priyanka Chopra's mother reacts to Kriti Sanon's Raksha Bandhan ad row



Priyanka Chopra's mother, Dr Madhu Chopra, has weighed in on the controversy surrounding Kriti Sanon's Raksha Bandhan advertisement, saying that while she believes in the idea of "my body, my choice", there should also be "daayra", or boundaries, depending on the cultural setting and occasion. Madhu's comments come amid the backlash over Kriti's Raksha Bandhan campaign for jewellery brand GIVA. The advertisement showed Kriti in an ivory bralette-style blouse, matching cape and long skirt as she tied a rakhi to her on-screen brother and a pet. While the campaign was meant to extend the festival's message of love and protection to pets, a section of social media users objected to Kriti's outfit and the way Raksha Bandhan was portrayed. Kriti later defended her choice and the ad, and GIVA eventually withdrew it following the controversy. Madhu was asked about the row during an interaction with the media, where she shared her views on Kriti's outfit and the debate surrounding the advertisement.

"My body, my choice is right, but woh daayra zaruri hai. Dignity, respecting other people's values is important. Ab yeh cheezein aisi jagah kar sakte hai jahan par yeh normal hai. Par yeh yahan normal nahi hai. Sorry to say that. Hamare bacche bhi pehente hai, kaam ke liye pehente hai, shauk ke liye pehente hai par jahan yeh normal ho aur mere khayal se acceptable aesthetically hona zaruri hai. Agar aesthetically accha hota hai toh sab kuch accha lagta hai. Par yeh thoda aesthetically nahi tha na isiliye. (Of course, my body, my choice is absolutely true however, there should be some boundaries and limitations. There should be dignity, respecting people's values. You can wear such things where they are normal, but in our culture, it's not normal to do this. Sorry to say. My kids also wear such clothes, for work and because they like wearing but I also feel, they need

'Ab mujhe vida karo': Amaal Mallik takes break from film music, asks fans not to pester him

Amaal Mallik has announced that he is taking a break from film music until next year. The composer and singer said on Thursday that he will not take on new film music projects until next year, saying he needs time to focus on his mind, body, health and recovery. The announcement comes after Amaal recently spoke about being sidelined by powerful people in the film and music industry and claimed that attempts were being made to create negativity around his work. Amaal, who most recently composed the prominent track "Yeh Awarapan" for Awarapan 2, shared the announcement in a note on X. He wrote, "I am all good & I will go all the way in, this time, to do what is best for me & only do what is important to my heart & for my health. Need a break for my mind, body, soul and overall physical healing. Need to rise, recuperate and bounce back soon with a heart full of melodies for you all my dearest #Amaalians ??"

"Please request you not to pester me" The singer-composer clarified that although he is putting new film music on hold, some of his previously recorded and unreleased songs could still make their way to audiences if the films they were created for eventually release. "PS — No more film music till next year, old unreleased film songs will arrive soon if the films even end up releasing, as they are smaller budget movies with good intent and such people don't get screens easily so don't know the future of those projects... Please request you not to pester me any further. Will update as I get to know. Music se cinema tak ka safar mujhe bohot door le aaya hai, ab music ki taraf wapas chalne laga hoon (From music to films, the journey has taken me far and I am going towards music now)." He ended the note with, "Ab mujhe Vida Karo (bid adieu), I'll be back. Anyway signing off for a bit..." I am all good & I will go all the way in, this time, to do what is best for me & only do what is important to my heart & for my health. Amaal's decision to take a break follows several emotional posts in recent months in which he has spoken about his struggles within the industry. In May, he accused unnamed influential figures in the film and music business of sidelining him and claimed that he had been removed from nearly five dozen projects over the years. Speaking about what he described as his struggle to continue working in Bollywood, Amaal said, "I'm trying my best for the last 8 years, with utmost sincerity & obviously some respectful terms & conditions of working but sadly it doesn't work for this place. Plus my inability to hide the truth about this place and its workings irks them further and leads to pointless threats to me and family. There are some very powerful set of people that don't want me to be part of their films or any film for a matter of fact, and it's not just L-BELS, it's beyond that NOW, it's a mixed syndicate of egoistic humans," the singer-composer added. All of them are playing award-worthy politics for almost 8 years now, and that's why you hear less of my music in films. I can't be part of a clout, a power setup, or be part of petty groupism. Even the NEPOTISM isn't working. SO MUJHE MAAF KARO...MERA INDIE MUSIC SUNO...IF A FILM SONG COMES GREAT, IF NOT THEN DON'T FRET." Just two days before announcing his break, Amaal had once again voiced his frustration with sections of the music and film industry, accusing unnamed people of attempting to generate negativity around him and his work through social media. He dismissed what he described as the "competitors and HATERS" game and maintained that popularity and

to look good aesthetically as per the occasion. If it's not looking aesthetic, it will draw criticism)." After the advertisement was criticised on social media, Kriti responded to the backlash and defended both the campaign and her choice of clothing. She questioned why a woman's outfit was being used to judge her respect for culture and traditions. "Imagine being this bothered by what another woman chooses to wear. Respectfully, evolve. PS: I'm the one she tied the rakhi to, and if I don't have a problem with it, why do you? The essence of festivals is not in the clothes you wear; it is in the emotions and meaning you attach to the traditions." Kriti also explained the idea behind showing her tying a rakhi to a pet in the advertisement, saying that, for her, Raksha Bandhan represents a bond of protection that goes beyond the traditional relationship between a brother and sister.

"Raksha Bandhan is a bond of protection. My sister and I tie rakhi to each other. We know we can protect each other just as much as a brother would. We pray for each other's health, happiness, and long life. For us, this prayer and promise extend to our dogs too. After all, they are family!" She further addressed the criticism over her clothing and wrote, "Also, when will we stop telling women what to wear? Ethnic fashion has evolved over the years, yet a woman's respect for her culture is still measured by her clothes. Culture and traditions are in her heart, not in her neckline!" Kangana was among the prominent voices who criticised the campaign. Without naming Kriti in her initial post, she questioned why someone would choose such an outfit for Raksha Bandhan and described the advertisement as "intentionally creepy." "From all the options that are available to us today why would you tie your brother a Rakhi in your bikini/under garments? Where are all your styling options? Ha ha the advert looks intentionally creepy."

"Who is stopping Kriti from wearing what she wants?"

In a later interaction with Doordarshan, Kangana said Kriti's bralette was not her main issue. She objected to the way Raksha Bandhan was portrayed, saying the advertisement lacked traditional elements such as images of gods, teeka, dhoop and deep. Responding to Kriti's statement about women being told what to wear, Kangana said, "Who is stopping her from wearing whatever she wants? Who has ever stopped her? I don't think anyone has bothered about her clothes." On the advertisement being withdrawn, she said, "I think everyone was shocked and appalled. I think the bralette was not even the major point there... But where were the parents? Where is the halwa and poori and pictures of gods and teeka, dhoop, deep? Nothing was there." As the controversy grew, GIVA pulled down the Raksha Bandhan advertisement from all media platforms. Kriti is also a strategic investor in the jewellery brand. In a statement, GIVA said, "We have the highest regard and deep respect for Indian culture, traditions and festivals. As a brand, we have always believed in celebrating these joyous moments with the entire family and this time we wanted to extend the love and celebration to our pets. If our recent advertisement has inadvertently hurt the sentiments of some segments of society, that was not our intent at all. Out of respect, we have withdrawn the said advertisement from all media. Wish you all the love & positivity this festive season!"



genuine appreciation for music cannot simply be manufactured. Amaal also claimed that a paid PR campaign had been run around his latest song "Yeh Awarapan" from Awarapan 2, saying the episode left him "angry, upset and hysterical." While he did not identify anyone, he described the phase as his "most difficult chapter." About Amaal Mallik Amaal is the son of composer Daboo Malik and the nephew of music composer Anu Malik. He entered Bollywood as a composer with Salman Khan's Jai Ho in 2014, before gaining wider recognition with "Sooraj Dooba Hai" from Roy the following year. Over the years, Amaal has composed music for films including Hero, Airlift, Kapoor and Sons, MS Dhoni: The Untold Story, Kabir Singh and Vedaa. He has also sung several songs, including tracks from soundtracks he has composed himself.

Dulquer Salmaan sings 'Loser' for 'I'm Game'

Chennai: The makers of director Nahas Hidayath's eagerly awaited action entertainer 'I'm Game', featuring actor Dulquer Salmaan in the lead, on Thursday released the single 'Loser' from the film, much to the delight of fans and film buffs. The song offers audiences a playful glimpse into the world of the upcoming thriller. The track also sees Dulquer stepping into the role of a singer, lending his voice to the song and adding a personal touch to the film's musical album. The song has been set to tune by Jakes Bejoy and has lyrics by Suhail Koya. 'Loser' takes a refreshing approach to the idea of being a loser, turning what is often considered a negative label into something to celebrate. The song embraces the imperfect, unconventional and chaotic side of its characters, giving the track a fun and irreverent energy. Speaking about the song, Dulquer says, "It's a song that celebrates losers, and I think it's kind of fun. I also got to sing it." The track also gives audiences a glimpse into Dulquer's character in 'I'm Game'. The character he plays is unlike the actor himself. Describing his role,