

Jagga Reddy's overaction made police job difficult during CM meeting

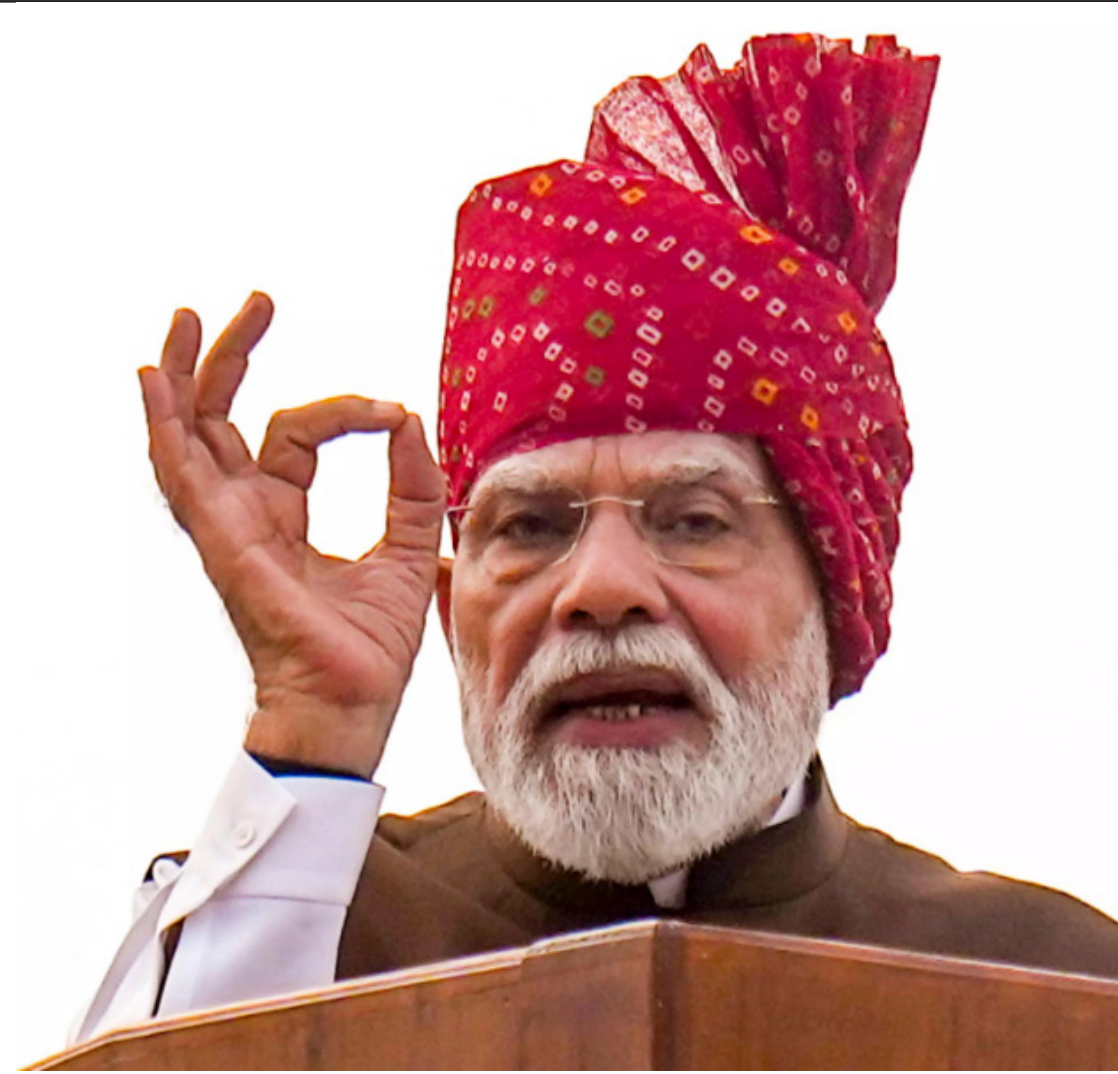
Sangareddy: TPCC Working President T Jagga Reddy's antics at I&B Junction left the Sangareddy police helpless as the crowd moved menacingly and the traffic started piling up. While the Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was expected to arrive in a few minutes at I&B Guest House to unveil the statues of former rime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi, the police found it difficult to control the public and traffic.

While Jagga Reddy had started moving all over the road to attract the attention of the crowd, the cadres and other leaders followed him.

Gap between Congress and CPI widens in Kothagudem Assembly, cadres confused

Kothagudem: Gap between the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Congress party is allegedly widening in Kothagudem Assembly constituency, if the comments by the CPI leadership are any indication.Geographic Reference

It might be noted that the CPI had a pre-poll alliance with Congress during the previous Assembly elections and got the Kothagudem seat allotted to it. Similarly, it enjoys Congress support in Kothagudem Municipal Corporation, though they had contested the elections separately.



Modi's Shout-Out To Gen Z On I-Day

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a slew of announcements aimed at Gen Z and Gen Alpha in his Independence Day address on Saturday, placing young Indians at the centre of the country's journey towards a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047 while highlighting the opportunities and challenges con fronting them. Among the initiatives announced were free online coaching for competitive examinations, artificial intelligence training for one crore youth, a nationwide sports talent hunt for children and a voluntary civil defence network. Modi also highlighted opportunities for young Indians in manufacturing, space, nuclear energy, semiconductors and emerging technologies, describing them as both the architects and beneficiaries of India's transformation.

Announcing that one crore youth would be trained in AI skills within a year, Modi said the government wanted children to develop an interest in technology from an early age and equip young Indians to lead globally in emerging technologies. The free online coaching initiative, he said, would use India's digital public infrastructure and teachers to provide competitive examination preparation nationwide, reducing the financial burden on middle-class families. He also announced a nationwide sports talent hunt for children aged five to 15, with talent to be identified in villages and schools and trained for national and international competitions. Modi said another five to eight semiconductor plants were expected to come up over the next seven to eight years.

India would also work towards achieving 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047, with five new nuclear reactors planned within this decade. Highlighting the expansion of India's startup ecosystem to 2.5 lakh registered entities over the past decade, he referred to the ₹1-lakh-crore research and innovation fund and initiatives such as Skill India, Khelo India, the National Drone Policy, private participation in space and the National Education Policy.

He said the number of universities had risen from fewer than 350 to nearly 1,000 and medical colleges from fewer than 400 to around 850. More than 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs, he said, were helping build an innovation ecosystem among young people.

Alongside these opportunities, the PM flagged challenges ranging from Maoist extremism and drug abuse to national security. Stating that armed Maoist extremism was nearing its end, Modi called for identifying and isolating "dimaagi Naxals", whom he accused of seeking opportunities to create violence and anarchy and mislead young people. He also called for collective action against drug abuse and urged families to participate in the 100-day nationwide Nasha Mukta Yuva Abhiyan. Against the backdrop of changing forms of warfare and threats to critical infrastructure, Modi announced the creation of a modern voluntary civil defence network.



I-Day: Revanth Calls for Collective Efforts to Build Developed India

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Saturday said the fruits of the Congress government's 32 months of hard work were becoming visible across Telangana, with record job creation, a surge in investments, major infrastructure projects and an expanded welfare network driving the state's growth. He said Telangana's per capita income had reached ₹4,18,931 in 2025-26, according to the latest RBI statistics, 91 per cent higher than the national average.

Addressing the Independence Day celebrations after hoisting the National Flag at Golconda Fort, Revanth Reddy said the government had demonstrated that welfare and development could move together while creating employment in both government and private sectors. He said the government would not compromise on securing Telangana's rightful share of Krishna and Godavari waters and would complete pending irrigation projects, including Thummadihatti and Palamuru-Rangareddy.

Revanth Reddy said more than 72,000 government jobs had been filled after completing recruitment for Group-I, II, III, IV posts and via the Mega DSC, while notifications had been issued for another 456 posts through TGPSC and 7,437 posts through the Police Recruitment Board. The Young India Skills University (YISU) had trained 1,190 youth in advanced skills, with 838 securing jobs, while 40,000 youth participated in job fairs under the 99-day Praja Palana-Pragathi programme and 5,700 found employment. Sixty-five government ITIs and 57 polytechnics were being upgraded into Advanced Technology Centres.

The Chief Minister said Telangana had attracted ₹1.29 lakh crore in investments through TG-iPASS, creating potential employment for more than 78,000 people, while MoUs worth ₹5.75 lakh crore were signed at the Telangana Rising Global Summit-2025. The state would host the global summit again this year to showcase investment opportunities. He said Telangana had emerged as a top achiever in business reforms and was targeting new opportunities in life sciences, semiconductors, electronics and advanced manufacturing through the Next-Gen Life Sciences Policy-2026.

The IT sector remained a major engine of growth, with exports reaching ₹3.97 lakh crore in 2025-26 and direct employment rising to 12.14 lakh. Hyderabad now

had more than 355 global capability centres, including 40 established in 2026 alone. Telangana was also emerging as a major destination for data centres, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, with Amazon announcing an additional \$7 billion investment. A major hyperscale, AI-ready cloud infrastructure campus was coming up in Bharat Future City and Chandanvelly.

On infrastructure, Revanth Reddy said Telangana was competing not with other States but with the world. Projects included the 360-km Regional Ring Road, 6,092 km of roads under HAM and radial road networks, and 122.9 km of new Metro Rail corridors under Phase-II. The government was also prioritising the revival of Mamnoon airport and development of a joint-use airfield at Adilabad. HYDRAB was protecting lakes, drains and government land, while the Musi rejuvenation programme covered 55 km, with 39 STPs and plans to divert 2.5 tmc ft of Godavari water to the river.

He said the government was simultaneously strengthening farmer welfare, having waived crop loans up to ₹2 lakh for more than 25 lakh families, provided over ₹36,000 crore under Rythu Bharosa and spent nearly ₹1.70 lakh crore on agriculture and allied welfare in 32 months. Telangana had surpassed Punjab in paddy cultivation and yield and procured a record 81.12 lakh metric tonnes of paddy through 8,575 centres.

The government's welfare initiatives, he said, included free RTC travel for women, free power up to 200 units for 53.09 lakh families, ₹500 gas cylinders for 42.90 lakh families, new smart ration cards, fine rice for 93 lakh families, and 4.5 lakh Indiramma houses in the first phase, besides another 2.5 lakh sanctioned houses. One lakh Indiramma houses were also being constructed in Hyderabad. Social security pensions were being provided to 43 lakh people, with another 2.25 lakh beneficiaries to be added.

The Chief Minister said Telangana was also pursuing social justice through SC sub-categorisation and legislation seeking 42 per cent reservation for BCs, while minimum wages had been revised for 1.11 crore workers. In education, 105 Young India Integrated Residential Schools had been sanctioned, while scholarships and fee reimbursement were supporting 11 lakh students. A

Hyderabad Celebrates Independence Day with Patriotic Fervour



Hyderabad: The 80th Independence Day was celebrated with patriotic fervour across Hyderabad on Saturday.

While various Central and State government departments celebrated the occasion at their respective offices with patriotism, several commercial and residential welfare associations members hoisted the national flag to mark the occasion.

They paid tribute to the sacrifices of the freedom fighters. The members of the associations sang patriotic songs and distributed sweets to people.

Under the aegis of the Hyderabad City Police Commissionerate, the Independence Day celebrations were conducted with rich patriotic fervor and grandeur at the CAR Headquarters, Petlabuz.

Hyderabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar attended as the chief guest and unfurled the national flag. He later received the ceremonial Guard of Honour.

The Commissioner paid rich tributes to the freedom fighters and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the nation's independence. Subsequently, he presented certificates of appreciation to 72 police officers and personnel in recognition of their exemplary dedication, meritorious service, and operational excellence.

Hyderabad: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has launched a sharp counter to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's claims on welfare and development, demanding that he convene the Assembly for an open debate. BRS leader T Harish Rao accused the Congress government of neglecting irrigation projects, misrepresenting employment figures, and making misleading claims on farm schemes and power supply. Politics

The Cyberabad Municipal Corporation celebrated Independence Day at its head office here. The celebrations included the hoisting of the national flag, the national anthem and a tribute to the sacrifices of our freedom fighters.

The occasion also recognized and appreciated CMC employees who have demonstrated dedicated service and contributed their best towards serving citizens and strengthening civic services.

The Commissioner G Srijana appreciated the commitment and efforts of the entire CMC team and encouraged all employees to continue working with dedication, responsibility and a strong sense of public service.

The 80th Independence Day was celebrated with patriotic fervour at the Telangana Human Rights Commission (TGHRC) office here.

As part of the celebrations, Dr. Justice Shameem Akther, Chairperson, Telangana Human Rights Commission, hoisted the national flag at his official residence and camp office. The programme commenced with the singing of Vande Mataram, followed by the hoisting of the national flag and singing of the national anthem – Jana Gana Mana

Hyderabad: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has given a point-by-point counter to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's claims on welfare and development. It also demanded that he convene the Assembly to discuss his claims.

BRS Deputy Floor Leader T Harish Rao strongly criticised the Chief Minister for resorting to personal attacks instead of speaking about Telangana's development and welfare.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Justice Varma case—time for judicial reckoning

The judiciary in India enjoys an overwhelming public perception that it is impartial, incorruptible, and insulated from the transactional politics that shape other wings of the state. That perception is precisely what's at stake when corruption allegations surface. The controversy surrounding Justice Yashwant Varma, at whose residence in Delhi huge unaccounted cash was recovered last year, was a blot on the image of the judiciary. Such instances can result in the erosion of public trust in the justice delivery system. A sense of closure has come in this case with the Lok Sabha inquiry committee concluding that all three charges against the former Allahabad High Court judge — unexplained possession of cash, failure to account for it and interference with evidence — stand proved. The three-member panel held that the judge, who has since resigned, had failed to furnish a satisfactory explanation for the presence and ownership of cash found in the storeroom of his residence. The committee has rightly concluded that his resignation cannot terminate a statutory inquiry once Parliament has set the process in motion. While the findings of the inquiry are a welcome development, the case raises larger questions about judicial corruption. Earlier, an in-house panel appointed by then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna found that the judge exercised "active or tacit control" over the storeroom in which the money was kept. More than 200 MPs endorsed a removal motion against him in July 2025, and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla constituted the statutory inquiry committee the following month. Booking Historical Guided Tours

Justice Varma was serving in the Delhi High Court when a fire broke out at his official residence. The firefighters and police who arrived at the scene found jute sacks full of cash, some half-burnt, stashed in a corner of the outhouse.

Congress Senior Leader MD Rafiq Hoists National Flags Across Ramantapur

“RAMANTAPUR, AUGUST 15 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held with patriotic fervour across Ramantapur Division on Friday. Senior Congress leader MD Rafiq led the celebrations by hoisting the national flag at several locations across the division. Flag-hoisting ceremonies were held at Indranagar Masjid Galli under the leadership of MD Karim and at Satyanarayana Swamy Temple Galli Line under Nehal. Similar programmes were organised

at Ramantapur Labour Adda, under the Gandhi Nagar Welfare Association, and at the Old Ramantapur flag point by Kishan Reddy, MD Shafeeq and others. Flag-hoisting ceremonies were also held at Yadayya Hotel Crossroads under Suresh Kumar Yadav, and at Ganesh Nagar near Aurora College under the leadership of

Syed Siraj and Laxman. Speaking on the occasion, MD Rafiq said that numerous great leaders and freedom fighters had sacrificed their lives to secure independence for the country. Remembering their sacrifices, he called upon the youth to work responsibly for the unity, integrity and development of the nation. "He paid rich tributes to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country." PCC representative Mohammed Tofiq, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Adinarayana Goud, Mogili Lingam, Labhasani Srinivas Goud, Cable Ashok, MD Atiq, Gautham Kumar, Sheikh Arif, Bunny Yadav, MD Shakeel, Thota Shankar, Rajkumar, Chotu Bhai, Gupta Prasad, MD Sadiq and others participated in the celebrations. [1:54 PM, 8/15/2026] +91 93911 09207: END

Grand Independence Day Celebrations at Khammam SUDA Office



“Khammam, August 15 | Indian Chronicle” Khammam: The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held grandly at the Stambhadri Urban Development Authority (SUDA) office in Khammam on Saturday. “On the occasion, SUDA Chairman Sri Puvvala Durga Prasad hoisted the National Flag. Khammam Municipal Commissioner and SUDA Vice Chairman Abhishek Agastya, along with other officials, paid their respects to the National Flag. “Speaking on the occasion, SUDA Chairman Puvvala Durga Prasad called upon everyone to remember the sacrifices of the freedom fighters who laid down their lives for India's independence. He urged citizens and officials to discharge their responsibilities with dedication towards the development of the nation and the welfare of the people. “He stated that SUDA and the Khammam Municipal Corporation are working in coordination to transform Khammam into a more developed and beautiful city. He said their primary objective is

to accelerate development works and provide better infrastructure and civic amenities to the people. “Everyone should take inspiration from the ideals of the freedom fighters and become a partner in the progress of the nation. Unity, inclusive development and public service should be our common goals,” Sri Puvvala Durga Prasad said. “Later, Independence Day greetings were extended to all officers and staff members. “The programme was attended by Warehousing Corporation Chairman Rayala Nageswara Rao, District Library Chairman Mohammed Khader Baba, former MLA Kondabala Koteswara Rao, former MLC Balasani Lakshminarayana, public representatives, DCC district and city presidents, women's wing representatives, senior leaders, party workers, women leaders, and officers and staff from SUDA, Municipal Engineering, Town Planning, Accounts and other departments. “The celebrations concluded successfully with the participation of officials, staff and public representatives.

Telangana Government's Mark in State Development Ponguleti's Leadership Driving Paleru's Progress

“Independence Day Celebrations Held Grandly at Minister's Camp Office

“Congress District President Nuthi Satyanarayana Goud Hoists National Flag

“Khammam, August 15 — Indian Chronicle” Khammam: Congress Party District President Nuthi Satyanarayana Goud and TPCC State General Secretary Maddineni Baby Swarnakumari said that the Congress government is delivering record-level governance in Telangana with public welfare as its primary objective. “Marking the 80th Independence Day, grand celebrations were held on Saturday at the camp office of Telangana Revenue, Housing and Information Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy. The programme was conducted under the leadership of camp office in-charge Thumburu Dayakar Reddy. District Congress President Nuthi Satyanarayana Goud, who attended as the chief guest, hoisted the National Flag. “Telangana Government Entering an Era of Welfare” “Speaking on the occasion, the leaders said that the state government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has been working to bring smiles to the faces of the poor since assuming office. “They said the government has provided financial relief to families through initiatives such as free bus travel for women and 200 units of free electricity under Gruha Jyothi. They further stated that the distribution of free smart ration cards to beneficiaries, launched on Saturday, reflects the government's commitment to public welfare. “New Era Under Ponguleti's Leadership — Record Number of Indiramma Houses” “The leaders particularly praised Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, stating that he is moving forward with his distinctive style of governance in line with the objectives of the state government. “They said that schemes such as Indiramma Houses, aimed at fulfilling the dream of owning a house for the poor, and Bhu Bharati, aimed at providing a permanent solution to land-related issues, are being implemented successfully under Ponguleti's leadership. “They stated that special efforts are being made to transform the Paleru constituency into a model constituency in the state. They said the constituency has witnessed significant development in basic infrastructure, including CC roads, drainage and electricity facilities, along with improvements in the education and healthcare sectors. “The leaders said that the foundation-laying and inauguration of development works worth several crores of rupees recently by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy demonstrated



Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy's vision and commitment towards the development of Paleru. “Participants” Paleru Constituency Atma Committee Chairman Chava Sivarama Krishna, Edulapuram Municipality 6th Ward Councillor Vemireddy Shivadevi Venkat Reddy, and leaders Pratibha Reddy, Shahela Javed, Maddi Malla Reddy, Mangi Lal, Arvapalli Shivakumar, Lingala Ravikumar, Srikala Reddy, Tirupatamma, Ramadevi, Padmaja Reddy, Padma, Dumpala Ravi, Pratapaneni Raghu, Battapothula Satish, Pantulu Naik, among others, participated in the programme.

Freedom We Enjoy Today is the Result of the Sacrifices of Great Leaders

“TUWJ (IJU) District General Secretary Maisa Paparao” 80th Independence Day Celebrations Held at Khammam Press Club “Press Club President Nama Purushotham Hoists National Flag” Khammam, August 15 | Indian Chronicle “The freedom that people enjoy today is the result of the sacrifices made by great leaders and freedom fighters, said Maisa Paparao, District General Secretary of the Telangana Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ-IJU). “The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held in a grand manner at the Khammam Press Club on Saturday under the aegis of TUWJ (IJU). On the occasion, Khammam Press Club President Nama Purushotham hoisted the National Flag. “Speaking as the chief guest, Maisa Paparao said that India attained independence because of the sacrifices of numerous brave freedom fighters. Their ideals should continue to inspire the present generation, and everyone should follow the path shown by them, he said. “He called upon journalists to stand with the people, highlight their problems and work towards finding solutions. He also stated that the TUWJ (IJU) would continue to work for the welfare and rights of



journalists. “The programme was attended by TUWJ State Council Member Samineni Murari, senior leader Mohiddin, District Vice-President Pasupuleti Satyanarayana, district leaders Eluri Venu, Pinni Satyanarayana, Shivaji, Ramesh, G. Nageswara Rao, G. Ramarao, Nageswara Rao, Indrasena and Suresh, along with Press Club leaders Kranti Kumar, Pichayya and Nagachari, and others.

Grand 80th Independence Day Celebrations at Press Club, Khammam

“Unity is the Strength for Journalists' Welfare and Rights” “TWJF H-2843 District President Nanabala Ramakrishna and General Secretary Arvapalli Nagesh Attend as Chief Guests” Khammam, August 15 | Indian Chronicle “The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held in a grand manner at the Press Club premises in Khammam under the guidance of TWJF H-2843 founder Mamidi Somaiah. The programme was organised under the leadership of Press Club President Antoti Srinivas. “TWJF H-2843 Khammam District President Nanabala Ramakrishna and General Secretary Arvapalli Nagesh attended the celebrations as chief guests and hoisted the National Flag. They, along with journalists, paid their respects to the National Flag. “Speaking on the occasion, Press Club President Antoti Srinivas recalled the significant role played by journalists and the media during India's freedom struggle. He called upon media representatives to responsibly carry forward the ideals and aspirations for which the freedom fighters had fought. “He stated that the Press Club would always remain at the forefront of efforts for the welfare of journalists and the protection of their rights. He stressed that unity among journalists is essential for resolving their problems and called upon everyone to work together. “Speaking at the programme, TWJF H-2843 District President Nanabala Ramakrishna and General Secretary Arvapalli Nagesh said that the organisation would continue to fight for the welfare of journalists who work tirelessly to bring public issues to the attention of the authorities. “They said efforts would be made to put pressure on the governments to provide journalists with house sites, health cards and identity cards, and assured that the organisation would work to secure justice for the journalist community. “They described unity as the greatest strength of journalists who work day and night for society and called upon all journalists to fight collectively for their rights. They assured that the organisation would stand by journalists and take the lead in resolving any issue brought to its notice. “They also urged every journalist to work in the interest of society and provide the public with truthful, honest and responsible news. “The programme was attended by TWJF H-2843 District Treasurer Vemulakonda Ramesh; Vice Presidents Kandharaboyina Nagakrishna, Kiran and Lingala Ramamurthy; National Council Member Elugoti Venkat; State Council Member Nalla Rakesh Reddy; TBUE District Secretary Kasoju Sridhar; Video Grapher Association President Amaraboyina Upender; TWJF City President Gantela Kumar; Secretary Kappala Madhu Goud; Press Club President Antoti Srinivas; Secretary Mallela Shilpa; Erra Rajendra Prasad, P. Srinu, V. Vijayakumari, B. Veeranna, Anchor Keerthi Jyothi, Banka Madhu, Kiran, Vanam Nareish, Vakacharla Suresh, Challagundla Satish, Kondal, Sheikh Meera, Sheikh Shabbir, Medara Nagaraju, Chinnamshetti Rambabu, and several others.



MLA Gangula honours meritorious students with cash incentives.

Karimnagar August 15 (Correspondent): Former Minister and Karimnagar MLA Gangula Kamalakar on Saturday presented cash incentives to three meritorious students who secured more than 500 marks in the Class X examination.

The programme was organised under the aegis of



31st Division Corporator Syed Muqaddar Ali at Gulf High School in the division. The three students, who studied Class X at the school last year, were each presented ₹5,000 in recognition of their academic performance.

Mr. Kamalakar, who attended the programme as the chief guest, congratulated the students and urged them to pursue their studies with dedication. He also appreciated Mr. Muqaddar Ali for encouraging academic excellence and supporting meritorious students in the division.

Congress Party Holds Grand Independence Day Celebrations

“UPPAL, AUGUST 15 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The Uppal Constituency Congress Party organised grand Independence Day celebrations on Saturday on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day. Congress leaders and party workers participated in large numbers in special programmes held at the Survey of India office and at the Indira Gandhi statue in Uppal. “Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-Charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy attended the programmes as the chief guest and hoisted the National Flag. He later paid his respects to the National Flag and remembered the great leaders and freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the independence of the country. “Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said that the freedom enjoyed by the people of India today was the result of the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters. He called upon people to move forward with unity, equality and brotherhood and contribute to the development of the nation. “He urged the younger generation to draw inspiration from the ideals of great leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He also stressed the need for everyone to protect democratic values, uphold the spirit of the Constitution and work for the welfare of all sections of society. “Parameshwar Reddy expressed the hope that the youth would play a key role in nation-building. “Congress party leaders, division presidents, senior leaders, youth leaders, women leaders and party workers participated in large numbers and paid their respects to the National Flag. Following the programme, the surroundings resonated with patriotic slogans. Leaders and party workers exchanged Independence Day greetings with one another.

Independence Day Celebrations at CARE and Aster Hospitals

“Hyderabad, August 15 (Indian Chronicle) : The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held with patriotic fervour at CARE and Aster Hospitals in Hyderabad. At CARE Hospitals, Banjara Hills, Dr. Pavan Kumar, CEO-India-2 of Aster DM Quality Care Limited, unfurled the national flag. Speaking on the occasion, he said that while soldiers protect the nation at the borders, doctors and healthcare staff safeguard the health and lives of people in hospitals. He called upon everyone to contribute their share towards achieving the Viksit Bharat-2047 vision. Zonal COO Abhinav Joshi, Medical Superintendent Dr. Ajit Singh, senior doctors Dr. P.C. Gupta and Dr. V. Surya Prakash, among others, participated in the celebrations.



Welfare schemes aimed at inclusive growth, says Laxman Kumar

₹206.82 crore released to 1.92 lakh farmers; 10,506 houses sanctioned under first phase of Indiramma scheme.

Karimnagar August 15 (Correspondent): Telangana Minister for SC, ST, Welfare, Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens and Transgenders Aduri Laxman Kumar on Saturday said the State government was implementing a range of welfare and development programmes with the objective of ensuring social justice, equal opportunities and inclusive growth.

Addressing the Independence Day celebrations in Karimnagar, Mr. Laxman Kumar paid tributes to freedom fighters, martyrs and the makers of the Constitution and outlined the progress made under various government schemes in the district.

Under Rythu Bharosa, ₹206.82 crore had been credited to 1,92,628 farmers for the current kharif season, while ₹71.17 crore had been paid as a bonus to 28,659 farmers who sold fine-quality paddy, he said.

The Minister said 10,506 Indiramma houses had been sanctioned in the first phase, with 8,557 houses already under construction at various stages. The government had released ₹222 crore to beneficiaries based on the progress of construction. Another 1,500 houses had been sanctioned for each Assembly constituency in the second phase.

Relief to women and households

The free bus travel facility for women under the Mahalakshmi scheme had resulted in 8.03 crore journeys in the district since its launch in December 2023, benefiting women and girls to the estimated extent of ₹366.31 crore.

Under the subsidised LPG scheme, 9.23 lakh cylin-

ders had been supplied at ₹500 each to 1.58 lakh beneficiaries, with the government bearing ₹29.78 crore as subsidy. Under Gruha Jyothi, ₹182.30 crore had been spent towards zero electricity bills for 1,71,622 connections consuming up to 200 units a month.

A total of 1,32,229 beneficiaries were receiving



Aasara pensions involving a monthly expenditure of ₹30.60 crore. The process of identifying beneficiaries for new pensions was also under way.

Agriculture focus amid dry conditions

Canara Bank Distributes Scholarships to Meritorious Students

“Khammam, August 15 – Indian Chronicle” On the occasion of the 80th Independence Day, Canara Bank’s Mamata Road Branch in Khammam distributed scholarships to meritorious SC and ST girl students studying from Classes 5 to 10 in government schools. “The scholarships were provided under the Canara Vidya Jyothi Scheme as part of Canara Bank’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The programme aimed to encourage meritorious students from disadvantaged sections and support their education.” Canara Bank Mamata Road Branch Manager Konuganti Praveen Kumar, Assistant Manager Mareeshwara Rao, Cashier Rambabu, Venkataramana, the Headmaster of Shanthi Nagar Government School and the parents of the students participated in the programme. [2:52 PM, 8/15/2026] +91 96187 88997: End



BJP Office Resonates with Slogans of “Bharat Mata Ki Jai”

Nelluri Koteswara Rao hoists the National Flag at 80th Independence Day celebrations

“Khammam, August 15 – Indian Chronicle” The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held in a grand manner at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) district office in Khammam on Saturday. BJP district president Nelluri Koteswara Rao hoisted the National Flag and led the gathering in singing the National Anthem. “Speaking on the occasion, party leaders paid rich tributes to the freedom fighters and remembered their sacrifices. They said that the freedom enjoyed by the people today is the result of the sacrifices made by great leaders and freedom fighters who fought for the country’s independence without caring for their lives.” The patriotic song “Vande Mataram,” which inspired the freedom movement, was also sung with devotion, reflecting the spirit of patriotism among the participants. “The leaders said that it was the responsibility of every citizen to take the ideals and aspirations of the freedom fighters to the younger generation. They called upon citizens to contribute their part towards protecting the country’s unity, sovereignty and democratic values.” As India completes eight decades of independence, the leaders recalled the country’s remarkable progress. They said India has demonstrated its strength at the global level in several fields, from agriculture to space and from technology to defence. “They urged the youth to play a crucial role in building a stronger India and encouraged them to move forward with skills, discipline and patriotism to accelerate the country’s development.” Nalgonda in-charge and former district president Sanne Uday Pratap, State Executive Committee member Dongala Satyanarayana, State ST Morcha Vice-President Shyam Rathod, Mahila Morcha Vice-President Pammi Anitha, Mahila Morcha District President Manda Saraswathi, district vice-presidents Ravi Rathod, Nakirikanti Veerabhadram, Ravi Goud, Boyinapalli Suresh, Mani and Rajini, along with mandal presidents, senior party leaders and workers, participated in the Independence Day celebrations and extended their greetings.



Oxford Grammar High School Celebrates 80th Independence Day

“Hyderabad, August 15 (Indian Chronicle) : Senior journalist, poet, writer and election analyst M.Satish Chander called for providing students with the freedom to choose career paths and fields according to their interests and aspirations. The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held in a grand manner at Oxford Grammar High School on Saturday under the leadership of School Director Prarthana Manikonda. Chief Guest M.Satish Chander, along with distinguished guest, noted poet and Social Reformer Award recipient S.Rajalingam, unfurled the National Flag. Satish Chander praised the vision and foresight of school founder Vedakumar Manikonda and emphasized the importance of giving students the freedom and opportunities to pursue their individual interests. School Dean G.Ramanujulu, Correspondent Katta Prabhakar, Sunitha, teachers, students and parents participated in the celebrations.



80th Independence Day Celebrations Held at Police Commissionerate Office

“Khammam, August 15 – Indian Chronicle” As part of the 80th Independence Day celebrations, the Khammam Police Department organized a flag-hoisting ceremony at the Police Commissionerate Office. Additional DCP (Admin) Ramanujam hoisted the National Flag. On the occasion, he conveyed Independence Day greetings to the people of the district as well as police personnel, Home Guards and ministerial staff. “Celebrations at Sri Krishnaprasad Memorial High School” The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held grandly at Sri Krishnaprasad Memorial High School. School Chairperson Smt. Nishta Sharma hoisted the National Flag. Later, sweets were distributed among the students. “Flag Hoisting at CAR Headquarters” Independence Day celebrations were also held at the City Armed Reserve (CAR) Headquarters. AR Additional DCP Kumaraswamy hoisted the National Flag in the presence of police personnel.



The ULLAS programme had helped make 5,351 women literate, with Karimnagar securing the first position in the State in the programme, he said.

Governance and civic development

As part of the 99-day Prajapalana Pragathi Pranalika programme, 4,290 pending files had been cleared in government offices. Road-safety gram sabhas were held in 318 gram panchayats, while special sanitation drives were conducted across the district.

An integrated land survey was being taken up under the Bhu Bharati framework to create villages free from land disputes. Seventy villages had been identified in the first phase, with re-survey under way in seven villages using modern technology.

Within Karimnagar Municipal Corporation limits, development works worth ₹840 crore under the Urban Challenge Fund and ₹50 crore under the Urban Infrastructure Development Fund were being taken up. Another ₹158 crore from municipal general funds was being spent on CC roads, drains and drinking water pipelines.

Under Rajiv Aarogyasri, free surgeries had been performed on 14,932 persons since January, with the government paying ₹42.75 crore to network hospitals.

Mr. Laxman Kumar said the first phase of house-listing for the Census had been completed and the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls was progressing, with enumeration forms distributed to all voters and digitisation of 83.74% of returned forms completed.

He thanked the Chief Minister, elected representatives, officials, police personnel, judicial officers, employees, voluntary organisations, freedom fighters, journalists and the people of Karimnagar for their cooperation in the district’s development.

Independence Day Celebrations at Hyderabad International High School

“Hyderabad, August 15 (Indian Chronicle) : The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held with patriotic fervour at Hyderabad International High School on Saturday. Dr.Raj Narayan Mudiraj, State President of the Telangana Medhavula Forum, who attended the event as the chief guest, hoisted the national flag and called upon students to contribute to the unity and development of the country. The students impressed the gathering with



their cultural performances, patriotic songs and speeches. School faculty members Mohammad Salman, Mohammed Siddiq, Mohammad Shafiullah Iman, Mohammad Sameer Alam, Mrs. Imrana Fatima, Sameera Fatima, and TCC State Coordinator G.Venugopal participated in the celebrations.

National Flag Hoisting Held Across Meerpet H.B. Colony Division

“Nacharam, August 15 (Indian Chronicle) : On the occasion of the 80th Independence Day, former corporator Jeripothula Prabhudas hoisted the National Flag at several colonies across the Meerpet H.B. Colony Division. “Speaking on the occasion, Prabhudas conveyed Independence Day greetings to the residents and highlighted the importance of unity, patriotism and the values of the freedom struggle. Local residents and community members participated in the celebrations with patriotic spirit.



80th Independence Day Celebrations Held in Shakti Sai Nagar Division

“Nacharam, August 15 (Indian Chronicle) : The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held grandly at the BJP office in Shakti Sai Nagar Division with patriotic fervour. “The programme was organised under the leadership of Medchal District Council Member Sri Sangishetti Ravindra Sagar. “On the occasion, colony members, senior BJP leaders, women leaders, students and youth participated in large numbers. They paid tribute to the National Flag and expressed their patriotic spirit and pride in the nation. “The celebrations reflected the spirit of patriotism, unity and national pride, with participants reaffirming their commitment to the country and its values.



Uppal–Beerappagadda Proudly Celebrates: Intelligence Officer Ikram Ab Khan Honored with Indian Police Medal

“UPPAL, AUGUST 15 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): On the occasion of the 80th Independence Day celebrations, State CI Cell Intelligence Officer Sri Ikram Ab Khan, a native of Uppal–Beerappagadda, was honored with the prestigious Indian Police Medal in recognition of his distinguished services to the Police Department.”The award was presented in appreciation of his dedication, commit-



ment, discipline, and efficient service in the discharge of his police duties. The honor was accompanied by a commendation certificate issued in the name of Hon'ble President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu.“It is noteworthy that Ikram Ab Khan received the prestigious award at the hands of Telangana Chief Minister Sri Anumula Revanth Reddy.”Local residents of Uppal–Beerappagadda expressed their happiness and pride over Ikram Ab Khan receiving this national-level recognition. Several people stated that his achievement serves as an inspiration to the youth as well as personnel serving in the Police Department.“On this occasion, the people of Uppal–Beerappagadda, along with his family members, friends, and colleagues, extended their heartfelt congratulations to Ikram Ab Khan on his remarkable achievement.

Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy visits the family of Alina, a student who died at Bagayat School in Bhuvanagiri town“

“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. August 15):- Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil



Kumar Reddy visited the family of Alina, a student who died at Bagayat School in Bhuvanagiri town.“Bhuvanagiri constituency legislator Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy visited the family of Alina, a student who died after a tree branch accidentally fell on her at Bagayat School in Bhuvanagiri town on Saturday. On this occasion, the MLA, who consoled Alina's family members, expressed deep shock and sorrow over the death of the child. He expressed his deepest condolences to the family members. Standing by Alina's family, MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy provided financial assistance of Rs. 1 lakh. They assured that the government would stand by the family and take steps to provide necessary assistance. Municipal Chairperson Thangallapalli Srivani-Ravikumar, Library Chairman Aves Chisti, Municipal Vice Chairman, local public representatives, councilors, Congress party leaders, activists and others participated.

Independence Day celebrations are grand under the auspices of the Telangana Activists Association: - Telangana Activists Association State President Pusa Srinivas

“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. August 15):- Telangana Activists Association State President Pusa Srinivas unfurled the flag at the local Bhuvanagiri JAC Telangana Square. As part of this program, he offered Johars to all the freedom fighters and praised the Telangana Activists for their spirit. On this occasion, an appeal was made to the government to immediately implement their aspirations“Similarly, an appeal was made to the government to recognize the Telangana Activists as Telangana Freedom Fighters. State Co-Presidents Kodimala Krishna, General Secretary Jampala Srinivas, State Official Representatives Gorla Lakshman Goparaju Ganesh, Town President Manthapuri Vinod Kumar. District Vice President Mudigonda Mahender and other activists participated in the Independence Day celebrations.



Telangana to Become a \$3 Trillion Economy by 2047: Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka

“18.69 lakh LPG cylinders supplied to 2,45,213 beneficiaries in Khammam district with ₹57.05 crore subsidy“10,396 Indiramma houses completed out of 16,243 sanctioned in first phase““Women saved ₹326.73 crore through free bus travel““Gruha Jyothi provides free electricity to 2,49,454 families with ₹257.22 crore subsidy““Young India Integrated Schools to be built in five constituencies at a cost of ₹200 crore each““₹525.36 crore flood protection wall being constructed along Munneru““Khammam, August 15 – Indian Chronicle““Telangana is moving forward rapidly in all sectors with the objective of transforming the state into a \$3 trillion economy by 2047, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Finance, Energy and Planning Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said.““Participating as the chief guest at the district-level Independence Day celebrations held at the Khammam Police Parade Grounds on Saturday, the Deputy Chief Minister received the guard of honour from the police and unfurled the National Flag. He later addressed the gathering and extended his heartfelt Independence Day greetings to the people of Khammam district, public representatives, officials and media personnel.““Bhatti Vikramarka said the government was working with the ambitious goal of increasing Telangana's economy to \$3 trillion by 2047.““Farmers' welfare top priority““The Deputy Chief Minister said farmers' welfare remained the top priority of the people's government. Under Rythu Bharosa, ₹427.97 crore was deposited into the bank accounts of 3,41,913 farmers in the district. Under the crop loan waiver scheme, 1,31,760 farmers received ₹912.10 crore, while ₹40.15 crore was deposited into the accounts of 803 farmer families under Rythu Bima.““He said 2,83,956.397 metric tonnes of maize worth ₹681.49 crore had been procured from 44,568 farmers at the Minimum Support Price. During Yasangi 2025–26, 14,62,411.60 quintals of paddy were procured from 20,085 farmers and ₹346.82 crore was directly credited to their bank accounts.““Continuous training is being provided to farmers on alternative crops, natural farming and climate-resilient agricultural practices through 129 Rythu Vedikas and 62 video-conferencing units in the district, he said.““A subsidy of ₹29.37 crore was provided for taking up new oil-palm cultivation on 3,098 acres during the current financial year. Under the micro-irrigation scheme, drip and sprinkler systems were installed on 3,082 acres with a subsidy of ₹7.37 crore.““Khammam leads the state in education““The government has decided to expand the Centralised Mechanised Kitchen system to all Gurukul and residential educational institutions across the state, he said.““Through the Badibata programme, 66,882 students were enrolled in government schools in Khammam district. The district is ranked first in the state in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy and fifth in the Performance Grading Index, Bhatti Vikramarka said.““To provide education of international standards, five Young India Integrated Schools are being constructed in Khammam, Palair, Madhira, Wyra and Sathupalli constituencies at a cost of ₹200 crore each.““Steps are being taken to establish Advanced Technology Centres at Enkoor in Wyra constituency, Tallada in Sathupalli constituency, Thirumalayapalem in Palair constituency and Siripuram in Madhira constituency.““The newly sanctioned engineering college at Madhira has received university approval and arrangements are being made to conduct classes at the Polytechnic College during the current academic year, he said.““Modern healthcare facilities““A 50-bed Critical Care building has been completed at the Khammam Government General Hospital at a cost of ₹23.75 crore. Modern facilities including CT Scan, 2D Echo, ultrasound, 20 ventilators and a Cath Lab are available, he said.““Construction of a 100-bed Area Hospital at Wyra at a cost of ₹37.50 crore and another 100-bed Area Hospital at Kusumanchi at ₹45.50 crore is underway. The Community Health Centre at Thirumalayapalem is being upgraded into a 100-bed Area Hospital at a cost of ₹26 crore.““Irrigation projects to create new ayacut““Through the Sitarama Lift Irrigation Scheme and Palair Link Canal, irrigation water will be provided to 1,38,790 acres of new ayacut, the Deputy Chief Minister said.““The Munneru–Palair Link Canal is being constructed at a cost of ₹107.65 crore, while the Jawahar Lift Irrigation Scheme is being taken up at ₹630.30 crore.““Works are progressing to provide additional water to the Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal ayacut in Madhira and Yerrupalem mandals.““He said works were also progressing through an 18.69-km canal with the objective of creating 7,115 acres of new ayacut and stabilising 1,18,933 acres.““A flood protection wall is being constructed along the Munneru in Khammam city at a cost of ₹525.36 crore.““Focus on renewable energy““Solar village development works are being taken up at a cost of ₹16.04 crore in 22 villages of Bonakal mandal and in Siripuram, Lakshimpuram, Cheruvu Madharam, Raghunathapalem, Sriramagiri and Lachagudem.““For uninterrupted power supply, 128 electricity substations are functioning in the district. Another 38 new substations have been sanctioned, with construction of nine substations currently underway.““The first indoor substation in Khammam city has been sanctioned at a cost of ₹6.50 crore.““A 1-MW solar plant has been commissioned at Rajulapalem, while another plant is under construction. Rooftop solar systems and solar pumps are being installed in 27 model solar villages.““Under PM-KUSUM, agreements have been completed for a capacity of 1,795 MW. Solar plants with a total capacity of 1,768 kW are

FORMER CORPORETER BANNALA GEETHA PRAVEEN MUDIRAJ Unfurls the National Flag



being installed in 379 government schools.“Major financial support for women““Under the Indira Mahila Dairy Pilot Project, 125 units were sanctioned in the first phase across five mandals of Madhira constituency, with two milch buffaloes per unit at a total cost of ₹2 crore.““For women's economic empowerment, 3,239 women self-help groups received bank linkage loans worth ₹330.69 crore, while 409 groups received ₹12.05 crore through Stree Nidhi loans.““A total of ₹57.15 crore in interest-free loans was provided to 52,059 women self-help groups, while ₹66.67 crore was provided to 3,609 women entrepreneurs.““Through MEPMA, 495 women self-help groups received bank loans worth ₹71.54 crore between April and August 2026. Under Indira Mahila Shakti, ₹7.70 crore was provided to 209 individual units and ₹1.66 crore to 14 groups.““Welfare schemes provide financial security““The government is launching the distribution of smart ration cards to white ration card holders across the state, he said.““Under the Mahalakshmi Scheme, 18,69,122 LPG cylinders were supplied at ₹500 each to 2,45,213 beneficiaries in Khammam district, with the government bearing a subsidy of ₹57.05 crore.““Women made 6,14,48,166 free journeys in TSRTC buses, saving ₹326.73 crore. The amount was reimbursed by the government to TSRTC.““Under the Gruha Jyothi Scheme, free electricity is being supplied to 2,49,454 families consuming up to 200 units, with the government bearing a subsidy of ₹257.22 crore.““From January to August 2026, financial assistance of ₹19.83 crore was provided to 4,301 workers under various welfare schemes.““Indiramma houses fulfil the dream of owning a home““Under the Indiramma Housing Scheme, 16,243 houses were sanctioned to the district in the first phase, of which 10,396 houses have been completed so far.““Financial assistance of ₹454.97 crore has been provided to beneficiaries. In the second phase, 7,800 new houses and 2,600 roof-replacement houses, totalling 10,400 houses, will be provided.““Rural employment and drinking water““Under the VBG–RAMG scheme, 31.53 lakh person-days of employment were generated for 1.26 lakh families, with ₹92.32 crore paid as wages.““Drinking water is being supplied to more than 24.88 lakh households through 1,408 Overhead Service Reservoirs in 915 villages. In addition, drinking water supply is being maintained through 7,889 hand pumps, 1,307 PWS schemes, 292 single-phase motors and 271 drinking water wells.““Land re-survey after 96 years““The Deputy Chief Minister said the government had taken up a land re-survey after nearly 96 years as a permanent solution to boundary-related land disputes.““Re-survey is underway in 3,791.38 acres at Kakaravayi in Thirumalayapalem mandal, 11,782.09 acres at Bethupalli in Sathupalli mandal and 1,258.17 acres at Bhagavathveedu in Kusumanchi mandal.““The re-survey programme is being implemented in phases across 70 villages in the district.““Roads and infrastructure development““Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, 4,678 CC roads and drainage works were sanctioned at an estimated cost of ₹201.76 crore, of which 3,550 works have been completed.““Within the Khammam R&B Circle, 179 development works were sanctioned at an estimated cost of ₹3,169.39 crore, covering 2,245.68 km of roads. Of these, 68 works are progressing and 13 have been completed.““Under HAM, 37 road works are being taken up at a cost of ₹1,227.13 crore. Construction of the Munneru Teegala Bridge at ₹180 crore and the Government Medical College and Hospital at ₹130 crore is progressing rapidly.““The four-lane Kodad–Khammam NH-365A project, taken up at ₹1,583 crore, has been completed 100 per cent. On Khammam–Devarapalli NH-365BG, Package-1 is 99 per cent complete, while Packages 2 and 3 have been completed 100 per cent.““Works on the ₹678-crore four-lane greenfield Warangal–Khammam NH-163G are also progressing.““Expansion of industries and employment opportunities““Through TG-IPASS, 319 applications relating to 153 industries, involving an investment of ₹577.74 crore and employment potential for 1,836 people, were received during the current financial year. Of these, 240 approvals were granted within the stipulated time.““Under T-IDEA and T-PRIDE schemes, ₹18.02 crore in investment subsidies was provided to 211 industries.““Under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme, ₹5.50 crore subsidy was sanctioned to 155 self-employment units, creating employment opportunities for 575 people.““Khammam sportspersons shine““District sportspersons won 24 medals at the national level and 314 medals at the state level during 2025–26, bringing recognition to Khammam district.““In CM Cup–2026, 510 participants from the district took part in state-level competitions and won 72 medals.““Construction of a synthetic athletic track at Sardar Patel Stadium in Khammam, at a cost of ₹8.50 crore, is nearing completion. ₹5.50 crore has been sanctioned for the development of the Madhira Mini Stadium.““Special focus on tourism development““A ropeway and tourism facilities are being developed at Khammam Fort with ₹15 crore. ₹5 crore has been sanctioned for tourism development at Palair Lake, ₹2.50 crore for the Nelakondapalli Buddhist Stupa, ₹6 crore for Madhira Pedda Cheruvu and ₹9 crore for Mamunuru Peta Cheruvu.““A total of ₹30.60 crore has been sanctioned for the development of Chintakani Lake, Maturu,



Chirumarru, Mutharam and Kalakota tank bunds in Madhira constituency, as well as Bayyaram Lake. The works are being taken up in phases.““Integrated development of Khammam city and municipalities““Under the AMRUT scheme, the drinking water supply system in Khammam city is being strengthened at a cost of ₹229.08 crore. Safe drinking water is being supplied to 75,318 households through new connections and 25 water storage tanks.““Infrastructure development works worth ₹15 crore have been taken up in Edulapuram Municipality, established in 2024, with more than 60 per cent of the works completed.““₹75 crore has been allocated for roads, drains, parks and sanitation works, ₹11 crore for drinking water infrastructure and ₹1.84 crore for Tank Bund development.““In Madhira, an underground sewerage system, four STPs and 102 km of sewer lines are being constructed through TUFIDC at a cost of ₹128 crore. So far, 60.40 km of pipelines, 2,245 manholes and 777 inspection chambers have been completed.““Under AMRUT-2.0, drinking water works worth ₹17.09 crore and urban development works worth ₹15 crore are being taken up in Madhira, with 88 per cent of the works completed.““Under SDF, major storm-water drains and a retaining wall along the Wyra River are being constructed at a cost of ₹140 crore to provide a permanent solution to flooding.““In Wyra Municipality, drinking water works worth ₹26.87 crore under AMRUT-2.0, a major storm-water drain at ₹6 crore, and CC roads and drainage works worth ₹4.75 crore are being taken up.““A shopping complex costing ₹7.40 crore and CC roads and drainage works worth ₹46.42 crore have also been sanctioned in different parts of Wyra town.““In Kalluru Municipality, 34 development works were taken up at a cost of ₹15 crore, of which four works worth ₹1.50 crore have been completed and works worth ₹13.50 crore are progressing.““In Sathupalli Municipality, 34 development works were taken up at ₹15 crore, of which 10 have been completed. Development works worth ₹7 crore are being undertaken through TUFIDC, while under AMRUT-2.0, 24 km of pipeline has been completed as part of a ₹19.20-crore drinking water project.““Freedom fighters honoured““The Deputy Chief Minister felicitated freedom fighters Vepala Venkata Subbarao, Gade Suguna Rao, Puchchakayala Ramaiah, S.K. John Mohammed, Panthangi Rajeshwari, Medipalli Bhavanidevi, Alla Sitaramaiah, K. Swarajyam and Mandapalli Shashirekhamma.““Cultural performances by students““Cultural and dance performances by students from various schools were a special attraction at the Independence Day celebrations.““Students of Abhinava Rudra School, KPM School, AGHS Gollagudem, Harvest Public School and Sambhaninagar Government Primary School presented cultural programmes.““Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka watched the performances with interest and appreciated the talent of the students.““Government department tableaux attract attention““Various government departments displayed tableaux showcasing welfare and development programmes being implemented through their respective departments.““The Deputy Chief Minister inspected tableaux presented by the Housing Department, Civil Supplies Department, Energy Department, RTC, DRDA, Transport Department and Forest Department.““He appreciated the officials for presenting the welfare schemes and development programmes being provided to the people.““He also visited exhibition stalls set up by various departments and enquired with officials about the programmes being implemented and services being provided to the public.““Later, the Deputy Chief Minister presented appreciation certificates to officials and employees who rendered distinguished services.““District Collector Divakara T.S., CP Sunil Dutt, Additional Collectors Dr. P. Sreeja and P. Srinivas Reddy, Wyra MLA Maloth Ramdas Naik, SUDA Chairman Puvvala Durgaprasad, Khammam Municipal Corporation Commissioner Abhishek Agastya, DFO Anuj Agrawal, Trainee Assistant Collector Paras Kumar, district officials, RDO Srinivas, police personnel, freedom fighters and their family members, employees of various departments, students, media representatives and a large number of people participated in the programme.

Bhuvanagiri Fast Track.. Special Court Appoints Gajjala Ravinder Reddy as Special Public Prosecutor for Speedy Trial of POCSO Cases

“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. August 15):- Gajjala Ravinder Reddy has been appointed as Special Public Prosecutor for the speedy trial of POCSO cases in Bhuvanagiri Fast Track Special Court. Ravinder Reddy expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, Aleru



MLA and Government Whip Beerla Ailaiah for their full cooperation in his appointment. This step taken by the Fast Track Special Court to ensure speedy justice to the victims and effective trial of POCSO cases is commendable. With heartfelt

thanks,“G. Ravinder Reddy Special Public Prosecutor POCSO Court, Bhuvanagiri Yadama Praveen“Advocate Palle Ram Reddy“Advocate M. Wasim Advocate“Gaddam Prasad Advocate and others participated.

‘The Indian Border’ Should Become a Big Success: Major SPS Oberoi at ‘Zinda Rahein Tho Duty’ Song Launch

“Produced by Nivedya Reddy under the Art in Heart Creations banner and directed by DS Basha, ‘The Indian Border’ features Kiran Yarlagadda, Adarsh, Murali Mohan, Megha Sri and Sindhu Tulani in key roles. Ahead of Independence Day, the team unveiled a patriotic song from the movie.”“Titled ‘Zinda Rahein Tho Duty’, the song delivers and inducing moments, igniting a strong sense of patriotism. Anand Mantra’s powerful composition, DS Basha’s lyrics and Saravana’s vocals turn the track into a stirring patriotic anthem. The song pays tribute to the sacrifices, courage and valour of Indian soldiers. K Music has acquired the audio rights of the film. The team is currently busy with post-production activities.”“Speaking at the song launch event, Major SPS Oberoi said, “It is wonderful to see a film being made about our country and the Indian Army. Everyone should take care of their health and avoid eating outside food. I have no connection with the film industry. I wish this movie a great success.”“Hero and writer Kiran Yarlagadda said , “Thank you to everyone who came to the ‘The Indian Border’ event. The story was born in me during the Palestine war. Basha garu gave the story a proper shape. Ex-army personnel and the media have supported us tremendously. We have portrayed the sacrifices made by a soldier as well as those made by a soldier’s wife. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported us throughout this journey.”“Director DS Basha said, “My thanks to the army officials and members of the media who attended the ‘The Indian Border’ event. This film showcases the sacrifices, thoughts and greatness of a soldier. That is why we created this song as a tribute to soldiers. If we are able to live happily and peacefully today, it is because of the sacrifices made by our soldiers. I thank the Sukumar Writings team for supporting me throughout this journey. I really liked the story narrated by Kiran garu, and I am happy to be part of such a wonderful story and film.”“Producer Nivedya Reddy said, “Thank you to everyone who attended the ‘The Indian Border’ event. We all worked together like one family. My father was also a soldier. Through this film, we wanted to showcase human relationships and emotions. Our movie is being made as a tribute to the soldiers.”“Executive Producer Ram



Gopal Chowdary said , “Kiran narrated a wonderful story to me. I really liked this patriotic story. Kiran is someone who always helps others. So, I extended my support to Kiran and Nivedya garu in my own way.”“Choreographer Ramesh Master said, “‘Zinda Rahein To Duty’ has come out very well. Everyone danced with tremendous energy.”“Music Director Anand Mantra said, “‘The Indian Border’ has a wonderful story. I am currently working on the background score. There are many emotional sequences and the film carries a strong message. I hope everyone accepts and appreciates this movie.”“Nalinikanth Kondapalli is the cinematographer, while K. Ramesh handles the editing. Harnath Singuluri and Gouri Shankar Nadipalli have penned the lyrics for the songs. The makers are expected to announce more updates about the movie soon.”“Cast: Kiran Yarlagadda, Adarsh, Murali Mohan, Megha Sri, Sindhu Tulani, Maya Machchendra, Aditya Menon, Ajay, Indu Anand, Uma Vurukonda, Shan, Pasha, Tirupati Dorai, Rajender and others.”“Technical Crew:“Banner: Art in Heart Creations“Producer: Nivedya Reddy“Director: DS Basha“Story: Kiran Yarlagadda“Music: Anand Mantra“Cinematography:“ Nalinikanth Kondapalli“Editing: K Ramesh“Associate Editor: Anugoju Renuka Babu“Choreographer: E. Ramesh Master“Lyrics: Harnath Singuluri, Gouri Shankar Nadipalli“PRO: Sai Satish

DPR should be announced for the cleaning of Musi in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district:- CPM State Secretariat Member Yandi Jahangir

““Godavari waters should be connected to the canals and tanks within Musi limits..Thousands of people should come to the Maha Dharna organized near Indra Park on the 31st for the completion of pending projects and canals....CPM State Secretariat Member Yandi Jahangir““Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. August 15):- CPM State Secretariat Member Yandi Jahangir demanded that the government immediately announce a DPR for the cleaning of Musi in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district and save the lives of the people from poisonous water. On Saturday, the Pochampally CPM Mandal Committee meeting was held at the CPM Mandal Office, Pochampally Mandal under the chairmanship of Secretariat member Pagilla Linga Reddy. Jahangir participated as the chief guest in the meeting and expressed his concern that the farmers, agricultural laborers and people of the Pochampally area are trapped in the poisonous grip of Musi waters and are facing many difficulties. Scientists say that there are toxic residues in the crops, vegetables, orchards and mats grown with Musi water and people who eat them are also falling ill. He said that in order to protect the people and crops from this, Musi should be cleaned, Godavari waters should be brought to Shamirpet tank through Kaleshwaram and from there, the water of Godavari should be filled with water from Edu Ladda and connected to the canals and tanks within Musi. Jahangir called for the construction of the Basvapuram Project, Gandhamalla Project, Palamuru Rangareddy Projects, which are being constructed to solve the irriga-



tion problems of farmers in the district and to make the districts fertile, and for the relief of the displaced, for the release of funds, for the pending Pillaipalli, Bunadigani Canal, Dharmareddypalli Canals, and for the completion of the canals, and for the renovation of the Asif Nagar Canal and Brindavanam Canals. He called for thousands of people to gather at the "Mahadharna" being organized at Indira Park on the 31st of this month, which will be held from Bhuvanagiri to Hyderabad Indra Park. CPM state committee member Kondamadugu Narasimha, mandal secretary Kota Ramachandra Reddy, mandal secretariat members Manchala Madhu, Prasadam Vishnu, Gudur Buchi Reddy, mandal committee members Nellikanti Jangayya, Sama Janga Reddy, Pathi Bikshapati, Boyapalli Pushpalatha and others participated in this meeting.

Grand 80th Independence Day Celebrations Held in Uppal — National Flag Hoisted by NERDAM BHASKER GOUD

““UPPAL, AUGUST 15 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The 80th Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm across various parts of the Uppal Assembly constituency on Saturday, with national flags being hoisted at several locations.“BRS former State Secretary and Uppal BC Assembly JAC leader Nerdam Bhaskar Goud attended the celebrations as the chief guest and hoisted the national flag at various locations.“The Uppal Pastors Association also organized Independence Day celebrations in a grand manner. The programmes were conducted under the leadership of Association Honorary President G. Prabhakar, President G. Nathaniel, Secretary J.C. Babu Joda, and Treasurer M. Jeevaraju. Pastor B.C.K. Devadanam, Pastor Varaprasad Rao Basimalla, and others participated in the celebrations.“Similarly, the Uppal Adarsh Auto Union organized a flag-hoisting programme in which President Yadanna, Secretary Satish Bhaskar, Vice-President Shekhar Reddy, Honorary President Ravi, along with Raju, Ellamma temple priest Madhuchari, Ravinder Reddy, Venkateshwarlu, Balaraju and others participated.“Representatives of the Uppal Painters Association, including its President Joseph, also took part in the celebrations.“As part of the Independence Day programmes organized by the Uppal Pastors Association, national flags were hoisted at various locations and the sacrifices of the freedom fighters were remembered. The participants called upon everyone to remain committed to preserving peace, unity, brotherhood and democracy in the country.



Fans and Lights Donated to GG Colony Anganwadi Centre by HABSIGUDA DIVISION CONGREGES PRESIDENT KANDI SHRAVAN KUMAR REDDY

““HABSIGUDA , AUGUST 15 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held in a grand manner on Saturday at the GG Colony Anganwadi Centre in Gandhi Girijan Basti under the Habsiguda Division.Habsiguda Congress Party Division President Kandi Shravan Kumar Reddy, who attended the programme as the chief guest, unfurled the national flag. On the occasion, he extended Independence Day greetings to the people and paid tribute to the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the country's independence.Later, Kandi Shravan Kumar Reddy distributed sweets to the children and participated in the celebrations with them. With the aim of improving basic facilities for the children at the Anganwadi Centre, he donated fans and lights to the centre.Anganwadi teacher Swathi and residents of Gandhi Girijan Basti expressed their gratitude to Kandi Shravan Kumar Reddy for providing the much-needed facilities. They thanked him for his continued efforts towards improving amenities at the Anganwadi Centre and for the overall development of the division.“District ST Cell President Ganesh Naik, former Habsiguda Division President Gannaram Vijay Kumar, Division General Secretary Dharma Naik, Ramalayam Chairman Chintala Baburao, senior leaders Muralikrishna Mudiraj, Raju Naik, Kishan Naik, Malu Naik, Javed, Solomon Babu and Dharma Raju, Youth Congress President Vasu Naik, Ramarao, Sai Kumar, Sai Kiran, Suman Naik, former councillor Govardhan Naik, Kalyan Naik, Rajesh, Ram Chander, Ganesh Naik, Vinod Naik, Mekala Shiva, Khaleem and others participated in the programme.



Grand 80th Independence Day Celebrations at Gayathri VidyaNiketan

““Peddapalli August 15(Indian Chronicle): Gayathri VidyaNiketan School in Peddapalli vibrated with patriotism and jubilation as it celebrated India’s 80th Independence Day with solemn splendor.The campus came alive with an array of vibrant cultural performances presented by enthusiastic students.“The event featured breathtaking dance routines set to patriotic melodies, alongside impressive human pyramid formations by students of classes 6,7and 8 that drew widespread acclaim. Demonstrations of martial arts, including Karate and traditional Karra Samu (stick fighting), kept the audience spellbound.Stirring speeches delivered by young speakers highlighted the sacrifices of freedom fighters and

reignited national pride.“Allenki Srinivas,Chairman of Gayathri Educational Institutions,hoisted the national flag and extended warm wishes to all present.Emphasizing the significance of national festivals,he noted that such occasions instill patriotism,discipline, and profound respect for the nation’s heroes.Correspondent Allenki Rajani Devi urged students to honor the martyrs whose supreme sacrifices paved the way for modern freedom,calling on the youth to draw inspiration from the independence movement.The celebration concluded on a high note with active participation from teachers,parents, and students alike, leaving an indelible mark of unity and patriotism.Principal Vijay and Vice Principal Priyanka participated.

Gaddam Sai Kiran Hoists National Flag in Venkat Reddy Nagar

““Uppal, August 15 (Indian Chronicle): The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held grandly in Venkat Reddy Nagar under the aegis of the Venkat Reddy Nagar Welfare Association, Ram Reddy Nagar Welfare Association and Supra Voluntary Organisation.“BJP senior leader Gaddam Sai Kiran, who attended the event as the chief guest, hoisted the National Flag. Speaking on the occasion, he said that everyone should remember the sacrifices and services of the great leaders who laid down their lives for the country’s independence.“He called

upon every citizen to contribute to the development of the nation and work together for the welfare of society.“Colony elders Pisari Shankar, Hanumanth Rao, Ragi Venkata Reddy, Yadamma, Mallesha Goud, Sudarshan Reddy, Sudhakar, Thota Srinivas, Sriramulu Yadav, Upender, Nandakanti Shiva, Balayya, Laxman, Srinivas Chary, Srinivas Mudiraj, Kittu, Ranjit Singh and Ekantha Rao, along with several prominent leaders and colony residents, participated in the programme.

Independence Day Celebrations Held Grandly at Uppal MRO Office

““UPPAL, AUGUST 15(INDIAN CHRONICLE):“The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held grandly at the Uppal Tahsildar Office on Saturday. The programme was conducted under the leadership of MRO Pool Singh Chauhan, with revenue officials and staff participating enthusiastically.“On the occasion, MRO Pool Singh Chauhan hoisted the national flag, followed by the singing of the national anthem and remembrance of the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters. He called upon the staff to serve the public with dedication, drawing inspiration from the great leaders who sacrificed their lives

for the country’s freedom.“He also urged every employee to work with commitment to provide revenue services to the public more efficiently. He conveyed his Independence Day greetings to all the officials and staff.“Uppal Deputy Tahsildar B. Sripal, Rls M. Ashwini Goud and A. Veerendra Sai, Surveyor Kiran, Junior Assistants M. Anantha Ramulu, Anjireddy, P. Venkanna and M. Alivelu, VRO Swathi, VRA Swamy, Attenders Satyanarayana, Sanjeeva and Ratan Raj, along with other revenue staff, participated in the programme.

80th Independence Day Celebrations Held Grandly

“Khammam, August 15 | Indian Chronicle:““The 80th Independence Day celebrations were held grandly at the Khammam District Central Library. On the occasion, District Library Organisation Chairman Mohammed Khader Baba unfurled the National Flag and received the ceremonial guard of honour.““Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman called upon everyone to remember the sacrifices of the freedom fighters and work towards safeguarding national unity, brotherhood and constitutional values. He expressed the hope that the youth would move forward with education, knowledge and patriotism.““The programme was attended by Nagandla Deepak Chowdary, Kamarthapu Murali, Pakala Seshagiri, Maduri Saidarao, Rangarao Shetty, Kosuri Prasad and Khaja Murali Narayana, along with Library Organisation staff Santosh Kumar, Bhaskar Rao, Babu, Venkateshwarlu, Koteswar Rao and Vijayakumari. The President and Secretary of the Pavilion Walkers Association also participated.““Later, District Library Organisation Chairman Mohammed Khader Baba unfurled the National Flag at the R&B Guest House and participated in the Independence Day celebrations.

20,000 Students Unite in Tirupati for Grand Tiranga Rally on Independence Day

““Tirupati, August 15, 2026: Marking the spirit of Independence Day and reinforcing the message of ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’, over 20,000 students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School came together for a grand Tiranga Rally in Tirupati.““The rally witnessed the participation of students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School, who marched together carrying a spectacular 100-foot-long Indian Tricolour. The sight of thousands of students walking together with the national flag created a powerful display of patriotism, unity and national pride.““Vishnu Manchu, Pro-Chancellor of Mohan Babu University, joined the students during the rally, along with the Vice-Chancellor, faculty and staff members. His participation encouraged the students to come together and celebrate the values embodied by the national flag.““The rally was organised in the spirit of the ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ campaign, encouraging the younger generation to celebrate Independence Day with pride and strengthen their

connection with the nation.““ Speaking on the occasion, Vishnu Manchu, Pro-Chancellor, Mohan Babu University said , “Tiranga is a symbol of the sacrifices of our freedom fighters and the hopes and aspirations of every Indian. Seeing thousands of students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School come together with such enthusiasm is deeply inspiring. As educational institutions, it is our responsibility to nurture young minds who are not only academically strong, but also conscious of their responsibility towards the nation.”“The participation of students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School reflected the spirit of unity and collective pride that lies at the heart of Independence Day celebrations.““The Tiranga Rally served as a memorable Independence Day celebration, bringing together the university and school communities in a shared expression of patriotism and respect for the national flag.

At 32.76 lakh hectares, Punjab’s paddy area hits all-time high



GNS News Agency, August 15

Punjab’s paddy area has touched an all-time high of 32.76 lakh hectares (around 81 lakh acres) this kharif season, with both Basmati and non-Basmati rice contributing to the increase, according to data compiled by the Punjab Agriculture Department. The rise comes despite years of government efforts to diversify the state’s paddy-dominated cropping pattern and reduce pressure on its rapidly depleting groundwater.Punjab has around 36 lakh hectares under cultivation during the kharif season, which means that more than 90 per cent of the state’s kharif area is now under rice, when both Basmati and non-Basmati varieties are taken together.

The total area under paddy stood at 31.79 lakh hectares in 2023-24 and it rose to 32.43 lakh hectares in 2024-25. It has reached 32.76 lakh hectares this season, the highest in the state’s recorded history.The increase has come from both categories. The area under non-Basmati, which stood at 25.83 lakh hectares in 2023-24, declined marginally to 25.63 lakh hectares last year, but has risen again to 25.90 lakh hectares this season. The area under Basmati, meanwhile, has increased from 6.39 lakh hectares in 2023-24 to 6.80 lakh hectares in 2024-25 and 6.86 lakh hectares this year.

The rise in Basmati acreage can be seen as a positive trend as it gives farmers an alternative to conventional, government-procured paddy and, owing to its shorter growing cycle, can reduce water use compared with some non-Basmati varieties. However, the overall increase in rice acreage remains a concern. The shift towards Basmati has not translated into any reduction in Punjab’s total area under paddy.In fact, Basmati acreage itself remains below the levels seen a decade ago. It covered 7.63 lakh hectares in 2015, compared to 6.86 lakh hectares this season. Thus, while Basmati has gained ground over the past two years, its long-term acreage has not shown a sustained upward trend.The latest figures underline the larger challenge before Punjab’s crop diversification programme. Alternative kharif crops such as cotton, maize and sugarcane together rarely crossed 4 lakh hectares in most years, and in recent years their combined area has fallen to around three lakh hectares.Cotton, once a major crop in Punjab’s Malwa region, has seen one of the sharpest declines. From 3.35 lakh hectares in 2015, its area has fallen to just around 80,000 hectares this year, a decline of more than 76 per cent.Maize, which policymakers have repeatedly identified as one of

the key alternatives to paddy, has also failed to make significant gains. Its area has declined from 1.26 lakh hectares in 2015-16 to below one lakh hectares in recent years.Sugarcane, meanwhile, has remained largely stagnant, with its area hovering between 90,000 and 95,000 hectares since 2015-16.The contrast is stark. While the government has been urging farmers to move away from paddy, the major alternative kharif crops have either lost acreage or remained stagnant. The result is that the space vacated by crops such as cotton has not been filled by other alternatives at the scale required for meaningful diversification.

The Agriculture Department’s comparative data also raises another concern: the increase in paddy acreage has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in productivity.The average yield of non-Basmati paddy was 7,172 kg per hectare in 2023-24, declining marginally to 7,101 kg per hectare in 2024-25. Its production consequently fell from 18.53 million tonne to 18.20 million tonne during the same period.For Basmati, the average yield increased from 4,866 kg per hectare in 2023-24 to 5,047 kg per hectare in 2024-25. The increase in acreage, therefore, does not necessarily indicate an improvement in overall productivity or production efficiency.Farmers also opt for this crop because of its export-linked market and the possibility of better returns, while its shorter duration makes it relatively more water-efficient than some conventional paddy varieties.But from the perspective of crop diversification and groundwater conservation, replacing non-Basmati paddy with Basmati is only a partial shift. Both are rice crops, and an increase in Basmati acreage cannot compensate for the fact that the overall area under rice continues to rise.This is particularly worrying in a state where groundwater depletion has become one of the most serious threats to agricultural sustainability.A 2017-18 Central Ground Water Board report had warned that Punjab could face an agricultural crisis by 2039, with farmers potentially having to drill to depths of around 1,000 feet to access groundwater.Agriculture economist and expert Dr Sardara Singh Johal, who has for years advocated a fundamental shift in Punjab’s cropping pattern, has repeatedly warned of a water emergency caused by the excessive extraction of groundwater to support paddy cultivation. His argument has consistently been that crop diversification cannot succeed merely through appeals to farmers; it requires a policy framework that makes alternative crops financially viable.The question, therefore, is not simply why farmers are unwilling to diversify. It is whether Punjab has created an alternative agricultural economy that can offer them the same combination of assured markets, price security and income that paddy provides.Narinder Singh Benipal, Joint Director (Plant Protection), Punjab, said the state government was making every effort to increase the area under Basmati, which has a crop duration of around one month less than conventional paddy and requires less water. He said the area under Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) had also increased by 36 per cent this year, helping reduce water consumption.However, he said farmers would not shift to alternative crops unless the Centre provided MSP and assured procurement for them. “The Centre has a major role to play in promoting crop diversification,” he said.

Woman’s decomposed body found at Bengaluru home. She died a year ago

GNS News Agency, August 15

A 57-year-old woman, who had been living alone in her house in Bengaluru’s Bagalagunte, was found dead in the house, with her remains reduced to a skeleton, the police said on Saturday. They suspect that she may have died nearly a year ago.The victim has been identified as Dakshayini. Her remains were found at her duplex house on Friday evening after people alerted the police following suspicions about the house remaining locked for several months.“The house was undisturbed for a long period. People who approached the house, including brokers who reportedly went there to check it for rental purposes, were unable to open the door. Suspecting that something could be amiss, they alerted the police,” a police officer said.A team from Bagalagunte police station reached the house and found Dakshayini’s remains. The police have begun an inquiry to establish how and when she died.Police say victim suffering from mental illness

The police said Dakshayini had been living alone for several years. She had earlier suffered a major personal loss when her son died in 2005 following health complications. The death affected her deeply, following which she allegedly developed mental health problems and was later diagnosed with schizophrenia. Her family had arranged treat-



ment for her and cared for her.Her husband, Umesh, died in 2017. Following his death, Dakshayini continued to live alone at the house in Havanur Layout.According to her brother Mahesh, 50, the family had been out of touch with Dakshayini for around two years.The police have registered an unnatural death report and said that the victim’s family members did not harbour any suspicions regarding her death. “We are awaiting further findings that will help establish the approximate time and cause of death,” a police officer said.

Expired meat, veggies with fungus: What officials found at 6 Bengaluru 5-star hotels

GNS News Agency, August 15

Bengaluru hotel inspection stale foodThe inspections revealed several food safety violations, including the storage of expired food products and unhygienic food handling and storage conditions.The Karnataka Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) department destroyed more than 250 kg of meat, 207 kg of vegetables, 32 litres of milk, and three kg of bakery products from six of the top five-star hotels in Bengaluru on Friday after finding violations of food safety practices, including storage beyond expiry dates and inferior storage systems.The action comes close on the heels of a crackdown on the sale of junk food around schools and colleges in Bengaluru.

According to the FSDA, 76 kg of meat, 200 kg of vegetables and 32 litres of expired milk were seized and destroyed at the Lalit Ashok (South Annexe); 15 kg of meat was seized at the Shangri La; 19 kg of meat at Four Seasons; three kg of expired bakery products at the Vivanta Whitefield; 72 kg of meat/fish at Taj Yeshwantpur and 50 kg of chicken, 25 kg of meat, 23 kg of fish, and seven kg of vegetables at the Radisson Blu hotel. The unsafe raw food was destroyed after the FSDA, under the guidance of Health Minister U T Khader, deployed 30 teams of food safety officers and inspected 26 three-star and five-star hotels in Bengaluru, according to the food safety commissioner’s office.“The inspections were carried out in all 3-star and 5-star hotels located within Bengaluru Urban District, including all zones under the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), to verify compliance with the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011,” the food safety authorities said in an official statement on Friday night.“The inspections revealed several food safety violations, including non-compliance



with FSSAI labelling requirements, improper labelling and misbranding of food products, storage of expired food products, unhygienic food handling and storage conditions, fungal growth on vegetables, and failure to maintain separate storage for vegetarian and non-vegetarian food items,” the food safety commissioner said.Chicken to cheese: Food samples collectedAmong the food samples collected for laboratory testing were tea powder, chicken, mutton, fish, edible oil, chilli powder, turmeric powder, tomato sauce, lemon juice, cheese, papad, cashew nuts, ginger, pepper powder, spice powder, and milk.The major violations found during the food safety inspection were “unhygienic conditions in kitchens and food storage areas, meat products not labelled in accordance with FSSAI requirements, storage of expired milk products, bakery products, chicken, fish, meat, and vegetables.”Further action against the defaulting establishments will be taken based on the laboratory analysis reports and the applicable provisions of the Act, the food safety commissioner said.Last week, the FSDA had issued an advisory to restrict the sale of food products high in fat, sugar, and salt around schools and colleges in the state.

From 500 sq ft cold drink house to 15,000 sq ft empire, inside Mohammad Ali Road’s Shalimar



GNS News Agency, August 15

It is impossible to miss Shalimar restaurant if you are crossing Mohammad Ali Road. Started 56 years ago as a 500 sq ft ‘cold drink house’ serving falooda and fresh fruit juices, it is today spread across over 15,000 sq ft — a Mughlai restaurant with multiple dining halls, a fast food counter famous for its chaats and over 600 pizzas sold daily, a dedicated takeaway section, and a cafe launched last year, Reserve By Shalimar.“It was started in 1970 by my grandfather Zainuddin Sheikh, who was the first to move to Mumbai from Jaunpur,” recalled Omaer Sheikh, 38, the third generation manning the business with his brother Arquam Sheikh, 24, and their mother Ishrat Sheikh, 56. “Back in those days, he got a chef from Bhutan to make falooda and it became an instant hit, and till today, it continues to be one of the most sought after.” The falooda is layered with housemade sugar syrup, vermicelli noodles and sabja seeds, topped with milk and finished with housemade ice cream. “We sell about 600 glasses on average, which goes up to 1000 on weekends and in summer, and beyond during Ramzan,” added Arquam.

In the late 1970s or early 1980s, adjacent shops were purchased and Shalimar became a restaurant serving hearty Mughlai food — Nalli Nihari, Mutton Biryani, Korma, Kadhai Gosht, Do Pyaaza among others.The restaurant expanded to a 400-seater under Omaer’s father Shahabuddin Sheikh, credited with introducing Shawarma to the city after sending a chef to Dubai to learn it. “I still remember our staff struggling to pronounce it correctly,” said Omaer, who started manning the eatery at 16 after his father’s sudden demise in 2004. “My younger brother Arquam was only two years old. I had three younger sisters. My mother took over the reins and I would spend all my day after college here. My teacher would come to the restaurant to give me tuition classes.”shalimar food Shalimar is known widely for serving hearty Mughlai food — Nalli Nihari, Mutton Biryani, Korma, Kadhai Gosht, Do Pyaaza among others. This was 22 years old. Ishrat admits it was tough being a woman and running a restaurant, but the staff supported me. “I was very worried. But I grew up as a tomboy — I knew how to drive, I could read well. My brothers said always read your pa-

pers so you know what you’re signing. They sent a CA who taught me the basics of business and finance. Thankfully it all worked out,” said Ishrat, who also runs a school nearby and is affectionately called ‘Mummy’ by staff.Omaer kept refining and expanding the restaurant — today it is a 600-seater. There is a dedicated dastarkhwan section where curtains are drawn and complete privacy is given to families. He also started four more branches, in Jogeshwari, Vashi, BKC-Kurla and Saki Naka, each 120-plus seaters.On the menu are about 450 dishes. When asked about the signature items, he said, “I can’t tell you five items that are the most selling dishes because we have at least 50 that are extremely popular — from our pizzas to chaat basket to our Mughlai delicacies to our falooda and shahi tukda.”

Although Omaer had to take over quite early, he was insistent that Arquam get a formal hospitality education; Arquam pursued IHM Aurangabad and gained experience at Taj Land’s End before joining Shalimar full time. “Ever since I’ve come, I’ve been putting more SOPs in place — cleaning solutions, kitchen planning, training staff,” shared Arquam, who is all set to get married later this year with a batchmate from college, who is a pastry chef. “We will then add a bakery,” he added with a smile.Their clientele spans neighbourhood regulars, Mohammad Ali Road shoppers, and politicians, industrialists and actors. “AR Rahman, Raj Kumar Santoshi, Javed Jaffrey and his son Meezan are our clients. Shahrukh Khan enjoyed our chicken chilli, while Aryan liked our shawarmas,” recalled Omaer.Last month, Shalimar was under the spotlight again after the Food and Drug Administration Maharashtra suspended its FSSAI license. “We were falling short on some compliances — maintaining annual medical records of staff, pest control reports among other things. They were largely paperwork related,” shared Omaer. “We have 200 staff on payroll, we had to look after them. Shalimar is a big restaurant, it’s not easy to follow so many standards. But we’re happy we did it anyway — we improved.”Ishrat added that though she felt bad then, she is happy they became better. “I am very particular about hygiene — our butchery is inhouse and all the mutton and chicken are washed thrice. Whatever we missed has now been fixed. I am actually very happy seeing the work FDA has been doing of late,” she said.The restaurant got a stay earlier this week after scoring 97 on compliances, and is currently doing renovation work, adding air-conditioning to the fast food section to keep rodents and flies away. A visible change: their paneer tikka now shows white paneer with a slight yellow from turmeric — the red is missing, per FDA guidelines. “We were using a high quality food grade colour, but since the FDA doesn’t want it, we’ve stopped.”When Omaer first expanded outside Mohammad Ali Road, his mother was worried. But he was clear — “I wanted to take Shalimar to everybody who couldn’t come here as frequently as they would like.” Fifteen years later, he’s eyeing at least four more branches: Thane, Pune, a posh pocket of South Bombay, and Dubai.

No phone, no teacher: How 10-day school shutdown for Kanwar Yatra hits Ghaziabad children

GNS News Agency, August 15

Ruksana, 16, woke up at 10 am on Friday, ate a hurried breakfast, and left home in Makanpur, a neighbourhood in Ghaziabad, to join her mother at work, cleaning utensils at nearby kothis.Her day would usually not start like this. The Class 9 student of Home Science and Music would be at Balika Inter College, hitting the books. But with schools shut for the Kanwar Yatra for 10 days, she was left to study on her own.Taking cover from the rain under a tree, she said: “The teacher keeps sending work on the school WhatsApp group, but I haven’t seen any messages posted since August 3. I study from the books... what can we do if there is no phone?”The only phone at home belongs to her mother, who takes it to work and returns late.On August 4, the Ghaziabad District School Inspector ordered all schools in the district to remain closed till August 12, citing the movement of Kanwariyas in large numbers on various routes and the safety of students.Several schools moved to online classes or send work through WhatsApp groups. But many children either don’t have a smartphone, uninterrupted access to it, or someone who can help them understand what is being taught.“Teachers helped me, but now...”Half a kilometre away in Gyan Khand III, Arun Kanojiya, a Class 7 student, solved a math problem. Though he hates the subject, his teachers at school used to help him.

With three other siblings, his chance to open the school WhatsApp group on his father’s phone comes at 3.30 pm.student Arun, a Class VII student, solves a Math problem at his home in Ghaziabad. (Express Photo by Driшти Jain)“My father works at a gym... he leaves home at 5 am and comes back at 3 pm. I then study till 4.30 pm, after which my brother, who is in Class 9, uses the phone,” he said, adding that his mother uses a button phone.Studying the math concept of ‘HCF’ and ‘LCM’, he said he turned to ChatGPT to explain it to him.‘Find Product 29.0 X 31.8;’ he typed, before noting down the answer in the notebook.He added that for other subjects, the teacher posts pictures of the pages and marks the paragraphs they need to study.“The problem is that I’m not able to understand the concepts. In class, I could raise my hand and clear my doubts,” he



said.His family is originally from Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh.While Ruksana and Arun get homework, three brothers who live a few lanes away have not received any since school closed.They study at a government school in Gyan Khand III.Their father, Rashid (30), a painter, was worried: “My elder one (in Class 8) studied regularly for a month... Now after this 10-day break, he’ll forget what he was taught.”

Glancing at the youngest one who is in Class 3, Rashid asked: “If they don’t learn now, when will they? In winters when schools shut due to the pollution, teachers used to hold online classes till 10 pm... sometimes stretching till midnight. But if they don’t get work from school, what will they do?”Basic Shiksha Adhikaari, O P Yadav told The Indian Express that schools decide which medium they want to use to continue teaching during such times. It could be online classes, sending work online, or assigning work before the holiday starts.“We’ve given directions that homework is to be given so that every child is nipun (skilled) and that the level of learning according to the class is maintained despite such breaks,” he said.He added that schools are regularly monitored by both State Resource Group (SRG) and Academic Resource Persons (ARP), who are responsible for visiting schools and conducting student assessments.Back at Makanpur, the rain had eased. Ruksana set off again.“A day before school opens, I’ll sit the entire night and complete the work,” she smiled.

Indian stock markets post weekly gains as crude prices ease

GNS News Agency, August 15

Mumbai: The Indian equity benchmarks posted gains for the second consecutive week, over sharp corrections in crude oil prices and strong Q1 FY27 earnings results.Nifty jumped 0.77 per cent during the week and shed 0.27 per cent on the last trading day this week to reach 24,570. At close, Sensex was down 455 points, or 0.58 per cent, at 78,499. It added 0.52 per cent during the week.

Small-cap stocks continued to outperform, supported by strong earnings traction and stock-specific catalysts, while PSU banks led sectoral gains on improving fundamentals.Metals benefited from a stronger growth outlook and resilient domestic demand, while automobiles gained momentum on expectations of healthy festive-season demand, said market watchers.The week started on a volatile note triggered by the rollout of the new F&O Closing Auction Session (CAS), but markets regained stability as participants adapted to the revised framework, an analyst said.“Sentiment improved meaningfully with the sharp decline in crude oil prices, which helped strengthen the mac-

roeconomic outlook and supported expectations of easing inflationary pressures,” he added.Globally, softer labour market indicators reduced the likelihood of a near-term Fed rate hike, leading to a moderation in US bond yields and a weaker dollar. This, coupled with sustained safe-haven demand ahead of key US economic data releases, provided additional support to gold prices.On the domestic front, the RBI reinforced confidence by maintaining its policy stance, while modestly upgrading its growth outlook and lowering inflation projections. The ongoing Q1 FY27 earnings season has further strengthened investor confidence, with results broadly exceeding expectations and driving broad-based buying interest.Broad market indices outperformed the benchmark indices, as Nifty Midcap100 added 0.87 per cent, while Nifty Smallcap100 jumped 2.73 per cent during the week.Investors are looking for cues from upcoming US labour market and inflation data for further clarity on the Fed’s policy trajectory. Domestically, CPI and WPI inflation readings, along with credit growth trends, will provide key insights into India’s growth-inflation dynamics.

Ahmedabad Chief Fire Officer arrested on bribery charges



GNS News Agency, August 15THE GUJARAT Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday arrested Amit Dongre, Chief Fire Officer (CFO) of the Ahmedabad Fire and Emergency Services (AFES), and a private individual for allegedly demanding and receiving a bribe of Rs 36,000 in lieu of approving the Fire Safety Certificates (FSCs) of six buildings in the city. The ACB identified the other arrested person as Bhavsinh Pratap Jhala (31), from near Vijay Cross-roads and claimed that Rs 36,000 paid to the duo as part of a bribe to approve FSCs for six buildings at Rs 6,000 per building has been recovered. Amitkumar Anandrao Dongre (47) CFO, Ahmedabad, Class-1, was arrested later on the basis of a phone call between him and Jhala talking pur-

portedly about the bribe amount, said the ACB. A statement issued by the ACB said, "The complainant in this case works as a Fire Safety Officer (FSO), who provides fire safety related services, in Ahmedabad city. Through him, fire safety NOCs of a total of six buildings located in Ahmedabad city were sent for approval on the Gujarat government portal, but the accused (Jhala) demanded a bribe of Rs 6,000 per NOC, totaling Rs 36,000 for approval of all 6 NOCs."The complainant then went to the ACB office in Vadodara and registered a complaint on the basis of which Inspector A N Prajapati of Vadodara ACB laid a trap along with government witnesses. The action was supervised by Vadodara ACB Assistant Director B M Patel. Jhala was caught red-handed by talking to the complainant about the alleged bribe and receiving the payment of Rs 36,000. The ACB statement said, "The accused, Amitkumar A Dongre, called Jhala and they agreed to the bribe amount. On the advice of Dongre, Jhala demanded the bribe and accepted it."Legal proceedings were initiated against both of them. Further investigation is underway, police said. Amitkumar A Dongre was appointed CFO of the AFES on October 18, 2024, by the Staff Selection and Appointments Committee of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The post had been vacant and run on interim charge since the previous full-time CFO M F Dastoor, retired on January 31, 2021. Dongre took charge of the fire service of the biggest city in Gujarat on December 24, 2024.

At Gujarat tourism fair, Israel among countries wooing travellers back post West Asia crisis

GNS News Agency, August 15ORGANISED AGAINST the backdrop of the West Asia crisis, the three-day Travel and Tourism Fair 2026 at the Mahatma Mandir convention and exhibition centre in Gandhinagar saw several country and state representatives going all out to bring back tourists and business. Israel, which was among those that saw a massive drop in tourist footfall, was in focus as the 'featured country' at the fair.

Asked how tourism had been impacted since the West Asia Crisis, Marketing Director of the Israel Ministry of Tourism Amruta Bangera said, "It has been impacted but I think we are growing", highlighting that "it should not be a problem to reach the 2019 numbers". She elaborated that in 2019, 65,900 Indians visited Israel, a number that fell to 44,000 in 2023 and to 13,600 in 2025. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, who inaugurated the fair on Thursday, said it would play an important role in showcasing Gujarat when the state had declared 2025 as the "Year of Tourism."

On how they would reach out to Gujaratis, Bangera told "Gujaratis are the most experiential people, who want to seek new destinations, different experiences", therefore "Israel becomes a perfect blend. It's not the first destination that people travel to, but if a person has already done Europe, US and UK they want something new and this is the perfect place where there is something new for everyone."On what set Israel apart, she said, "It is the only democracy in the Middle East, and every Indian will feel welcome there".

"Right now we do not have any direct connectivity with any airline, but the major carriers around the world have already returned to Israel with full operation. Right now you have connecting airlines via Dubai or Gulf carriers. Even with layover, it is around seven hours", she added. Mohan

‘Sadan jhooth da adda nahi’: AAP MLA confronts Punjab Minister in Vidhan Sabha



GNS News Agency, August 15 The ruling Aam Aadmi Party legislators turned the heat on their own party's government in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha Friday, with one of them accusing a minister of misleading the House "by telling lies" while offering to resign if the minister could prove his claim. The exchange between Rural Development and Panchayats Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond and AAP MLA from Payal Manwinder Singh Gyaspura came during the Question Hour on a discussion on the delayed auction of panchayat land in Daulatpur village. Responding to Gyaspura's question, Sond said that the village sarpanch was suspended, an administrator had been appointed, and the auction was being conducted on Friday. He argued that earlier auction attempts had failed because nobody came forward to bid after the department increased lease rates by 20 per cent, forcing it to follow the prescribed procedure of subsequent auctions.

Gyaspura, however, asked why no administrator had been appointed for nearly four months after the sarpanch's suspension. When Sond claimed that auction attempts had already been made earlier in the year, the MLA rejected the assertion. "If the minister can prove that even a single auction was conducted this year, I will resign from my MLA-ship," Gyaspura declared in the House. He then said, "Eh sadan jhooth bolan da adda nahi hai. Iss layi ithe sach boleya jaave. (This House is not a place to tell lies. Please speak the truth here)". He also disputed the minister's reply regarding the suspension of a Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO) and asked why departmental proceedings were being initiated if the officer was not at fault. Sond replied that the BDPO had been suspended in connection with an unrelated case and not in the Daulatpur matter. He also defended the department's record, saying it had increased panchayat lease income across Punjab and promised to place detailed figures before the House in the next session.

Another AAP MLA, Kuljit Singh Randhawa, too put the government on the mat over the long-delayed tehsil complex in Dera Bassi. In a supplementary to his starred question, Randhawa said it had been 18 months since he first raised the matter, yet little had changed.

"Dera Bassi, with a population of around 15 lakh, still does not have a proper judicial and administrative complex. The DSP office, SDM office, BDPO office and tehsil office

are functioning from different locations, forcing people to shuttle between offices," he said. Randhawa reminded the government that it had announced that the complex would be completed soon, but asked, "Where does the project stand today?" Housing and Urban Development Minister Hardip Singh Mundian said the SDM office had been shifted temporarily and new judicial complex was nearing completion. He invited Randhawa to meet him with officials on August 17 to resolve the issue at the earliest. Randhawa accepted the invitation but remarked, "Better late than never". Another AAP MLA, Gurdit Singh, said the existing norm of constructing watercourses for holdings of 50 acres or more was leaving many cultivators out in Faridkot. He said Faridkot was badly affected by waterlogging (sem) and also fell in the dark zone, where farmers faced restrictions on groundwater use. He said most farmers in the constituency owned small landholdings of two to three acres and could not benefit under the existing policy. "The government should also construct common water channels for farmers owning less than 50 acres," he said. Replying, Water Resources Minister Barinder Kumar Goyal said the government had completed 39 canal works in the Faridkot Assembly segment at a cost of Rs 13.12 crore, covering 109 km. Another 23 works had been taken up during 2026-27 at a cost of Rs 18.65 crore. Of these, 17 works worth Rs 15.13 crore were nearing completion, while the remaining six projects costing Rs 3.54 crore would begin soon. Goyal said the issue of constructing watercourses for holdings below 50 acres would be taken up. The minister added that the government had spent Rs 104 crore on relining the Sirhind Feeder to address seepage and improve water supply in the area. Three major bridges had also been built over the Rajasthan and Sirhind feeders. "In all, around Rs 188 crore has been spent on irrigation infrastructure in Faridkot," Goyal said, assuring the House that the remaining canal works would be completed at the earliest. Another AAP MLA Sarbjit Kaur Manuke said the newly built School of Eminence in Jagraon was facing a shortage of teachers after new students were admitted. She also questioned the government over the lack of separate toilets for boys and girls at government school in Tihara village, and asked when the issue would be resolved. She said a school at Hathur had a science stream but no science teacher, forcing villagers to arrange teaching staff on their own. She said another school, upgraded to plus two in 2017, was still waiting for sanctioned teacher posts. Responding, Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains said the department would look into the adjustment of teachers between schools. He said the government was recruiting 1,032 lecturers, who would be posted mainly in rural schools where vacancies were higher. Manuke also questioned the status of funds announced during the previous Congress government for construction of 23 rooms at a school. She said an amount of Rs 80 lakh had been announced during former Chief Minister capt Amarinder Singh's tenure but had not reached the school, and sought an inquiry into where the money had gone.

Pargat raises copyright strikes by AAP: ‘Gagging media, free speech’



GNS News Agency, August 15 Congress MLA Pargat Singh on Friday accused the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab of suppressing free speech by issuing copyright strikes against journalists and Opposition leaders on social media. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Vidhan Sabha, Pargat referred to reports that the social media accounts of AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal had faced restrictions and said the party had termed it an attack on the Opposition's right to speak. "In a democracy, the Opposition has the right to express itself. If the AAP says restrictions on Kejriwal's accounts amount to an attempt by the BJP to silence the opposition, then the same principle should apply in Punjab," he said.

Pargat alleged that journalists and opposition leaders in Punjab had been served copyright strikes over content posted online, effectively restricting their freedom of expression. "Who gave them the right to issue copyright strikes against journalists and opposition leaders? That too amounts to curbing freedom of speech," he said. The Congress MLA also flagged the alleged misuse of small hotels, particularly those located near bus stands, railway stations and colleges and claimed that many such establishments rented out rooms by the hour without proper verification of guests. Pargat alleged that some of these hotels were being used for drug trafficking and that young people were being blackmailed after compromising videos were secretly recorded. He claimed the police, intelligence agencies and the Home Department were aware of the issue and alleged that an organised network, extending to neighbouring states, was involved. Pargat said strict action was needed to protect young people from exploitation and criminal networks operating through such establishments. Congress MLA Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa expressed concern over the state's preparedness for the upcoming paddy procurement season, warning that farmers could face hardships as paddy would not be lifted if the government failed to address storage issue. "The godowns are filled to the brim. There is no space left for storage," he said. Bajwa said a large quantity of last year's paddy stock was yet to be milled, creating an acute shortage of storage space ahead of the new procurement season. He claimed that nearly 30-40% of the previous year's paddy was still lying in storage sheds. He also raised the shortage of railway rakes for lifting foodgrain,

UN chief backs probe into PoK protest killings



GNS News Agency, August 15United Nations: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres backs his human rights chief's call for an impartial inquiry into the killings of protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), his Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Friday. Haq said that there should be accountability if peaceful protesters were harmed. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, has called for "prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all deaths that have occurred due to the unrest, both among protesters and members of security forces" during the popular protests against election irregularities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Asked at his briefing about Turk's statement last month, Haq said, "The Secretary-General supports the work

saying the state required 40-50 goods trains daily but was receiving only four to five.

"Paddy will again remain stranded in mandis if immediate steps are not taken. Please wake up and arrange adequate railway rakes and create storage space. Otherwise, farmers will once again suffer during procurement," Bajwa said. Earlier, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa also launched a sharp attack on the Punjab government over alleged illegal mining, citing recent observations by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Punjab and Haryana High Court to press for the constitution of a House committee to investigate the issue. The LoP reminded Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan that he had earlier requested the constitution of a House committee after the session. He alleged that the state government was "not serious" about acting against illegal mining. The senior leader said the NGT had directed the Punjab government to file a fresh progress report within four weeks in a case relating to alleged illegal mining that reportedly damaged a bridge over the Sutlej river. He alleged that reports had been lying unattended for months without any meaningful action. He also flagged alleged illegal mining in Pathankot. He alleged that a Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO), Kuldeep Singh, was first posted in the area at the instance of a minister, promoted as District Development and Panchayat Officer on February 20, 2023, and within three days appointed Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development). He alleged that on February 27, the officer allotted 92 acres of mineral rich gram panchayat land at Narot Jaimal Singh at throwaway prices to a private individual before retiring the very next day. Bajwa said he had written to the Punjab Governor on August 11, 2023, seeking action in the matter. The Congress leader then cited the ED's July 7, 2026 searches at 16 locations linked to alleged illegal mining. He alleged that two close political associates of a serving minister had been arrested, nearly Rs 1.75 crore in cash had been recovered and Rs 91.34 lakh in bank deposits frozen. He named Shri Sai Stone Crusher and Shiv Shankar Stone Crusher among the entities searched. Reading out portions of the ED statement, Bajwa said the agency had found that the individuals and entities searched had "illegally excavated, purchased, sold and transported sand and river-bed material without proper authorisation and without paying due taxes and royalty". He said the ED was also investigating the role of certain government officials suspected of facilitating illegal mining or failing to take preventive and corrective measures, causing huge losses to the state exchequer. Bajwa also referred to an ongoing public interest litigation before the high court on mining in the border districts of Pathankot and Gurdaspur. Quoting the court's observations, he said illegal mining across the Ravi river was detrimental to national security as it could facilitate the movement of drug smugglers, terrorists and anti-national elements operating in the hinterland.

of his High Commissioner, and we certainly hope that the pleas made by Volker Turk will be listened to." "It's important that all authorities everywhere allow for peaceful protest, and certainly that is the case here" in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the UN Chief's Deputy Spokesperson added. "If there have been people harmed for engaging in peaceful protest, there needs to be accountability for that," he added.

About 50 protesters have been killed in the recent protests by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) against Pakistan reserving seats for outsiders in the elections to the local legislature. The Human Rights office said, "The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) — a movement behind the protests comprising traders, transporters, students, lawyers, activists and others — has been banned under anti-terrorism laws for allegedly threatening public order and security." "Some of the group's leaders have subsequently been arrested. The criminalisation of a civil society organisation and imposition of strict limitations on gatherings raise serious concerns about infringements on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association," it said. Turk called for giving the detained JAAC leaders "access to legal representation and their families" and said, "Their rights to due process and fair trial must be fully guaranteed," according to his Spokesperson Jeremy Laurence. The Security Council Resolution 40 from 1948 demands that Pakistan withdraw its forces and citizens from the area it occupies.

Trump to approach US Supreme Court over White House complex

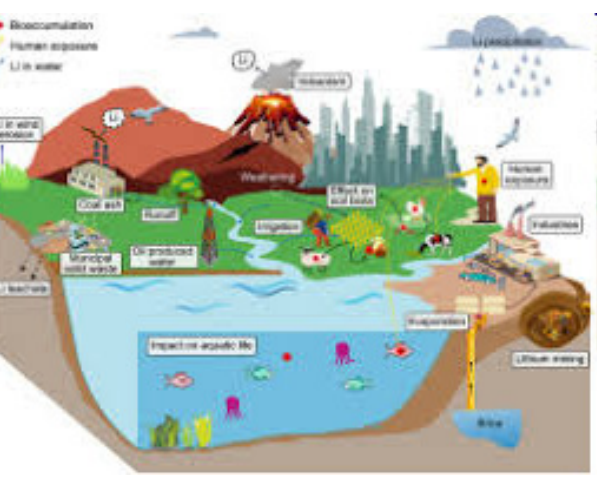
Washington: US President Donald Trump said his administration would immediately approach the US Supreme Court after an appellate court ruling against continued construction of a military and security complex at the White House. Trump said two appellate judges had voted against what he described as a "desperately needed Military Center" required for the national security of Washington and the country. "The decision has been stayed, and does not take effect for a period of time. We will be immediately appealing to the United States Supreme Court," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

The President cited a dissent by Judge Neomi Rao, who argued that the lower court had no jurisdiction because the plaintiff lacked standing to halt construction. "This was a blatant abuse of discretion," Rao said, according to the excerpts shared by Trump. "To begin with, the district court had no jurisdiction because the Trust has no standing to stop construction at the White House," she said. Rao said the balance of equities "overwhelmingly favours the government". She accused the district court of placing "the aesthetic displeasure of a single passerby" above the government's security concerns and the risks of leaving an open construction site at the President's home and office. "The district court seized supervision of construction at the White House, and my colleagues affirm this judicial overreach," Rao said. "Because the injunction is beyond the proper province of the federal courts, construction should be allowed to continue." Trump described the ruling as politically motivated and unlawful. He said the military and the Secret Service viewed it as a national security threat because the complex was designed to protect the country and future presidents. According to Trump, the integrated project includes bomb shelters, a hospital and medical facilities, top-secret military installations, protective partition-



ing and missile-resistant steel. He said it would also include drone-proof ceilings and roofs, military-grade ventilation and blasts capable of resisting bullets, ballistic impacts and glass. "It is all tied together as one big, expensive, and very complex unit, which is vital for National Security and Military Operations of the United States of America!" Trump said. The President argued that the ruling jeopardised White House employees, future presidents and their families. He said visiting heads of state, dignitaries and members of the public could also be affected. Trump said the secure ballroom was being built ahead of schedule and under budget. He described it as a gift from himself and other private supporters and said it would impose no cost on taxpayers. "The entire Complex, Military and all, is largely built, fabricated, and paid for. Much is already on site, or being delivered," he said. "This unjust decision must be overturned by the Supreme Court in its entirety." Rao was appointed to the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit during Trump's first term. The Senate confirmed her in 2019 after she had served as administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

From mines to minds: how lithium shapes energy and psychiatry



In a significant stride towards bolstering strategic resources, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States last month culminated in the launching of a collaborative initiative focused on recovering and processing critical minerals, notably lithium. This partnership underscores the rising importance of lithium in various sectors, from energy storage to pharmaceuticals. Lithium, denoted by the symbol Li, has atomic number 3 and is a silvery-white alkali metal. It was discovered in 1817 when Swedish chemist Johan August identified it within the mineral petalite. In 1821, William Brande successfully isolated lithium in its elemental form through the electrolysis of lithium oxide.

Due to continuing exploration, measured and indicated lithium resources have increased substantially worldwide, totalling about 105 million tons as per the U.S. geological survey in 2024. Major lithium reserves are concentrated in South America's 'Lithium Triangle'—encompassing parts of Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. Australia is the leading producer, extracting lithium from hard-rock spodumene deposits. India's lithium deposits are in Reasi (Jammu & Kashmir) and Mandya (Karnataka), with exploration ongoing in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Himachal Pradesh. The recent Indo-U.S. initiative aims to recover and process lithium. In 1859, Alfred Baring Garrod published a paper in The London and Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science examining lithium's potential to dissolve uric acid crystals, proposing its use for gout treatment. The hypothesis stemmed from chemical observations rather than clinical trials. While lithium salts showed promise in vitro, therapeutic applications were limited by toxicity and impractical dosing. The study marked one of the earliest discussions on lithium's physiological effects, but its medical relevance remained uncertain. In 1949, Australian psychiatrist John Cade published a seminal paper in the Medical Journal of Australia detailing his discovery of lithium's antimanic properties. Cade hypothesised that mania was linked to a metabolic imbalance and conducted experiments, injecting guinea pigs with urine from manic patients, observing toxic effects. He administered various compounds to identify the poisonous substance, noting that lithium carbonate has a calming impact on the animals without sedation. Translating these findings to clinical practice, Cade treated ten patients with mania using lithium salts, reporting significant mood stabilisation and reduction in manic symptoms. This groundbreaking study introduced lithium as an effective treatment for mood disorders like acute mania and bipolar disorder.

Melbourne's Noack and Trautner (1951) and French psychiatrists Despinoy and De Romeuf (1951) indepen-

dently tested lithium in manic patients, reporting effectiveness. Despite initial scepticism and concerns over toxicity, further studies, notably by Danish psychiatrist Mogens Schou in the 1950s and 60s, confirmed lithium's efficacy as a mood stabiliser. By 1970, lithium was approved for the treatment of bipolar disorder in the United States.

Mechanism of action and ongoing mysteriesLithium's exact mechanism in stabilising mood disorders is not fully understood. It is hypothesised that it influences neurotransmitter activity and intracellular signalling pathways, by competing with sodium ions due to their chemical similarities as alkali metals. This competition may alter neuronal excitability and neurotransmission. Despite its long history of use, the precise biological underpinnings of lithium's mood-stabilising effects continue to be a research subject. Lithium has a narrow therapeutic window (0.6–1.2 mEq/L), requiring regular monitoring to prevent toxicity. It is absorbed orally, distributed evenly in total bodywater, and is excreted unchanged via kidneys, necessitating renal function monitoring. It is not used in pregnant women.

With lithium, the difference between an effective dose and a toxic dose is small. At therapeutic levels, lithium stabilises mood, but even slight elevations can lead to toxicity, causing neurological, renal, and cardiac complications. Lithium also interferes with thyroid function, leading to hypothyroidism. Over time, this can lead to fatigue, weight gain, and depressive symptoms, further complicating bipolar disorder management. Lithium exemplifies the Paracelsus' principle—"the dose makes the poison"—whereby a slight deviation from the therapeutic range can turn it from a life-saving mood stabiliser into a toxic agent. It also has a delayed onset of action—often requiring weeks to show full effects—which means that more rapid-acting medications are usually preferred in acute manic episodes. Second-generation antipsychotics have emerged as viable alternatives to lithium due to their mechanism of action and better safety profile. Unlike lithium, which acts as the source of bipolar disorder by inhibiting sodium-GPCR protein pumps in neurons, SGAs act at a downstream level by modulating neurotransmitter activity, particularly dopamine and serotonin. This difference means that while lithium exerts its effects at the root of the disorder by stabilising neuronal activity, SGAs regulate the symptoms more directly by blocking excessive neurotransmitter action. Despite the increasing use of SGAs, lithium remains the drug of choice for specific bipolar disorder presentations, manic episodes and suicidal tendency prevention. It is most effective for classic euphoric mania and bipolar disorder with a strong genetic component. Lithium uniquely reduces the risk of suicide in bipolar patients, a benefit that SGAs do not replicate. Its mood-stabilising properties are particularly valuable in preventing relapses, ensuring long-term remission, and managing treatment-resistant cases. What prompted John Cade to hypothesise lithium for mood stabilisation remains a greater mystery than the unknowns surrounding its mechanism of action. His work was published in 1949 when the relationship between medical research and ethics fundamentally differed from today's standards. Cade's experiments immediately after WW-2 reflected an era where scientific curiosity often operated in a vacuum, independent of ethical considerations. With the establishment of modern research ethics, including informed consent, clinical trial regulations, and oversight committees, such an experiment—would not even be possible today. Yet, these historical inquiries remind us that medical advancements have often emerged from unconventional and ethically questionable explorations. In addition to its role in psychiatry, lithium is indispensable in battery technology, nuclear energy, ceramics, and lubricants. It plays a crucial part in carbon neutrality by enabling renewable energy storage.

Trouble at the Centre of Excellence: Why Jadavpur University remains on the boil?

On March 12, the Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar informed the Parliament that Jadavpur University is set to lose the status of Institute of Eminence (IoE) due to a fall in budgetary allocation. Mr. Majumdar, who is also West Bengal BJP president in response to a question by another BJP MP Samik Bhattacharya mentioned that the Empowered Experts Committee (EEC) considered the revised proposal of the Jadavpur University and observed that there was a steep decline in the budget from the earlier projected amount of ₹3,299 crore to ₹606 crore. Such a steep decline in the budget was not conducive to realise the target set for the IoE Institutions. While the question was raised and replied to by two senior BJP leaders from West Bengal, the development could not have come at a worse time. Jadavpur University, the highest-ranked university in West Bengal, has been on the boil over the past three weeks. Recent violence at the university

Days before the start of the new academic session, violence erupted at the university when West Bengal State Education Minister, Bratya Basu, came face to face with a group of students on March 1. The students who had blocked the Minister's car were demanding that the student's union election be held at the university. After a commotion for a few minutes, the Minister's car drove over the protesting students and some protesting students came under the wheels of the Minister's car. While the protests and blocking of the Minister's convoy was not something new at the state-run university, the fact that the wheels of the Minister's car injured students was unprecedented. For more than two weeks the university witnessed protests and academic activities remained suspended. Nine FIRs have been registered, eight of which against students and one at the instruction of the Calcutta High Court against the Minister, his driver, and another professor at the university. Set up in 1955, Jadavpur University is considered an outcome of the country's freedom movement and is the highest-rated university in West Bengal, which till decades ago boasted of top-rated educational institutions in India. As per the latest National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking by the Ministry of Education released in August 2024, Jadavpur University ranked at the ninth position across the country on the list of universities. The university has excellent humanities, science and technology professors and has several interdisciplinary schools and centers that are engaged in inter-disciplinary research. It is not only politics and protests but also fund constraints that are hampering the development of the university. The Jadavpur University Teachers Association (JUTA) has raised the question that ₹1 crore was crowdfunding for applying for the IoE status. JUTA in a statement in January 2025 said that the university spent ₹34.97 crore from its coffers for "non-salary maintenance-related expenditures" and it will have to borrow funds in future if the situation continues. The university is completely dependent on State funding and has missed the opportunity to generate resources through self-financing courses or other means like engaging with its vast alumni network. With no central funds in sight and the state government stressed of funds due to other financial commit-



ments such as cash incentive schemes for women and children, the JU might have to grapple with funds crunch for a while. Politics at the university At the centre of the controversy is the politics at the university. Jadhavpur University has been a bastion of student unions with Left ideology for the past several decades. The campus saw violence during the turbulent Naxal movement of the 1970's. Despite being in power for almost 14 years in West Bengal, Trinamool Congress that has not been able to establish itself among the students of this premier university. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, has also tried to establish a presence in the university but without much success. March 2025 is not the first time Jadavpur University has made headlines for the wrong reasons. In September 2019, almost a similar situation had emerged when the students laid siege to the convoy of the then Union Minister Babu Supriyo inside the university campus. Mr. Supriyo, who was a BJP MP then, was rescued by then West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar. Beyond the colourful graffiti adorning the walls of the university campus and the slogans of revolution painted all around, student politics has often taken difficult turns, from the occasional laying siege at the office of Vice Chancellors and authorities to the 'Hok Kolorob (Let there be Noise) movement in 2014 when the siege went to 150 hours. In August 2023, a first-year student allegedly fell to death while being ragged by his seniors. Thirteen students were arrested in connection with the case that is being heard in the Calcutta High Court There is much more than aggressive student politics that needs to be addressed by all the stakeholders of the university. The students protest surveillance on the campus and oppose setting up a police outpost, but block movement of others and gherao Vice Chancellors and other constitutional functionaries visiting the institute. The authorities on the other hand try to keep passing the buck. When the Education Minister's car was surrounded by students on March 1, 2025 the University Vice Chancellor Bhaskar Gupta was nowhere to be seen. He later fell ill and was hospitalised for a few days. Even in the past when there was a ragging death at the campus hostel or a Union Minister convoy was stopped, the university authorities were not seen handling the issue proactively and shifted the blame to institutional lapses. The different teachers' associations seem to be more committed to the different ideologies they represent and their actions are more inclined in the interest of the ideology rather than the interest of the university.

A land where ambition grows minus an outbound ticket



The recent drama over the unceremonious repatriation of Indians who attempted illegally to enter the United States of America, and who ended up handcuffed and manacled in an American military aircraft that dumped them on the tarmac in Amritsar, raises a whole series of issues. Migration, after all, is not merely a policy issue. It is a human story, woven into our collective memories and dreams. Immigration has long been an integral part of human history, shaping civilisations, economies, and societies across the globe. India, with its rich tradition of global engagement, has long seen its people traverse continents in pursuit of opportunity, new lives, better futures. Every year, millions of Indians embark on this journey, making India the country with the highest number of emigrants in the world. Today, Indians are no longer just workers abroad; they are leaders, shaping global industries. With Sundar Pichai at Google, Satya Nadella at Microsoft, and a host of others born and raised in India heading Fortune 500 companies, Indian migrants drive innovation and economic power in the West. History proves that migration has always been a force multiplier, enriching both migrants and host nations. Yet, in an era of rising walls, both physical and political, migration faces unprecedented scrutiny.

For decades, the lure of the American Dream has beckoned young Indians with the promise of economic opportunity, social mobility, and the prospect of a better future. While the IT engineers in Silicon Valley went on scholarships or work visas and stayed on, the Sikh cab drivers navigating the streets of New York may have found less conventional means of entry. But these illegal migrants are not fugitives but opportunity-seekers wanting a fair shot at prosperity. With remittances to India crossing \$120 billion in 2023, migration fuels a cycle where families seek to replicate the success of relatives abroad. It is the vast expanse of opportunity in major U.S. cities, the promise of work under the radar, and the prospect of eventual amnesty (like so many before them) that draws them in. An estimated 7,25,000 undocumented Indian migrants — nearly one in four of all Indians in the U.S. — live and work clandestinely in the U.S. There is a painful paradox at the heart of India's illegal migration story. We celebrate tech billionaires while youth unemployment soars, showcase gleaming infrastructure while millions struggle for dignified work. India's growth story features booming statistics, shrinking opportunities, and a rising economy still unable to assure its own people that their future lies at home. The lure of foreign shores is sometimes about ambition, sometimes about survival. This has birthed a thriving network of unscrupulous agents weaving fantasies of western riches, convincing even people from India's most prosperous States to leave. Gujarat — a State championed as an economic success story, the launchpad of the Prime Minister's rise — sees thousands risking everything to migrate. Punjab, too, is revered as India's breadbasket; it feeds the nation, yet its youth are leaving in droves. Rising unemployment, dwindling agricultural returns, and an insidious drug crisis have eroded hope, leaving many with little choice but to seek their fortunes abroad, legally or otherwise.

In their desperation, many Indians turn to shadowy networks, paying staggering sums to be smuggled across borders. What was once the path of young, single men now sees entire middle-class families — the bedrock of India's ambitions— risking everything for a fresh start abroad. The Gujarati family that froze to death trapped in a snowdrift on the Canadian-U.S. border in January 2022 was upper middle-class at home. Some of those who were sent back

by the U.S. had paid a crore of rupees to get there. Who would have imagined that people with a crore of rupees would not thrive in India? Why is India, one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a rising geopolitical force, and a nation with unparalleled human capital, still unable to provide enough opportunities for its own people? Why has the pursuit of dignity, stability, and economic security led millions of Indians to distant shores, even where they are not welcome? These are uncomfortable questions — ones we can no longer ignore.

More mirage than dream There is also the question of what they find when they get there. The American Dream, once seen as a golden ticket, is increasingly a mirage. Many find themselves trapped in an endless cycle of uncertainty — living in fear of deportation, working in jobs that barely sustain them, struggling to integrate into societies that, at times, view them with racist suspicion. And for many who leave, the struggle does not end when they cross the border — it follows them, sometimes in the most tragic ways. We hear of migrants working endless hours in exploitative conditions, of families back home waiting for news that never comes. And now, for many, the journey merely ends in humiliating deportation. The United States is well within its legal authority to return those who have entered its territory unlawfully. They have been doing so: the Biden administration deported 1,100 Indians in the last fiscal year. Since October 2020, nearly 1,70,000 Indian migrants have been detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection while attempting to cross the border illegally, largely from Canada or Mexico; they are all subject to deportation. However, the manner in which this process is conducted has been dismaying. Deportation must be carried out with dignity and a respect for human rights. The recent images of shackled and handcuffed migrants being loaded onto military aircraft, suggesting more a criminal extradition of felons than an immigration enforcement measure, have understandably agitated Indians. Colombia and Mexico have rejected such treatment of their citizens, rightly arguing that deportation is an administrative process, not a punitive spectacle. Humiliating individuals to deter others serves no just purpose — it merely erodes dignity and distorts perceptions. We must ask: should a democracy treat another's citizens this way? Does border enforcement justify undermining the very values the deporting nation upholds? Diplomacy is not just policy but also a reflection of national character. While India does not, and should not, endorse illegal immigration, we cannot be silent spectators to the mistreatment of our citizens. A nation's stature is not just economic clout or international reach but the respect its passport commands. True global engagement is not just about alliances and trade deals; it is about setting an unwavering standard — wherever an Indian stands, their nation stands with them. Another paradox: We hail the aspirational young Indian, but he prefers to fulfil his aspirations abroad. India must not be a place migrants are forced to return to, but one they want to return to. Those coming back are not just deportees but skilled, ambitious individuals whose aspirations can drive India's growth. We must make opportunities accessible to all, not concentrated among the privileged. Inclusive growth, innovation, and investments in infrastructure, education, and entrepreneurship must be national imperatives. More than just jobs, India must offer careers that inspire people to stay, build, and invest in their future here. As the world builds walls, India must build bridges — to opportunity, prosperity, and a future where migration is an option, not a necessity. If India is to truly rise, it must become a nation where people do not feel compelled to leave, but empowered to stay. India must not just be the world's largest exporter of talent but a magnet for it — a place where ambition flourishes without an outbound ticket, where success is celebrated at home, and where prosperity is not a foreign fantasy but a reality shaped on our own soil. Let us make India, once again, a land of hope. Not because the world is rejecting our people, but because, if we do the right things, they will have no need to look elsewhere. Shashi Tharoor is a fourth-term Member of Parliament (Congress), Lok Sabha, for Thiruvananthapuram, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, and the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author of 26 books, including Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century (2012). The writer is grateful to Urjasvi Ahlawat for her assistance

How can India meet its rising power demand?

As the fastest-growing major economy in a rapidly heating world, India's electricity demand is growing fast. Since FY21, India's electricity consumption has risen at approximately 9% per annum, compared to an average of 5% annually in the preceding decade. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) had projected electricity demand to grow at a 6% CAGR between 2022 and 2030. However, recent trends suggest a strong likelihood of overshooting these estimates. Can India's power sector keep up with this demand and transition to renewables at the same time?

What's driving India's electricity demand? Besides economic growth and urbanisation, climate change-induced heat stress, marked by increasingly hotter summers, is one of the key factors driving electricity demand. Currently, industries, households, and agriculture comprise 33%, 28%, and 19% of total electricity use in India, respectively. Yet, household electricity demand has grown the fastest over the past decade. The summer of 2024 witnessed a 40-50% year-on-year growth in room air conditioner sales, driven by rising incomes and record-breaking temperatures. All-India peak demand crossed 250 GW on May 30, 2024, which was 6.3% higher than projections. In 2025, after recording the warmest-ever February in 125 years, India must now brace for extended heatwaves and a peak electricity demand growth of 9-10%.

How has India met rising demand so far? Since the early 2000s, power generation capacity has quadrupled to 460 GW, making India the third-largest electricity producer globally. Driven by the imperatives of clean energy transition, India's power sector is undergoing a major shift with the rise of Renewable Energy (RE) technologies like solar and wind. In 2010, the Indian government set a target of 20 GW of RE by 2020, which was revised upwards in 2014 to 175 GW by 2022. In 2021, India further amped its target to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2030. The government has continuously adopted several long-term and short-term measures to meet the spikes in demand. For instance, to manage the peak in 2022, it increased coal allocation to the power sector and prioritised its transportation through railways. It also directed imported coal-based power plants to operate at full capacity. States that have added substantive solar capacities utilised the surplus solar power to meet day peaks. Nights peaks continue to pose a challenge. In many ways, 2024 was a land-

mark year — India added a record 28 GW of new RE capacity, bumping up the share of RE in the electricity mix to 13.5%. The share of coal in the capacity mix fell below half, though it still caters to 75% of power demand. India's RE capacity now stands at 165 GW. Another 32 GW of RE is expected to be commissioned in 2025. In the following five years, India would need to add about 50 GW of RE every year to meet its 2030 goal.

Why should India further raise its clean energy ambitions? Episodes of power shortages in the last two years amid rapid growth in demand pose an important question. How should India act and plan to meet its rising energy demand reliably and cost-effectively? A new study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) answers this question by simulating six scenarios of India's power sector in 2030. CEEW found that failure to achieve 500 GW of clean energy capacity by 2030 will lead to power shortages and higher power costs, even if demand grows moderately. For instance, 0.26% of the demand will not be met if we achieve only 400 GW. Just this small percentage alone could impact the power supply to ~1 million households for 2.5 hours daily. States in northern India would be the worst affected because of network constraints. If demand grows faster (at 6.4% CAGR between 2023 and 2030 instead of 5.8%) and the 500 GW target is achieved, India will still need additional generation capacity to avoid major power shortages. Here, India has two choices — add six GW of new coal (beyond the under-construction capacities now) or 100 GW of new RE capacity (beyond the stated 500 GW). The first choice will meet the demand, but the coal fleet will remain under high stress with a likelihood of increased downtime. This could result in sudden shortages and increased costs. The study finds that the latter choice of 100 GW of new RE capacity, distributed across States, is a better option. How can India aim for 600 GW by 2030?

India must achieve 600 GW of clean energy by 2030 to keep pace with demand. This will help the country deliver reliable power at lower costs, saving up to ₹42,400 crore (\$5 billion) in procurement costs in 2030 alone. It will also yield higher social and health benefits, with 1,00,000 new jobs (during 2025-2030) and up to 23% lower emission of air pollutants in 2030. However, a 600 GW target would require 70 GW of RE addition annually until 2030 which may sound wishful.

Weight loss surgeries go up with insurance cover: What are challenges in approvals?



For a long time Kolkata-based Dr Ratul Pal, 41, had been battling weight issues because of his severe arthritic knees and was barely able to move around. His obesity posed a serious health threat and doctors advised bariatric surgery because of the combined risk of diabetes, hypertension and high levels of lipids in his blood."I planned a surgery in 2021 but although insurance cover for bariatric surgery was introduced in 2019, I had a waiting period given my pre-existing conditions. Finally, my surgery was done on October 15, 2024, at Manipal Hospital, Dwarka, and my insurance covered my bill of Rs 4.5 lakh. From 116 kg, my current weight is around 98 kg," says Dr Pal, who has not faced any side effects or complications. "The osteoarthritic knee problem has gone down by 80 per cent. I am not taking any medicine for cholesterol or hypertension, I am not taking any blood sugar-lowering drugs either and managing to build in some activity," adds Dr Pal.

Many others with morbid obesity, where the body mass index (BMI) — calculated by dividing body weight in kilograms by height in metres squared (m2) — is 40 or higher, have got relief. Doctors say that with bariatric surgeries (between Rs 4 and 6 lakh) now being covered by different health insurance schemes, there has been an uptick in their numbers over the last few years, even in private hospitals. Dr Arun Prasad, surgical gastroenterologist, Bariatric Surgery, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi, says the number of patients seeking surgeries has gone up by one-and-a-half times on an average, from 55-60 a year in 2020 to 90 now.Gaurav Shrivastav, Delhi-based financial and insurance adviser, predicts that with the inclusion of bariatric surgery in family health insurance plans, individual health plans and even a critical illness insurance policy, up to 38 per cent people are expected to benefit in rural areas and up to 30 per cent in urban areas.

What are the conditions for coverage?

The patient should be at least 18 years old. The surgeon should confirm that the applicant has Class III Obesity (extreme obesity) with a BMI of 40 or a Class II Obesity with a BMI between 35 and 39 along with a co-morbidity. That could be uncontrolled diabetes, cardiovascular disease, history of coronary artery disease with a surgical intervention such as bypass or angioplasty, fatty liver and cardiopulmonary problems arising out of conditions like severe Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).Insurance doesn't cover surgeries done for cosmetic reasons. Neither does it cover obesity due to psychiatric and eating disorders, obesity due to certain drugs and untreated hormonal imbalances.Dr Sandeep Aggarwal, laparoscopic, bariatric, GI and renal

transplant surgeon at Manipal Hospital, Dwarka, who conducted Dr Pal's surgery in 2024, says the cut-offs need to go down. "Last year, the International Federation for Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders lowered the cut-off for BMI because there's so much evidence now about the safety and efficacy of surgery over other means. So international cutoffs are 30 and 35 but insurance companies here still follow old standards. They want to minimise the number of patients," says Dr Aggarwal.According to Dr Prasad, the IRDA (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority) has given clear guidelines that help patients opt for life-saving surgeries. "Any patient who has an insurance over four years old and a BMI of 40 plus, is eligible for surgery," he says.Insurance doesn't cover surgeries done for cosmetic reasons Insurance doesn't cover surgeries done for cosmetic reasons

Why is claiming insurance a cumbersome process?

"I sent my test reports and my policy documents to the hospital. There was a lot of to and fro between my doctor and my insurance company for full approval. Most plans have an initial waiting period of around 30 days. If you have pre-existing conditions like I did, you may have to wait for one to three years. My surgery was slotted when the insurance company gave an approval for more than 50 per cent of costs. After the surgery, we submitted documents and I got almost Rs 4,08,000 as reimbursement. I had to pay only Rs 4,000 from my pocket," says Dr Pal.Dr Aggarwal says such scrutiny happens because bariatric surgeries in India are newer compared to the West. "Some insurance companies still have a waiting period of two to three years before they allow patients to be reimbursed. But some corporate insurance policies now cover it straight away," he says.

What are obstacles?

Dr Prasad, who has had to intervene in claims resolution, says, "The insurance companies raise a lot of questions and we have to literally fight, justifying why the patient needs it. Sometimes the insurance company asks the patient to pay up first and then claim reimbursement post-surgery." However, he's seeing things improving over the years.Most claims are rejected over eligibility issues. "Many insurers require specific pre-approval steps, such as documented weight-loss attempts by the patient, dietitian consultations or psychological evaluations. They want to be sure that the bariatric surgery is being done as a life-saving option. They need evidence that previous treatment plans had been followed but did not yield desired results," says Shrivastav.Some insurers, while adhering to criteria like BMI and comorbid conditions, may factor in the patient's age. "Also bariatric surgeries are of various types like gastric bypass (reducing stomach size and connecting it directly to the small intestine, bypassing a portion of both) sleeve gastrectomy (removing a large portion of the stomach) and adjustable gastric banding (placing a silicone band around the upper part of the stomach to create a smaller pouch, limiting food intake and promoting weight loss). This variability means that each patient's coverage details need to be carefully reviewed and cross-referenced with insurer requirements," says Dr Aggarwal.Bariatric surgeries need pre-authorisation, and the process involves gathering specific documentation, such as medical necessity forms and physician referrals. Any missing or inaccurate documentation can lead to delays or denials. "However, as people regain their health and quality of life, insurers are gradually easing barriers," says Shrivastav.

Tackling the problem of nutrition



While health was not a priority for Budget 2025, it seems that nutrition is. In the coming financial year, two Union government schemes will receive higher allocations — Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. But will this fix India's nutrition challenge?

Nutrition in India is not just about food insecurity, but also about dietary habits shaped by culture, caste, and gender relations. Only one aspect of the nutrition challenge receives most of the policy focus — malnutrition among women and children. Women outside of the reproductive age, men, and senior citizens rarely figure in national nutrition policy discussions. More importantly, we ignore diabetes, hypertension, and other lifestyle-induced non-communicable diseases which are really another manifestation of under nutrition. One type of nutrition deficiency is because some people just don't have enough to eat and the other type is because people are not eating sufficient nutritionally rich food. The outcomes are damning in unique ways.India has among the world's highest share of malnourished children and anaemic women. According to the National Family Health Survey-5, 36% of children under five are stunted and a meagre 11% who are breastfed between the ages of 6 months and 23 months receive an adequate diet. Fifty-seven percent of women in the 15-49 age group are anaemic. There is a rise in the share of those with diabetes, hypertension, and other such lifestyle-diet induced non-communicable diseases (NCDs). 24% of women and 23% men in India are overweight or obese and 14% take medicines for diabetes.Poshan 2.0 and Saksham Anganwadi offer more of the same solutions — take-home rations, supplementary foods, tracking of severe and acute malnutrition cases, iron and folic acid tablets etc. With Poshan 2.0, there is additional focus on aspirational districts and the north-eastern region. But these schemes reinforce the idea that malnutrition is a problem only in certain parts of India and only in certain segments of the population. Instead, what we need is a comprehensive nutrition agenda in which nutrition is identified as a public health problem that impacts people across the social strata.A comprehensive agenda would recognise the nutrition needs of different segments of the society. It must consist of: first, a clear identification of nutrition needs beyond reproductive and child health; second, a broad set of solutions, particularly rooted in the local food systems; and third, a clear identification of locally embedded facilities to deliver nutrition services. We need

most work in identifying local institutional linkage for the agenda. Who will implement this in our neighbourhoods every day? The clear answer is: the health and wellness centres (HWCs).

At present, we provide supplementary nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers and young children through take-home rations, iron and folic acid tablets for adolescent girls at Anganwadi centres (AWCs); and mid-day meals for children in schools. We need to systematically expand the nutrition-focused activities to other segments of the population and involve HCWs and ACWs. The mix of nutrients which goes in the take-home ration for poor women is relevant for pregnant women from all strata of society. Food items which use locally available low-cost, nutrient-dense produce need to be emphasised for the middle classes too, which consume sugar-laden, fibre-poor packaged goods.For HWCs to implement this agenda, they need to be in sufficient numbers to cover the entire population. Each of them has to have a detailed set of nutrition services covering the entire catchment population. At present, the spread of HWCs is lopsided. Rural areas seem to have them in excess when compared to urban ones. And within rural areas, some areas have a higher concentration of HWCs.Nutrition services in HWCs are limited. HWCs are supposed to provide nutrition advice to pregnant women and lactating women, adolescents and children, the elderly population, and those recuperating from disease, disaster and trauma. But these are not implemented consistently or systematically.We also need dedicated staff to provide nutrition services at the HWCs. In the existing design, nutrition is a tiny part of the responsibilities of the multi-purpose worker.The success of the nutrition agenda will depend on two factors: engaging with local elites; and linking nutrition practices with local cuisines. Professor Prerna Singh at Brown University demonstrates in her research on small pox vaccination that there was significant variation in the uptake of vaccination during the 1950s among equally placed countries such as India and China. Some got their population vaccinated earlier and faster than others. Those that did were countries where the vaccination interventions were publicly owned by local elites and connected with local health practices and ideas.India is a rapidly transforming society. We have to push further with the HWC approach of imagining health as wellbeing and not just an absence of illness.

The challenges of public health education in India

The decision by the United States to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO) and drastically reduce the scale of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is one that has sent shock waves through the aid and public health world. This move has disrupted essential health-care services in many low- and middle-income countries. However, India has been largely unaffected, as international aid accounts for just 1% of its total health expenditure. Nevertheless, the cessation of such funding threatens to further shrink an already constrained public health development sector, which relies heavily on international support. More importantly, this development directly impacts the public health job market, reducing opportunities for thousands who are pursuing their Master of Public Health (MPH) and similar postgraduate courses.

Public health plays a critical role in shaping a nation's well-being and health-care delivery. The Constitution of India, through Article 47, underlines the state's responsibility to improve public health care. Public health is a specialised field that requires specific knowledge and skills to effectively address people's health needs. There is an urgent need for a dedicated workforce in India trained in public health, a fact that was very starkly realised during the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond government systems, such a workforce is essential for civil society organisations, academic institutions, and research organisations engaged in public health.

The evolution of training and jobs in IndiaThough the surge in public health education in India is relatively recent, its history dates to the colonial era. In the early days, public health was largely embedded within medical teaching. This narrow approach persisted despite the establishment of the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Kolkata in 1932 and the subsequent inclusion of preventive and social medicine — later known as community medicine — as an essential part of medical education. Specialists in community medicine, well-trained in public health provided public health services and met human resource needs in this field. However, their numbers were limited, and they were often engaged in medical teaching. Many students pursued MPH courses abroad in countries such as Australia, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the U.S. Yet, the supply of public health professionals remained constrained. Recognising the growing need and demand, MPH institutions and teaching expanded in India.

The number of institutions offering MPH and related courses in India has grown rapidly. Currently, over 100 institutions offer master's level courses in public health, whereas in 2000, there was only one. This expansion coincided with the launch of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in 2005, which opened public health system roles to non-medical public health specialists. A wide range of institutions, from social science faculties to community medicine departments within medical institutions, have begun offering MPH courses. However, after an initial surge in demand, government recruitment for public health specialists plateaued, while the number of schools, programmes, and

graduates continued to rise. As a result, securing jobs has become increasingly difficult for graduates.Compounding this issue are challenges such as the lack of standardised training, insufficient practical learning opportunities, faculty shortages, and varied curricula that inadequately prepare students for real-world public health challenges. In addition, institutions offering public health courses are unevenly distributed, with large and populous States such as Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand, and many smaller and hilly States, having none or only a limited number of seats.

Hurdles graduates face, issues in education

The foremost challenge is the mismatch between supply and demand, with limited and shrinking job opportunities for graduates. Today, entry-level positions in public health, such as research or programme assistants, attract a very high number of applications, with a significant proportion of candidates being eligible. The success rate remains exceptionally low, with only a few positions available. Moreover, the shrinking of public health roles and institutions within the public system has further limited job prospects. Efforts to establish public health management cadres in States have been hindered by multiple factors.In recent times, the changing landscape of health care, marked by the growing dominance of the private sector in public health, further restricts employment opportunities. The private sector prioritises hospital and business management professionals over public health specialists. With limited opportunities in both the public and private sectors, the research and development sectors remain the primary employers for graduates. However, these sectors rely largely on foreign grants, and India is no longer one of the priority countries for such international funders. Similarly, the development sector is constrained by limited funding, which is expected to worsen further due to recent decisions in the U.S. The national research and health development funding remains in its early development and is significantly underfunded. Thus, the job scarcity for public health professionals continues and can exacerbate further.Beyond job scarcity, there are concerns about the quality of MPH education. The rapid spread of public health schools has led to intense competition to attract students, often at the expense of compromising admission standards. Many students enrol in these courses without a clear understanding of the field or passion needed to thrive in this field. Further, public health faculty often lack adequate training and real-world experience. The absence of a standardised curriculum and clear outcome measures, despite the Health Ministry's model course framework further exacerbates concerns. In India, MPH courses are currently not mandatorily regulated by any regulatory body. Neither the National Medical Commission (NMC) nor umbrella organisations such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) oversee MPH training. In the absence of these quality measures, the overall quality of graduates is also impacted.To address these challenges, a multi-pronged approach is required. The most urgent priority is to create public health jobs at all levels, from primary care to State and national health systems. In most developed countries with established public health

Should cancer be a notifiable disease?

Time and again, there have been calls to designate cancer as a notifiable disease in India. While some argue that this would enhance surveillance and treatment, the Union government has resisted the move, saying the practice is to notify only infectious diseases and that cancer is non-communicable and not infectious.Recent shifts in disease notification policies raise questions about whether this reasoning still holds. In 2024, the government asked all the States to make snakebites a notifiable disease. This trend is not unique to India. In 1995, the U.S. became the first country to list lead poisoning as a notifiable disease, establishing a precedent for the surveillance of non-communicable diseases. This evolution in public health policy forces a critical examination of whether cancers warrant notification for surveillance in India.The primary purpose of disease notification is to ensure that contagious diseases are kept under check. Notification of infectious diseases is a legal mandate and compels physicians to report designated diseases to public health authorities, failing which they could face legal consequences. Unlike infectious diseases, cancer does not pose an immediate threat to public health through direct transmission and sudden deaths. It is a diverse group of diseases rather than a single condition, and its detection often requires complex diagnostic procedures. Proponents of making cancer notifiable argue that mandatory reporting could enhance early detection and resource allocation.

However, there are fundamental issues with this approach. First, cancer is not a single-point diagnosis. Arguably, cancers as a disease are more diverse ranging from benign to malignant. Notifiability triggers rapid containment measures, whereas cancer requires long-term management rather than emergency interventions. Legal obligations on physicians could impose a burden that does not translate into improved patient care.

India's National Cancer Registry Programme (since 1982) functions as a data collection mechanism, compiling crucial information on the demographics of cancer patients, cancer identification including type, stage, and morphology, the timing of diagnosis and staging at the time of detection, treatment details such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery, and follow-up and survival outcomes. The NCRP includes hospital-based registries, which collect data from cancer-treating hospitals, and population-based registries, which capture cancer incidence in a defined geographic area. There are 269 hospital-based and 38 population-based registries as of 2022, which is insufficient. Hospital-based registries should be expanded to every cancer-treating hospital, including all district headquarters hospitals. Similarly, population-based registries should be established in every district, ensuring at least one unit per district for comprehensive nationwide cancer surveillance. Rather than legally mandating notification, strengthening existing cancer registries is a more thorough and effective alternative.Second, making cancer a notifiable disease also raises privacy concerns. Notifiability generally does not account for privacy because disease notification is meant to preserve public health over individual confidentiality. There is still stigma attached to cancer.

Many State public health acts still contain provisions that give sweeping powers to local authorities during a health emergency. While much of this has been rendered toothless over time, the legal precedent remains. Introducing cancer into such a framework could further deepen the reluctance among patients to come forward for diagnosis and



treatment, making it counterproductive and potentially deterring patients from seeking timely treatment due to stigma and discrimination. The World Health Organization advocates mainly cancer registries, which mention notification as an option at the individual level alone.An effective approach would be to expand the NCRP to ensure comprehensive data collection at all tertiary and district hospitals. Improving cancer screening initiatives would ensure early detection. Strengthening reporting mechanisms without legal mandates would allow oncologists and healthcare providers to contribute accurate data voluntarily rather than reporting under duress. Mandatory notification remains an apt approach suited for single-point, outbreak-prone diseases. For cancer, a well-structured registry system, bolstered by wider hospital participation, including private hospitals and robust follow-up mechanisms, offers a far superior solution to improving cancer surveillance in India.

Department of Telecommunications launches '5G Innovation Hackathon 2025'

New Delhi: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on Monday announced the '5G Innovation Hackathon 2025', a six-month initiative aimed at accelerating the development of innovative 5G-powered solutions to address societal and industrial challenges.

Open to students, startups and professionals, the programme provides mentorship, funding, and access to over 100 5G Use Case Labs, enabling participants to transform visionary ideas into scalable technologies, according to the Ministry of Communications.

Winners will receive significant rewards, including Rs 5,00,000 for the first place, Rs 3,00,000 for the runner-up, and Rs 1,50,000 for the 2nd runner-up.Also, special mentions will be given for Best Idea and Most Innovative Prototype, each receiving Rs 50,000. Ten labs will also be given Certificates of Appreciation for Best 5G Use case and one Certificate for Best idea from Emerging Institute.The hackathon invites proposals focused on key 5G applications such as AI-driven network maintenance, IoT-enabled solutions, 5G broadcasting, smart health, agriculture, industrial automation, non-terrestrial networks (NTN), D2M, V2X, and quantum communication.Participants are encouraged to leverage 5G features like network slicing, Quality of Service (QoS), and call-flow scenarios to address real-world problems.

UPI fee won’t apply to small payments, needed to fund growth: Sources



In 2025-26, only 4% of person-to-merchant (P2M) UPI payments were greater than Rs 2,000. However, these 4% of transactions made up around two-thirds of UPI payments by value. “If UPI is to grow further and even across borders, more funds are needed. And for this, public funds cannot be used. So, money has to be generated,” the person said, requesting anonymity. “An MDR would not be charged on small-value payments, such as those at kirana stores, where the average transaction size is Rs 100-200. This would be for large transactions that take place on e-commerce websites and shopping malls.” An MDR is levied on merchants by banks that process payments to help meet transaction processing, settlement and infrastructure costs. Individuals making payments using UPI have never paid a separate fee to use UPI. Separately, the Payments Council of India (PCI) said on social media platform X that small merchants are not required to pay any charges to accept UPI payments and that consumers would not have to pay a fee if large merchants pay for payment acceptance.

“Merchant service charges, where applicable, are commercial arrangements between merchants and payment service providers. They do not mean that consumers pay to use digital payments,” the PCI, which represents various non-banking payment industry players, said. There has been considerable discussion around UPI and merchant charges. Here are the facts behind the conversation what it means for consumers, merchants, and India’s digital payment ecosystem. Debate over a potential fee on UPI payments has emerged this week after the government introduced The Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in Parliament on Monday. The bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday, proposed changes to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 that open the door for banks and payment system providers to charge fees on UPI and RuPay debit card payments.

To be sure, no decision has been taken so far, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman posting on social media platform X late on Thursday that the UPI and Services Steering Committee headed by the National Payments

Corporation of India “is yet to decide on the MDR”. “Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) applies only on the merchants and not on the end users/customers. It will support the Banks & Fintech to invest more on infrastructure, innovation & security. All users of UPI will reap the benefits of this investment,” Sitharaman had further said in response to a post by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh. Before spreading a canard, Experts point to the huge growth in UPI transactions, which has seen costs pile up: in 2025-26, more than 24,000 crore UPI transactions worth Rs 314 lakh crore were made. According to the aforementioned source, the industry’s annual costs are to the tune of Rs 15,000 crore. “UPI has become critical national digital infrastructure used by hundreds of millions of Indians every day. As transaction volumes continue to grow, sustained investment in security, resilience, innovation, fraud prevention and infrastructure will remain essential to ensure that UPI continues to serve consumers and businesses reliably for years to come,” the PCI said. Since 2020, the government has been subsidising UPI and RuPay debit card payments of up to Rs 2,000 to only small merchants through its ‘Incentive scheme for promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions (P2M)’. The incentive offered is capped at 0.15% of the transaction value and is shared between banks, payment service providers and third-party app providers.

The Centre paid out Rs 8,730 crore under the incentive scheme during 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 combined. However, this was significantly lower than the cost borne by the payments industry to meet the various costs involved, which range from mobile app development, transaction authorisation, reconciliation, and settlement costs, cybersecurity, Know-Your-Customer processes, cloud storage, disaster recovery, fraud detection, dispute handling, continuous network monitoring, and regulatory reporting, among others. So far, these costs for the last decade or so have been borne by banks, payment companies, fintechs, NPCI, and Reserve Bank of India.

Payments industry players say that an MDR of 0.3-0.6% on UPI payments to large merchants with an annual turnover of more than Rs 50 crore could help recover the cost of maintaining the infrastructure. Some also point to a lower fee of 0.05-0.07%, but with a lower merchant turnover threshold of Rs 1 crore-Rs 1.5 crore. Currently, credit cards face an MDR of 1-3% while for debit cards it is up to 0.9% of the transaction value. “UPI has evolved from a new payment platform into the world’s largest real-time payment system. As the ecosystem continues to expand, discussions are taking place on how to sustainably support the infrastructure that enables billions of secure transactions every month, while continuing to ensure that consumers and small merchants remain protected,” the PCI added.

nology under the Petroleum Ministry) has checked ethanol samples from 80 distilleries across the country in the last 10 days and all samples had chloride content less than 3 ppm,” the OMCs said. “Ethanol and E20 samples tested at depots and terminals continue to meet prescribed chloride limits, with regular monitoring at this stage ensuring that quality is maintained as fuel moves through the storage and distribution network. More than 80 samples collected from various OMC terminals showed chloride content below 3 ppm,” they said. At the retail outlets (ROs), or petrol pumps, just two “isolated instances” of elevated chloride levels were detected in surveillance, after which sales at these outlets were suspended, followed by a detailed root-cause analysis and implementation of corrective measures before restoration of supplies.

“Under the intensified monitoring programme, more than 160 samples (from retail outlets) have been analysed for chloride content in last few days and levels are in range of 0-3 ppm, contrary to the claims of several hundred ppm,” the OMCs said. “About 90,000 ROs have commenced mandatory inspection and monitoring of underground storage tanks. The underground tanks at ROs are being inspected 8-12 times every day and have not revealed any water ingress so far,” they said. The OMCs assured consumers that fuel quality surveillance is undertaken continuously across the supply chain, and wherever any deviation is detected, prompt and decisive corrective action is initiated. They also urged vehicle owners to continue using “E20 petrol with confidence”, as it conforms to the prescribed quality specifications and “is backed by robust quality assurance and monitoring systems designed to safeguard consumer interests at every stage of the supply chain”. India achieved 20% ethanol blending in petrol five years ahead of schedule. The ethanol-petrol blending programme dates back over two decades. The programme gathered pace over the past few years after the government made concerted efforts to ensure sufficient ethanol availability. Average blending rose from about 1.5% in ethanol supply year 2013-14 to 10% in 2021-22, and further to 20% in 2025-26. According to the government, extensive laboratory studies and field trials conducted by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI), SIAM, Indian Oil, Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP) and automobile manufacturers covering parameters such as engine durability, drivability, startability, corrosion resistance, material compatibility, emissions and fuel efficiency confirmed that E20 is safe for use under prescribed standards.

FSSAI imposes penalty on AWL Agri Business for selling substandard Fortune fortified sunflower oil

New Delhi: Food regulator FSSAI has imposed a penalty on edible oil major AWL Agri Business Ltd for manufacturing and selling substandard fortified sunflower cooking oil. Ahmedabad-based AWL Agri Business Ltd sells edible oils under the ‘Fortune’ brand. The action was taken after the regulator found that a sample collected from Goa failed in lab testing as Vitamin D level was significantly below the prescribed limits. In a social media post on Friday, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) informed that an adjudication order has been passed and penalty has been imposed on AWL Agri Business Ltd. The order has been passed against AWL Agri Business Ltd (Mangalore) for “manufacturing and marketing a substandard fortified edible oil (Fortune ‘Fryola’ refined sunflower seed oil),” the FSSAI said. Sharing details about the violations, the FSSAI said a sample of Fortune “Fryola” refined sunflower seed oil (1 litre) was collected by the FSSAI from Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa

Remo Fernandes claims he had a stroke after COVID-19 booster: What do neurologists say?



Musician Remo Fernandes, while announcing withdrawal from live performances, said that he had suffered a mild stroke after taking his third COVID-19 vaccine. He said the stroke affected the movement of his fingers, making it difficult to play the guitar and flute as before.

Neurologists caution, however, that while a stroke occurring after vaccination naturally raises concerns, timing alone is not enough to establish that the vaccine caused the event. Besides, there is no scientific proof of the same. Determining the cause requires careful evaluation of a person’s underlying health and other stroke risk factors. “The weight of evidence from large population studies and systematic reviews, one done this year itself, does not support an increased overall risk of stroke after COVID-19 vaccination, including after booster doses. One should understand the difference between association in time and causation since there were reports about rare clotting complications connected to some vaccines, including adenoviral-vector vaccines. But these are not frequent and do not correspond to the average risk of stroke among people having health problems such as diabetes and hypertension,” says Dr Vipul Gupta, Director, Neurointerventional Surgery, Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, Mumbai.

At the same time, he says, COVID-19 itself leads to a higher risk of developing blood clots or stroke because of inflammation and changes in the blood coagulation system. “That too in the initial phase post-recovery,” he told. Even then, not everyone who gets COVID-19 is at risk of having a stroke. “During an infection, the body’s immune system mounts a response to fight the virus. In some individuals, this response can become excessive, leading to widespread inflammation throughout the body. That, left unattended, is a risk factor,” says Dr Vineet Suri, senior consultant, neurology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi.

What causes a brain stroke?
A stroke occurs when the blood supply to a part of the brain is interrupted, preventing brain cells from receiving oxygen and nutrients. This can happen when a blood vessel supplying the brain is blocked by a clot (known as an ischemic stroke) or when a blood vessel bursts and causes bleeding in the brain (known as a haemorrhagic stroke). Since brain cells begin to get damaged within minutes, a stroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate treatment.

Why Chandipura virus returns every monsoon and why children face the highest risk



The recent deaths of children due to the Chandipura virus infection in Gujarat have once again drawn attention to an outbreak that has haunted parts of India for decades. Although this makes headlines almost every monsoon, Chandipura virus is not a new infection. Since it was first identified in Maharashtra in 1965, repeated outbreaks have been reported from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and other parts of western and central India, particularly during the monsoon season.

The virus is transmitted primarily through the bite of infected sandflies. Warm temperatures, high humidity and poor sanitation during the rainy season create ideal conditions for these insects to breed. “Mud houses with cracked walls, accumulated waste, livestock kept close to homes and inadequate vector control, all increase the risk of transmission. Unless these environmental conditions improve, seasonal outbreaks are likely to continue,” Dr Vivek Jain, Senior Director & Unit Head, Paediatrics, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi told The Indian Express. Excerpts:

Why are children most affected?
One of the defining features of Chandipura virus infection is that it disproportionately affects children, particularly those younger than 15 years. Children’s immune systems are still developing, making them more vulnerable to rapidly multiplying viruses. They also spend more time outdoors, increasing their exposure to sandfly bites. Malnutrition, overcrowded living conditions and delayed access to healthcare further increase the risk of severe disease in many affected communities. Unlike many viral infections that progress gradually over several days, Chandipura virus can deteriorate with alarming speed. After an initial fever, some children rapidly develop acute encephalitis syndrome (AES), a severe inflammation of the brain that can lead to seizures, unconsciousness and death within 24 to 48 hours if not recognised and managed promptly.

Symptoms parents should never ignore
The illness often begins like a common viral infection, making it easy to mistake for a routine fever. However, parents should seek immediate medical attention if a child develops a sudden high fever accompanied by repeated vomiting or severe headache. Increasing drowsiness, unusual irritability, confusion, seizures or any change in consciousness are warning signs that require urgent evaluation. Because the disease can progress from fever to serious neurological complications within just one or two days, delaying treatment can have devastating consequences.

New research offers clues to how the virus causes severe disease
A recent laboratory study by researchers from the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre and the National Institute of Virology provides new insights into why Chandipura virus progresses so quickly. Rather than studying patients, the researchers examined how the virus interacts with infected cells in the laboratory. The study found that the virus triggers a rapid immune response within the first few hours of infection. As the infection progresses, it rewires the host cell’s metabolism and switches on genes

ment.
How can COVID-19 affect the brain?
COVID-19 has also been found to affect the inner lining of blood vessels, making them more vulnerable to injury. “Together, inflammation and damage to blood vessels can increase the likelihood of blood clot formation. If one of these clots blocks an artery supplying the brain, it can result in an ischemic stroke,” says Dr Suri.

Who is more likely to be at risk after COVID-19?
The risk of stroke following COVID-19 is generally higher in people who already have underlying cardiovascular risk factors. “These include hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, obesity, smoking and a previous history of stroke or blood clotting disorders. People who experience severe COVID-19 infection, particularly those requiring hospitalisation, are also at a higher risk of developing stroke-related complications than those with mild illness,” says Dr Suri. According to Dr Gupta, severe infections may also lead to dehydration, immobility, altered blood pressure and imbalance in the normal coagulation processes of the body, which collectively increase the cardiovascular burden. “In certain cases, heart complications resulting from an infection could raise the risk of blood clots reaching the brain,” he adds.

Does everyone with COVID-19 have an increased risk?
No. Most people who contract COVID-19, especially those with mild symptoms, recover without experiencing a stroke. While studies have shown that the infection can temporarily increase the risk, strokes remain relatively uncommon. The risk is generally greatest during the active infection and in the weeks following recovery, particularly among individuals with existing health conditions.

What symptoms should not be ignored?
Stroke symptoms usually appear suddenly and require urgent medical attention. These may include weakness or numbness on one side of the face, arm or leg, difficulty speaking or understanding speech, sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes, loss of balance, coordination or difficulty walking or a sudden, severe headache with no obvious cause. “Seeking medical care without delay can improve the chances of recovery and reduce the risk of long-term disability,” advises Dr Suri.

Can the risk be reduced?
While it may not be possible to prevent every stroke, maintaining good control of blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol can significantly lower the risk. Regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco, eating a balanced diet and taking prescribed medications as advised are important preventive measures. “For people recovering from COVID-19, any new neurological symptoms such as sudden weakness, slurred speech or loss of balance should be evaluated promptly rather than being dismissed as part of post-viral recovery,” says Dr Suri.

that favour viral replication. By 24 hours, many of the cell’s normal functions begin to shut down, helping explain why the disease can worsen so dramatically in a short period.
Using these findings, the researchers identified three existing drugs that might be repurposed to treat Chandipura virus infection. In laboratory experiments, sulfasalazine and romidepsin significantly reduced viral infection with minimal toxicity to cells, while nilotinib showed limited benefit because of higher toxicity. Although these findings are promising, the drugs have not been tested in patients with Chandipura virus and cannot yet be considered treatments. Further animal studies and clinical trials will be needed before they can be used in medical practice.

Prevention remains the best protection
At present, there is no licensed vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for Chandipura virus infection. Supportive medical care and early recognition remain the mainstay of treatment. Preventing sandfly bites is, therefore, the most effective way to reduce the risk of infection. Children should wear long-sleeved clothing, particularly during the evening and night when sandflies are most active. Sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets, using child-safe insect repellents, maintaining clean surroundings, repairing cracked walls and eliminating potential breeding sites around homes can all reduce exposure to infected sandflies. Community action is equally important. Regular vector control measures, improved sanitation, early detection of suspected cases and prompt reporting by healthcare workers are essential to limiting the spread of the virus during the monsoon season. A year-round strategy is needed. The recurring outbreaks show that Chandipura virus cannot be tackled only during emergencies. High-risk districts need continuous surveillance, rapid diagnostic facilities, effective vector control and stronger public awareness campaigns before every monsoon. Primary healthcare centres should be equipped to recognise suspected cases early and refer children quickly for specialised care.

Microsoft opens Hyderabad cloud region to boost India’s AI, cloud infra

New Delhi: Microsoft on Thursday announced the general availability of its India South Central cloud region in Hyderabad, strengthening its cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure in the country. The new facility expands Microsoft’s presence to four cloud regions in India and comes amid rising demand for AI and cloud services from enterprises. With the addition of the Hyderabad region, Microsoft now operates four cloud regions in India, namely Central India in Pune, South India in Chennai, West India in Mumbai and India South Central in Hyderabad.

The company also runs two datacenters in partnership with Jio, giving it what it describes as the largest hyperscale cloud presence in the country. The new datacenter region comprises three Availability Zones and has been built with a resilient design aligned with India’s regulatory and seismic-zone requirements. Microsoft said the facility is designed to support mission-critical workloads at scale while providing customers with greater choice to run eligible Microsoft Cloud services and workloads from within the country. The launch comes at a time when demand for cloud and AI infrastructure is rising rapidly across industries.

Ash Gardner's ex-wife slams Cricket Australia over cheating scandal, demands sack



GNS News Agency, August 15

Australia vice-captain Ashleigh Gardner's estranged wife, Monica Wright, has slammed Cricket Australia (CA) for inaction over the cricketer's alleged affair with teammate Georgia Voll. Wright, who first made the allegations public in July, has also demanded that the 29-year-old Gardner be stripped of the leadership role in the national team.

"I think if you're privileged enough to represent your country and be seen as a role model, there's a responsibility to hold yourself to a high moral standard," Wright told Code Sports. "What I can't understand is why Cricket Australia hasn't said anything publicly.

"Does their silence mean they support the actions of Ashleigh and Georgia?

"You can't have an affair with a junior member of staff, especially when there's a clear power imbalance, and then remain in a position of leadership." Captains are expected to set the standard, and that kind of conduct falls well short of it," Wright added. In a response to Wright's comments on

Code Sports, Cricket Australia (CA) stated that the board considered the incident to be "private and personal." "Cricket Australia ensures all relationships within our workforce comply with our Respect at Work policy. This includes putting appropriate conflict-of-interest management arrangements in place to support leadership responsibilities and maintain the integrity of team processes," CA said in its statement. In July, Wright posted a Daily Mail article on her Instagram story with the caption that it was 'too vague' and said she'll say 'exactly what happened. In the next slide, she posted the photo of Voll with the caption: "This is who my wife cheated on me with." Wright and Gardner had tied the knot in April 2025 but things started deteriorating when the cricketer was in India for the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup, according to the Daily Mail report. When Wright had flown in to India to see Gardner, there was a bit of awkwardness, an insider stated according to the report. They have since separated with Gardner moving out of their Sydney house while beginning divorce proceedings. According to news.com.au, Gardner has also received firm backing from her WBBL franchise, Sydney Sixers, amid the scandal. "I'm not going to comment on (Ash's) personal life, or anything like that. But certainly we've exchanged messages," Sixers GM and former Australia player Rachael Haynes said. "I've checked in with her. She knows that we're here to support her.

"She's a well-respected player within our program, an important player for us, so I think the most important thing is knowing that we're there for her, we care about her and look forward to continuing with the club ongoing." Gardner was recently in the triumphant Australia team which extended the country's staggering T20 World Cup record, winning seven titles from eight finals.

Uttarakhand CM responds to Rishabh Pant's land request



Dehradun: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has reacted to a plea by cricketer Rishabh Pant for help in purchasing land to build a house in his home state and has issued instructions to officials concerned to tackle the issue as per the rules and assist the India wicketkeeper-batter. Pant made his plea in a social media post around midnight, tagging CM Dhami and seeking help in buying land in the hills to build his first house as he wants to shift his base from Delhi. "Dear Rishabh, you are the pride of Uttarakhand. Through your magnificent sporting performance and achievements, you have brought glory to 'Devbhoomi' on both the national and global stages. Your love for your homeland and your desire to return and contribute here are truly commendable," Chief Minister Dhami said in a reply to Pant's post. "Instructions are being issued to the concerned officials regarding the matter you raised.

They will contact you shortly to ensure all possible assistance in accordance with the rules," CM Dhami added. The social media post late in the night tagging the Chief Minister has surprised many, as Rishabh Pant's family already has a house in Roorkee in the state and can easily get in touch with property dealers in the city he prefers and buy available land. But Pant seems to have taken an unusual route to seek help to buy land in the hills for his 'first house', making a social media post from Sri Lanka, where he is on tour with the Indian cricket team. In his post tagging Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, Pant wrote, "Hello sir, how's you ??? (sic) It's a long time for me, especially being local from Uttarakhand. I have been trying to buy land to shift my base from Delhi to Uttarakhand, and I couldn't find anything facilitating and big to live here. I love my Uttarakhand. My humble request." He then followed it up with another post in which he made it clear that he is not seeking the land parcel as a gift from the state but would rather like to buy land for his base.

"A gift would be lovely for representing our state at the highest level internationally, but if you allow me, I wanna buy it from Government and on their rates; at least I can have my first house built in my own state and our state. Please be helpful. Seriously, I didn't know how to do it," Pant said in his post at midnight on Friday. The Chief Minister's response this morning has now set the wheels in motion, with officials likely to get in touch with the wicketkeeper-batter to take things forward. Pant hails from Uttarakhand but has played most of his cricket for Delhi and District Cricket Association at the domestic level.

India had never won judo gold at CWG. Then came their best-ever haul

Indian judokas recorded the best medal haul at the Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2026 with two gold, one silver and one bronze. This was the first time Indian Judokas had won a gold medal at the CWG. The historic medal haul came despite the Judo Federation of India functioning under an interim body. The body held elections last month in July after a four-year delay. The CWG medal haul comes on the back of a historic bronze medal at the Asian Championships earlier this year won by Takhellambam Inunganbi.

However, the improvement among the Indian judokas is not a sudden result but a gradual growth story, after an investment in foreign coaches, tougher training regimes, and a focus on nutrition and rehabilitation. Three of the medal-winning judokas, Harsh Singh (gold in men's 60kg), Yamini Mourya (silver in women's 57kg), and Unnati Sharma (bronze in women's 63kg), belong to the Judo campus program of IIS headed by British combat sport expert Gary Hall.

"We are really pleased with the progress of the judo program. We have a new coaching structure with both foreign and Indian coaches, and along with focus on physiotherapy, the results are visible now," Gary told The Indian Express. Gary, a former Taekwondo athlete, joined Inspire Institute in Bellary after leading the GB Karate team to major international success, including ten Olympic medals through his high-performance program. "Indian combat athletes, especially judokas, have all the talent and they are skilled on the mat, but they need to improve on their tactical acumen. There are certain improvements, but it will become better once Indians compete more at the global level," said Gary.

28-year-old Yamini, who won the silver medal, didn't expect that the medal would bring her this much attention. "Judo has grown in the last four years. I didn't know that the medal would make me so popular. It was just a judo competition for me, and I wanted to win the medal," Yamini told Yamini attributed the professionalism brought in Judo as one of the reasons. "I have been doing Judo for a long time. But one thing that has changed after I joined IIS is the professionalism in nutrition, training regime, and diet," she said. "Before joining the program, I had no idea about the importance of nutrition or recovery after a training session. These are the things that have made us better than before," Harsh,



the first Indian male judoka to win gold at the CWG, was a promising national-level player, but after joining IIS, his mindset and technique both improved massively. "I think I was doing well before joining IIS at the national level. However, once I joined, I realised how different it is to compete at the elite level," said Harsh. "I have been working with a foreign coach, which has resulted in my improvement and technique being much better than before," said Harsh. "Also, the recovery and rehabilitation from injuries are much better now as compared to before," he added further.

While the medal haul is a good reflection of India's improvement, the quality is still far away from the global or the continental level. "We need more fights at the international level. Right now, we don't have enough sparring partners in India. Once we go to international camps, we also learn from the athletes of other nations. I think the next step is for us to get more exposure at the international level," explained Harsh. Gary concurs with his ward on the international exposure, but he also points out that India needs to develop a culture for Judo. "Combat sports like Judo come from culture," said Gary. He cites the example of France. "France adopted Judo, and nobody expected them to become this good. But the reason they are good is because of the culture of Judo clubs and kids doing it regardless of thinking of it as a career," said Gary. Gary is confident that the show at CWG is just a teaser of the good times that could come for Indian judo. "This is the result of a good system that looks at holistic development. Indian judokas are talented, and I think the good times for Indian judo are coming now," concluded Gary.

Irfan Pathan opens up on how PAK media ran fake Babar Azam story to defame him



Former India player Irfan Pathan said that Pakistani media had once ran a fake story involving him and Babar Azam. The former all-rounder said that he does not respond to anything, since doing that with everyone would not let an individual live his life. Speaking during JioHotstar's 'Cheeky Singles' programme, Pathan said that instances of "trolling and fake attribution" happen every day, and once a story about Babar refusing him an interview was run, by photoshopping his face on someone else's picture.

"The trolling and fake attribution happen every day. The media in our neighbouring country once ran a story claiming that I had gone to interview Babar Azam, and that he refused because, according to him, 'He trolls our country, so I won't give him an interview.' It was a complete lie. Someone had photoshopped my face onto a picture," he said. "The person in the original image was a young Bangladeshi reporter who had gone to the ground for the first time and was refused an interview. They literally put my face on his body and spread the story. It got over a million views, and people believed it was me. This happens every day, but I don't respond. Every day, some lie is told in our name or about some player. If you keep responding to everyone, you won't be able to live your life," he added. In his playing career from 2003-12, Pathan scored 2,821 runs at an average of 26.12 in 141 innings, with a century and 11 fifties and a best score of 102. With 301 wickets at an average of 29.85, nine five-wicket hauls and two ten-fers, he was one of the finest all-rounders of his time, but saw his career get affected by injuries a lot. He has also represented Punjab Kings (PBKS), Delhi Capitals (DC), Rising Pune Supergiant (RPG) and Gujarat Lions (GL) in the IPL, taking

80 wickets in 103 matches and scoring 1,139 runs in 82 innings at an average of 21.49, with a fifty.

Avanish Rao, Binjrajka score centuries as Abhirath Reddy's 241 lights up HCA league

M. Abhirath Reddy's magnificent 241 for Jai Hanuman, along with centuries by A. Avanish Rao and Sachet Binjrajka for EMCC, highlighted another action-packed day in the HCA two-day league as several teams registered emphatic victories across the A and B divisions South Asians & Diaspora

Hyderabad: Centuries by A. Avanish Rao (102, 83b, 14x4, 2x6) and Sachet Binjrajka (116, 88b, 15x4, 4x6) for EMCC, M. Abhirath Reddy (241, 185b, 27x4, 7x6) for Jai Hanuman were some of the highlights of the HCA A-Division two-day league cricket championship here on Friday.

Balaaji 218 in 70.3 overs lost to Evergreen 224/7 in 55.1 overs (Aaron George Varghese 47, Vaishnav Reddy 75 not out).

SCRSA 232 in 63.1 overs lost to Charminar 233/4 in 28.2 overs (Karan Yadav 76, Bhavesh Seth 88).

UBI 315 in 84 overs lost to EMCC 320/6 in 54.1 overs (S. Rohit Reddy 36, A. Avanish Rao 102, Sachet Binjrajka 116, Harish Thakur 55 not out).

Deccan Chronicle 508 in 89.2 overs beat Jai Hanuman 506 in 82.3 overs (M. Abhirath Reddy 241, Ananth Prateek Reddy 45, P. Arvind 57, Shanmukha Ashwin 50, Md. Mudassar Hussain 55, Mohd Abdul Adnan 4/75, M. Pratyush Kumar 4/78).

Sporting XI 254/5 in 57 overs (A. Vignesh Reddy 31, Shaik Sohail 55 not out, A. Takshith Rao 84) vs Budding Star – second day's play abandoned. Rohit XI 445 in 90 overs beat Marredpally 177 in 41.3 overs (Sanyasi Shiven 83, M. Navtej 33, Ishan Narayan Reddy 3/27, A. Sai Chandra 6/50).

Bangladesh suffer embarrassing start to Australia tour in warm-up

Bangladesh's first Test tour to Australia in 23 years got off to a rocky start as they were bowled out for 54 in an innings defeat during the three-day warm-up game against the Cricket Australia XI in Darwin. Starting the final day of the three-day practice match with two wickets down, the Bangladesh batting order was razed by an unknown Australia quick, Campbell Thompson, playing only his second First-Class game. The 22-year-old left-arm pacer stormed through with figures of 8 for 25 as Bangladesh followed their first-innings effort of 263 with a tepid innings that lasted only 22 overs.

"Sometimes you get lucky," Thompson was quoted as saying by Cricinfo. "It felt my way today, which was nice. It's always a good experience and opportunity to come and play up against a Test side a few days out from a series. Then to play alongside experienced Aussie guys as well, like Kurtis Patterson and Corey Rocchiccioli and stuff like that. So, just involving myself around these guys has been awesome." "I think the opportunity to step out and play against the top liners in Australia, bowling to the best batters, has definitely given me some good experience heading into this year," he said. "Hopefully there's more of that but just trying to take it one step at a time. Trying to just



bowl as well as I can in any level while I'm playing and hopefully putting my best foot forward." Bangladesh will now have four days before they take on a full-strength Australian attack led by Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood in the first Test at the Marrara Stadium in Darwin, also the first Test at the venue in 22 years. The second Test, to be played at Great Barrier Reef Arena in Mackay from August 22 to 26, will also be the venue's first-ever men's Test match. While Australia dominated the ICC World Test Championship standings with a points percentage of 87.50, Bangladesh rank fourth after four Tests this cycle.

Jaiswal falls for two-ball duck as left-arm pace struggle continues in SL warm-up



GNS News Agency, August 15

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal fell for a two-ball duck during the three-day practice game against Sri Lanka Cricket XI at the Nondescripts Cricket Ground in Colombo. Opening the batting alongside KL Rahul on day two of the fixture after the SLC XI declared on their over-night score of 363 for eight, Jaiswal was dismissed caught at gully off the second delivery of the innings from left-arm

pacer Vishwa Fernando. Offering no feet movement to the delivery well outside the off-stump channel, Jaiswal flailed his bat wide from his body to offer a simple catch. The Mumbai southpaw, who has established himself as one of the opening mainstays in the shortest format, has struggled with his issues against left-arm pace across the last two seasons. Coupled with his affinity to employ the cut shot often, Jaiswal has fallen prey to the left-armers with his inability to shy away from his favoured stroke. As per data, no batter has recorded more runs with the cut than Jaiswal since his Test debut – nearly 400 runs – even as the dismissal count (seven) is firmly building up. Jaiswal has been dismissed nine times in Test cricket against left-arm pacers, three of which occurred in his last four ICC World Test Championship (WTC) innings against South Africa at home last year. On all three occasions during the series that India lost 0-2 to the Proteas, Jaiswal fell prey to South Africa quick Marco Jansen. Besides Jansen, Australia's Mitchell Starc and South Africa's Nandre Burger are the other left-armers who have dismissed him thrice in Test cricket. Jaiswal last featured in the one-off Test against Afghanistan outside the WTC cycle, scoring 24 runs.

Leylah Fernandez defeats Andreeva to reach Round of 16

Montreal: The 2021 US Open finalist Leylah Fernandez ended a streak of seven defeats to Top 10 opponents by getting past Roland Garros champion Mirra Andreeva in the third round of the WTA section of the Canadian Open. South Asians & Diaspora

Fernandez entered her match against fifth seed Andreeva and snapped her streak of defeats in a big way, matching her best-ever result at her country's signature event. The win left the 30th-ranked Fernandez primed for a Round of 16 clash with former US Open winner Naomi Osaka, the 11th seed who got the better of 20th seed Elise Mertens of Belgium 6-1, 6-4. The Canadian star routed the No. 5 seed 6-1, 6-4 in 1 hour and 21 minutes to return not just to the Round of 16 in Toronto, a result she previously recorded in Montreal in 2023, but also score her first Top 10 victory in more than a year. She last beat a player ranked as highly as Andreeva when she beat then-World No. 4 Jessica Pegula on the way to winning the Mubadala DC Open last year.

Fernandez cruised against an out-of-sorts Andreeva up until 6-1, 5-1, when the 20-year-old came alive to hold from 0-30 in the eighth game and close the gap to 5-4. But a key forehand miss at 0-15 on Fernandez's serve at 5-4 turned what turned out to be the final game around, and the No. 30 seed wrapped up the win three points later. "The key for me was to stay positive, stay strong, and to keep being patient. I mean, she wasn't going to give away some easy balls," Fernandez said afterwards. "In the beginning there were a lot of long rallies, and that was a key for me to kind of stick with it, trusting in my abilities, and to continue playing my game throughout the match."



The stat line of the match agreed with the left-hander's strategy. Andreeva made 19 unforced errors in the first set, and 34 for the match, double her 17 winners. Fernandez, meanwhile, was tidy with eight winners and seven unforced errors. "[I was] telling myself to put the ball back in. I mean, I've trained a lot growing up in being consistent and hitting like a hundred balls in a row, and trying to hit, you know, a series where none of us miss," Fernandez continued. "It's like that's where I come back to. Like, I know I can do it." There have been times where I just want to finish the point quickly, and in that moment I was like, no, trust in my abilities, trust in my fitness. I've put in the work. I know physically I'm strong. I know I can endure long rallies, long matches. So if it's going to take a hundred balls to hit to break her down, then so be it. "That was kind of the mentality. I knew that if I can do it, and if I can put a little bit more pressure, I will have my chances to hit winners, or to take more chances in the point."

Ajay Devgn's Chauhaan faces Kshatriya Parishad ire over 'weaponisation of Rajput history'



Days after the makers officially announced director Neeraj Yadav's Ajay Devgn-starrer Chauhaan with an action-packed teaser, the movie has run into a new controversy with the Kshatriya Parishad coming down heavily on the alleged "weaponisation of Rajput history and appropriation of Rajput identities". The organisation has described that such attempts are for "electoral or ideological purposes." Strongly condemning the makers' attempts to "appropriate" the Chauhan clan name for "contemporary communal politics," the Kshatriya Parishad pointed out, "Chauhans are a historic Rajput (Kshatriya) lineage whose legacy belongs to history, not to partisan campaigns or manufactured media controversies."

In a statement shared on social media, the organisation called it "deeply unfortunate" that the Rajput identity was yet again "being dragged into a political narrative" which, the Parishad pointed out, "Rajputs neither initiated nor sought." The organisation added, "At a time when Rajput voices remain underrepresented in mainstream media and public discourse, invoking a Rajput clan name merely to provoke outrage, inflame caste and communal sentiments, or generate political spectacle is both irresponsible and disrespectful." Maintaining that such representations highlight an "ignorance of Indian history," the organisation noted that the Indian subcontinent's past "cannot be reduced to simplistic communal binaries." The Kshatriya Parishad further listed examples of occasions when the Afghans and Rajputs fought alongside one another. "Mahmud Lodi fought

under the leadership of Maharana Sanga at the Battle of Khanwa; Hakim Khan Sur commanded a contingent in the army of Maharana Pratap at Haldighati; Farid Khan, who later became Sher Shah Suri, is traditionally associated with military service under Raja Raisal Shekhawat in his early career; and Maharaja Vikramaditya Tomar laid down his life fighting alongside the Lodi forces in the First Battle of Panipat," the organisation noted. "These episodes illustrate that medieval political alliances were shaped by statecraft, loyalty, and military strategy — not by the communal narratives being imposed upon them today," they said, adding, "Kshatriya Parishad rejects every attempt to weaponise Rajput history or appropriate Rajput identities for electoral or ideological purposes. Historical memory must not become a tool for communal mobilisation. We call upon political actors, filmmakers, and media organisations to engage with India's past responsibly, respecting historical complexity rather than exploiting Rajput heritage as bait for divisive political debate." We strongly condemn the attempt by Neeraj Yadav and Ajay Devgn's upcoming film Chauhaan to appropriate the Chauhan clan name for contemporary communal politics. The latest controversy follows the criticisms Chauhaan's teaser received soon after its release, due to certain dialogues and insinuations in it that many found problematic. While the promotional video's depiction of the Kashmir conflict largely received criticism, many came down even more ferociously on it for the dialogue that pellet guns leave only "minimal damage." Many, including actor Swara Bhasker, stepped forward to condemn the teaser for such remarks, which they found insensitive. Ajay's voiceover dialogue, "Tell the Pathans, Chauhaan is coming," also faced massive backlash, with many alleging that the line vilified Muslims in general and was further worsened by the portrayal of Chauhaan, a Rajput, as coming to give "answers." Along with a news report on the adverse effects of being attacked with pellet guns, Swara wrote on social media, "Is this what you want to glorify Bollywood?! Pellet guns are not 'limited damage,' they are a gross human rights violation. And mainstream Kashmiris are not Pathaans. Kuch toh research kar liya karo yaar. And look up Goebbels while you are at it!" She captioned the post, "The Vivek Agnihotri-fication of Bollywood." Produced jointly by Jyoti Deshpande, Aanand L Rai and Himanshu Sharma under the banners of Jio Studios and Colour Yellow Productions, Chauhaan will hit the screens on October 1, 2027.

'Rather have 5 joyous years than 15 miserable ones': Zeenat Aman on live-in relationships

Veteran actress Zeenat Aman has consistently advocated for live-in relationships, arguing that couples should spend time living together before making a lifelong legal commitment. Her views have sparked criticism from several of her contemporaries, including Mumtaz and Saira Banu. Despite the backlash, Zeenat continues to stand by her belief. In a recent conversation with Shubra Aiyappa, Zeenat explained why she feels live-in relationships are more relevant than ever.

"In today's day and age—and even in the past—nothing lasts forever. You need to ensure compatibility before making a legal commitment. This is my view. You need to know whether you're compatible mentally and emotionally. If you're planning to have children, how will you raise them? What are your views on finances? If there is no compatibility, what's the point? Wouldn't you rather have five joyous years instead of fifteen miserable ones? That's what I believe," she said. Elaborating further, the actress added, "People think romance is going to last forever. Nothing lasts forever. Relationships are always a work in progress. There has to be give and take, adjustment and compromise if things are to work. Relationships evolve. If you think the honeymoon phase is going to last forever, it doesn't."

Zeenat Aman has previously revealed that she gives the same advice to her sons, encouraging them to live with their partners before deciding on marriage. Her perspective is also shaped by her own difficult experiences with relationships. She was briefly married to Sanjay Khan, a relationship that ended amid allegations of physical abuse after an infamous incident in a hotel room, during which she sustained serious injuries to one of her eyes. She later married actor Mazhar Khan, but the marriage was also troubled. Zeenat has previously spoken about infidelity during her pregnancy and the unhappy end to their relationship. Earlier, Zeenat Aman had faced intense criticism after sharing her views on live-in relationships in an Instagram post. One of you asked me for relationship advice in the comments section of my last post. Here's a personal opinion I haven't previously shared—if you're in a relationship, I strongly recommend that you LIVE TOGETHER before getting married!" she wrote.

She added, "This is the same advice I've always given



my sons, both of whom have had, or are in, a live-in relationship. It just seems logical to me that before two people get their families and the government involved in their equation, they first put their relationship to the ultimate test." Explaining her reasoning, Zeenat continued, "It's easy to be the best version of yourself for a few hours a day. But can you share a bathroom? Weather the storm of a bad mood? Agree on what to eat for dinner every night? Keep the fire alive in the bedroom? Work through the million tiny conflicts that inevitably arise between two people living in close proximity? In short—are you actually compatible?" Acknowledging that her opinion could spark controversy, she concluded, "I'm aware that Indian society is a little uptight about 'living in sin,' but then again, society is uptight about so many things! Log kya kahenge?" Her remarks, however, did not sit well with Saira Banu, who strongly disagreed with the advice. "She has all of a sudden come into this huge social media popularity, and I can understand her excitement about sounding like a cool aunty. But giving advice that is counter to our moral values is not the solution to increasing your following. Aap Zeenat ko hi le lo misaal ke taur par (Take Zeenat for example). She knew Mazhar Khan for years before marrying him. Her marriage was a living hell. She should be the last person doling out advice on relationships," Saira had said.

'The Angry Birds Movie 3' trailer introduces Red as a father

It offered a fresh glimpse into the next chapter of the animated franchise. The trailer teases a new storyline that pushes Red into unfamiliar territory, introducing unexpected challenges and a new family dynamic that adds a fresh twist to the beloved character's journey. Paramount Pictures shared the trailer, poster, and first-look images of the upcoming film on Instagram and wrote, "Parenthood is a game-changer. Watch the new trailer for The #AngryBirdsMovie3 — only in theatres December 23."

Having previously taken on the green pigs and protected Bird Island, Red now faces his biggest challenge yet—fatherhood. The Angry Birds Movie 3 brings in a fresh family dynamic that places him in completely unfamiliar territory. As he struggles to adjust to the demands of parenthood, he is also drawn into a global mission, discovering that being a hero at home can be just as demanding as saving the world.

Produced by John Cohen, Dan Chuba, Carla Connor, and Namit Malhotra, the film is directed by John Rice from a screenplay by Thorup Van Orman. The star-studded voice cast features Jason Sudeikis, Josh Gad, Emma Myers, Rachel Bloom, Walker Scobell, Danny McBride, Marcello Hernández, Tim Robinson, Anna Cathcart, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, Nikki Glaser, MrBeast, Salish Matter, Psalm West, Sam Richardson, and James Austin Johnson, with Lily James and Keke Palmer. The upcoming installment in the animated franchise is based on the hugely popular Rovio



Paramount Pictures has unveiled the official trailer of The Angry Birds Movie 3, teasing Red's biggest challenge yet—fatherhood. The animated film is set to release in India on 1 January 2027 in English and Hindi.

game series. The new film sees Jason Sudeikis return as Red, who is now up against an entirely different challenge—fatherhood. As per the official synopsis, "one angry bird will face his greatest challenge yet, surviving fatherhood... while saving the world!" "The Angry Birds Movie 3" will release in India in English and Hindi on 1 January 2027.

'Infidelity not a deal breaker': Ram Kapoor says wife was okay with his on-screen kiss



TV actor Ram Kapoor has failed to make a good first impression on Lock Upp: Sach Ya Sazaa. Right from day one on the show, he has been in the news for his entitled behaviour and inappropriate comments, with other contestants often calling him out. In the latest episode as well, Ram Kapoor's opinions were met with strong opposition. In the first instance, Madhuri Grover said it was not okay for wives to see their husbands kiss another woman on screen, with an irritated Ram Kapoor strongly disagreeing. He also said cheating in a marriage is not a deal breaker, with Akanksha Chamola protesting to his comments. On the latest episode of Lock Upp: Sach Ya Sazaa, Ram Kapoor stirred a serious discussion with his views on infidelity. When Shreya Kalra asked, "You know your partner cheated on you, so what is the solution? Do you explore other options because you don't feel the same connection?" This discussion stemmed from Harshad Chopda's confession that his girlfriend cheated on him with his best friend. Sharing his views, Ram Kapoor said, "No, you have to find the connection again." He further added, "If you really love your partner, nothing is a deal breaker. Marriage is hard, and it's a journey. You have to work at it every day. Sometimes, after 20-25 years, you have highs and lows, good and bad periods. In the bad phase, if one partner makes a mistake and ends up cheating, and you can't live without them or the children, and want the best for the family, then time heals everything,

and nothing is a deal breaker." Akanksha Chamola opposed him and said, "This doesn't happen by mistake; being physically intimate is a process. You cannot say it's a mistake." The conversation will be screened in the episode tonight. Ram Kapoor on Gautami supporting his on-screen kiss Last year, the Bade Aocche Lagte Hai actor shared in an interview with Siddharth Kannan that he was uncomfortable kissing on screen in the show. Ram had also accepted he hadn't informed his wife Gautami about the kiss and how she reacted. Earlier this year, in an interview, Gautami Kapoor also recalled that she banged the phone on Ram when he informed her about the kiss. In an interview with Siddharth Kannan, Gautami Kapoor had said, "It was 2:30 am when he called, I was a mother who was breastfeeding at that time. So my first reaction was hanging up on him. I was like 'What?' I hung up. I didn't even want to think further. As the night progressed, I thought more about it and realized that these are just actors who are doing their jobs and that a television set is a chaotic place with no place for romance. I thought, 'Why am I putting him in such a tight spot?' In the morning, when he came back home, I only hugged him." On the latest episode of Lock Upp, when Madhuri Grover discussed that it was not okay for a star wife to see her husband kiss on screen, Ram Kapoor got irritated and said, "I disagree, I will give you my wife's number, and you can talk to her." He further discussed how wives feel or react to such scenes and said, "It's not easy at all, but we make our wives feel so loved and secure; it's our responsibility to make them feel safe. I have kissed three different actresses on screen, all three times Gautami has never had an issue. She has happily said yes every time because I make her feel comfortable and in love, so she doesn't need to bother about it. She knows it's my job, and I call myself a professional. I did Indian television's first lip-to-lip kiss with Sakshi Tanwar. It became a huge controversy. The way Gautami told me, 'make me proud', I knew she was happy that her husband was making history." Lock Upp: Sach Ya Sazaa streams on Netflix India every Saturday to Wednesday at 8 pm. The show has been getting a great response and has also been trending at number one on Netflix India.

'He started bleeding': Kayadu Lohar recalls hitting her harasser with stone as a student

Kayadu Lohar is one of those rare actors who has managed to make a strong impression on audiences across various languages in a short span of time, and that too with just a handful of films. In a career spanning about five years, she has appeared in only eight movies but already ranks as a star in South India and is slated to play key roles in several major under-production projects. During a recent interview, Kayadu took a trip down memory lane and opened up about an instance when she faced street sexual harassment as a student. Although she ignored it on the first two days, the actor shared that she reacted strongly on the third day, even injuring one of the harassers. "When I was in school, I used to go for these Grade 10 classes (tuition) near my house. En route, there were these boys who eve-teased me. On the first day, I was like, 'Okay, fine, forget it.' I reacted the same on the second day, too. But, on the third day, I just couldn't take it," she shared during a conversation with Galatta Tamil. For the unversed, eve-teasing is a colloquial term used in India — which has received significant criticism over the years for being tone-deaf — referring to the act of making unwanted sexual remarks or advances in a public place. The Pallichattambi star added, "I was so agitated and angry. I picked up a stone and threw it at them, breaking the head of one of them. He started bleeding, and I left from there. I don't know what happened next, but... very violent... I don't think you can pick up a stone and break someone's head. But that's what I felt, and that's



what I did. I have always been the kind of girl who might look quiet. But when someone does wrong things, I don't think one should be quiet. You should give it back." Kayadu Lohar is currently gearing up for the release of director Aakash Baskaran's Atharvaa-led Idhayam Murali and Mariyappan Chinna's GV Prakash Kumar-led Immortal. While Idhayam Murali will hit the screens on July 10, Immortal is eyeing July 23 release. She also has Dulquer Salmaan's I'm Game, Prithviraj Sukumaran's Khalifa, and Nani's The Paradise in the pipeline.

Ramayana is IMDb's most-awaited film of 2026, King and Alpha make it to top five

The year is halfway through, and while the first half was largely dominated by tentpole announcements and major releases such as Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar: The Revenge, Sunny Deol's Border 2, and Akshay Kumar's Bhoot Bangla, all eyes are now on the second half of 2026, which is packed with several big-ticket releases starring some of the biggest names in Indian cinema. Keeping that in mind, IMDb has unveiled its Most Anticipated Indian Movies list for the second half of 2026, and as expected, it is topped by Ranbir Kapoor's highly anticipated Ramayana: Part 1. The list reflects the titles that drew the most page views from IMDb's 250 million-plus monthly visitors worldwide between January 1 and June 28, 2026. Directed by Nitesh Tiwari and backed by Namit Malhotra, the film is the first part of a two-part epic saga. It stars Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Rama, Yash as Ravana, Sai Pallavi as Sita, and Sunny Deol as Hanuman. The film is eagerly awaited not only because it brings one of India's greatest mythological epics to the big screen, but also because of its landmark musical collaboration between AR Rahman and Hans Zimmer.

At number two is Alia Bhatt's upcoming spy actioner Alpha. Directed by Shiv Rawail, the film also stars Sharvari, Bobby Deol, and Anil Kapoor. It is the latest instalment in YRF's Spy Universe, following films such as Pathaan, Tiger 3, and War 2. Yash's much-awaited Toxic, which has faced multiple delays, ranks third on the list. Directed by Geetu Mohandas, the period gangster actioner boasts an ensemble cast featuring Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria, and Rukmini Vasanth. Shah Rukh Khan is also set to make his big-screen comeback after a gap of three years with Siddharth Anand's actioner King, which marks the theatrical debut of his daughter Suhana Khan. The film also stars Deepika Padukone, Jaideep Ahlawat, Arshad Warsi, Saurabh Shukla, Jackie Shroff, Anil Kapoor, Raghav Juyal, Abhay Verma, and Rani Mukerji. Scheduled for a Christmas 2026 release, King occupies the fourth spot on the list. At number five is the comedy-drama Dhamaal 4 which aims to build on the success of the popular franchise. The film features a large ensemble cast led by Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi, Jaaved Jaaferi, Ravi Kishan, Sanjay Mishra, Upendra Limaye, Anjali Anand, Sanjeeda Shaikh, and Esha Gupta.

Drishyam 3 Ajay Devgn appears again at number six with the highly anticipated sequel Drishyam 3, which revisits his iconic character Vijay Salgaonkar as he once again fights to protect his family while confronting the consequences of his past. At number seven is the Tamil film



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Vishwanath and Sons, starring Suriya. The film follows a man who has devoted decades to excellence as an international shooter. When age, family responsibilities, and an unexpected romance begin to clash with his ambitions, he is forced to confront what truly makes life worth living. At number eight is the surprise entrant Mirzapur: The Movie, which brings the hit streaming franchise to the big screen. The original cast, including Pankaj Tripathi, Divyenndu, Ali Fazal, Abhishek Banerjee, and Kulbhushan Kharbanda, reunites for what will be the first cinematic adaptation of an Indian web series following its digital success. At number nine is Priyadarshan's Haiwaan, which reunites Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan. The thriller features Saif in the role of a visually impaired man and has already generated considerable curiosity among audiences. Rounding off the top 10 is Shraddha Kapoor's Eetha. The film's teaser, released recently, received significant attention. It is directed by Chhaava famed filmmaker Laxman Utkar. Other titles featured in the top 20 include Emraan Hashmi's Awarapan 2, Sunny Deol and Akshaye Khanna's courtroom drama Ikka, the Tamil film Arasan, Malayalam films Khalifa and I'm Game, the Telugu film Ranabaali, Shakti Shalini starring Aneet Padda, Tamil films Idhayam Murali and Sigma, and Siddharth Malhotra's Vvan: Force of the Forest.