

Tiger pugmarks spark panic in Adilabad’s Bheemapur mandal

Adilabad/Kumram Bheem Asifabad: A tiger scare has gripped parts of Bheemapur mandal on Thursday. Locals claimed that they noticed pugmarks of a tiger at a hillock and in agricultural fields on the outskirts of Bheempur Arli (T) village in Bheemapur mandal, triggering panic among farmers. A farmer raised an alarm after spotting it in his field. He said that the tiger entered the forests after killing a wild boar. They urged forest officials to divert the tiger.

Pradhan May Return to Cabinet in Modi Reshuffle

New Delhi: Forced to quit as Union education minister amid unprecedented student protests over the NEET paper leak and growing concerns over the state of education in the country, BJP Lok Sabha member Dharmendra Pradhan might just be on his way back to power. Amid talks of an impending reshuffle in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's team, speculation is rife that Pradhan could be offered a Cabinet berth. That the former education minister continues to be the "blue-eyed boy" of the ruling dispensation became evident from the way he was accorded a hero's welcome by the BJP MPs when he attended Parliament after his resignation.

After the announcement of BJP president Nitin Nabin's team, which has a significant number of new faces along with some senior leaders, speculation is rife that the council of ministers could also include new faces along with some reshuffling of portfolios. Commerce minister Piyush Goyal was the only union minister appointed as the national treasurer of the BJP.

Under intense pressure from the CJP and its supporters, who had gathered at the Jantar Mantar last month, Pradhan tendered his resignation on July 25, maintaining that his decision was aimed at safeguarding the student's future. He also maintained that his decision to resign from the Cabinet was also to prevent "anti-national



forces" from exploiting the nationwide protests. Two days after Pradhan's resignation, his party colleagues presented him with a ceremonial cap and escorted him inside the Parliament when he went to attend the recently concluded Monsoon Session.

With the BJP-led NDA government's efforts in passing the women's reservation amendment bill, there are talks within the ruling party that some more women leaders could also be inducted. Some of the NDA allies could also see their representative getting included in Team Modi during the reshuffle, or so claim reports.

Cong.’s Two-Stanza Vande Mataram Stand Anti-National: Shah

Chennai: The political row over Vande Mataram intensified on Thursday, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah accusing the Congress of appeasement and defying the law by deciding to sing only two stanzas of the national song.

Speaking in Mahabalipuram on the sidelines of the South Zone Chief Ministers' meeting, Shah said the Congress Working Committee's decision amounted to repeating a "historic mistake" made in 1937.

He alleged that the Congress had then restricted the rendition of Vande Mataram for appeasement and claimed that the move strengthened the two-nation theory that ultimately led to Partition.

Shah said the Narendra Modi government had corrected that mistake during the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram by giving legal recognition to the full song. He accused the Congress under Rahul Gandhi of again pursuing vote-bank politics.

Calling the CWC decision "anti-national" and an "open defiance of the law", Shah appealed to people to oppose what he described as the Congress' politics of appeasement.

The Congress rejected the charge, with senior leader Jairam Ramesh accusing the BJP of politicising an emotive issue to divert attention from public concerns, including those affecting students.



Ramesh said the Congress position was based on a 1937 CWC resolution adopted by leading figures of the freedom movement, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, following Rabindranath Tagore's advice.

He also recalled that Rajendra Prasad had declared Vande Mataram the national song on January 25, 1950, and accused BJP leaders of being "fraudulent and fake nationalists".

Other BJP leaders also joined the attack, alleging that the Congress was placing vote-bank politics above national sentiment.

Tough Rules Set For Rahul Gandhi’s Pune Event, 30 Conditions Imposed

Police have granted permission for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's August 22 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' event in Pune with 30 conditions, prohibiting "objectionable" banners or images and directing organisers to avoid hurting religious sentiments. The 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' (voice of students) event is specifically dedicated to female students to discuss issues like education, safety, equality, competitive exams, and career opportunities.

The programme is scheduled to be held from 4.30 pm to 9.30 pm at the SSPMS College ground near RTO Chowk in the city, where 8,000 to 10,000 people are likely to gather, as per the permission order issued on Wednesday.

Among 30 conditions set by the police, the organisers have been directed not to put up any objectionable images, pictures or banners, and they will be responsible if any untoward incident occurs and leads to a law-and-order situation there, the order said.

"No one's religious sentiments should be hurt dur-



ing the programme and responsibility for ensuring this will be on the organisers," it stated.

Maharashtra Congress vice president Mohan Joshi said the police have granted permission for the programme and the organisers will comply with all the conditions laid down by them.

There are a total of 30 conditions set by the police while granting the permission, he informed.

The police have also asked the organisers to ensure adequate security, separate arrangements for men and women, sufficient entry and exit gates, drinking water, toilets, fire-safety equipment and parking facilities.

They have directed the organisers to deploy private security personnel, including women guards, and make extensive use of volunteers, particularly women. CCTV cameras covering the entire venue are also required to remain operational during the day and night.

The organisers have been instructed to comply with Supreme Court directions on permissible noise levels and provisions of the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

The police have also prohibited the use of drones for photography at the venue and directed the organisers to ensure that emergency access remains available for police, medical and fire services.

The permission is subject to a no-objection certificate from the traffic department. It can be cancelled at any time if any illegal activity affecting law and order is detected, the police said.

If a dispute arises over the venue, the no-objection permission will be cancelled immediately, they said.

PM Modi to address UNGA high-level meet in New York in September

United Nations: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to address world leaders at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September, according to a preliminary schedule.

His address is set for the afternoon session on September 25 that runs from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. in New York, corresponding to 12:30 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. the next day in India.

CM Revanth Arrives In London For First Leg Of Two-Nation Tour

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday arrived in London as part of his 10-day two-nation tour to the United Kingdom and the United States. The Telangana delegation is scheduled to hold meetings aimed at attracting industrial investments and forging academic partnerships.

The delegation, which includes senior state officials, will pitch Telangana as a global investment destination, with a focus on Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence, life sciences, green energy and skill development.

Revanth Reddy left New Delhi on a post-midnight flight after attending the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting on August 19. On August 20, he is likely to attend the wedding of AIMIM floor leader Akbaruddin Owaisi's daughter Fatima Owaisi.

On August 21, the Chief Minister will visit the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University and attend an English Premier League football presentation at Emirates Stadium.

The following day, he will interact with the Cambridge team, visit Senate House at the University of London and tour the London Business School.

Revanth Reddy will leave London for Boston in the US on August 23. On August 24, he will hold academic meetings at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before travelling to New York at night. On August 25, the delegation will visit Northeastern University and hold talks with representatives of Virginia Tech University.

The Chief Minister will attend a 'Meet & Greet' event organised by the Indian Overseas Congress in New York



on August 26 to interact with members of the Indian diaspora and business leaders. On August 27 and 28, the delegation will participate in industrial roundtable sessions with global CEOs, venture capitalists and multinational companies on data centre expansion and manufacturing facilities in Hyderabad.

Revanth Reddy will leave New York on August 29 and return to Hyderabad on August 30.

Trump Announces Crushing Economic Warfare Against Iran

Washington, DC: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday (local time) announced what he described as the "most crushing economic operation ever taken" against Iran, warning that any country providing financial or other support to Tehran would face "tremendous economic consequences."

"No one has given the Islamic Republic of Iran a greater opportunity to make a Deal than me. TRAGICALLY, for them, they have failed to take it," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

"Therefore, today, I am announcing the MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY! This will be Economic Warfare and Isolation on an unprecedented scale," he added.

"Their navy is gone, their air force is destroyed, their military factories are now rubble, their currency is worthless, and their country is hanging by a thread," he further wrote.

Trump said any country providing financial, business, airport or government support to Iran would face "tremendous economic consequences."

"Today, I am also announcing that ANY country that allows its financial institutions, businesses, airports, or government entities to provide any type of lifeline to Iran will itself face TREMENDOUS Economic Consequences,"



Trump said.

The US President further said the measures would target Iran's economic lifelines, including oil smuggling networks, financial transfers, exchange houses and front companies.

"Oil smuggling, swap lines, cash transfers, exchange houses, ship registries, front companies -- It all needs to stop NOW," he wrote.

Trump said the measures would mark an "economic D-Day" and urged US allies to join Washington in isolating Iran, claiming that the steps would cripple Tehran's ability to project terror worldwide.

"You know who you are. This will be an ECONOMIC D-DAY, and we need all of our Allies to stand with the United States of America to isolate, and defeat, the Iran threat. These maniacs are on the ropes, and these HISTORIC MEASURES will cripple them and their ability to project terror worldwide," Trump said.

The US President also reiterated that Iran would not be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons.

"IRAN WILL NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON," Trump said.

Trump's announcement came shortly after he said the US had "very draconian sanctions" available against Iran and indicated that further measures could be taken.

LKG Student Dies After Allegedly Being Hit by Teacher

Visakhapatnam: A five-year-old UKG student allegedly collapsed and died after being slapped by his teacher for not completing his homework at a recognised private school near the Kanaka Mahalakshmi temple in the One Town police station limits on Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Tammana Pranay Tej, son of Tammana Krishna Prasad and Sai Lakshmi. Prasad works as a professional cook, while Sai Lakshmi is a homemaker.

Police registered a case under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), relating to suspicious death, following a complaint lodged by the boy's parents. However, the teacher has not yet been arrested.

The incident reportedly occurred at around 11 am when the teacher was checking the homework of students one by one. According to eyewitness accounts and CCTV footage, Pranay Tej showed the teacher an empty slate, following which she allegedly pulled him towards her, opened the buttons of his shirt and slapped him.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Indian Railways—basic amenities off track

A train journey in India is often romanticised by writers for providing a glimpse of stunning diversity, but a closer look at the condition of railway stations and passenger amenities tells a different story. A story of neglect, callousness and inefficiency. Whether it is in cleanliness, hygiene, infrastructure, safety or punctuality, Indian Railways fares poorly. The latest report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) paints a grim picture of the Railways and shows that the country's busiest public spaces continue to fail passengers on the basics. The findings expose systemic gaps in safety, sanitation and service delivery across a network that carries 292.4 crore non-suburban passengers annually through 5,908 stations and over 7,424 daily passenger trains. The audit of 512 stations across all 16 railway zones found that 458 stations, constituting 89%, lacked one or more mandatory Minimum Essential Amenities. Only 54 stations met the prescribed standards. Even premier stations such as New Delhi, Howrah and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus showed serious deficiencies. The Railways presents a curious paradox: while it has excelled in expanding the networks and become much better at building new assets, it continues to be poor at maintaining, operating and managing existing assets to high standards. The most alarming finding of the CAG concerns public health. Drinking water samples from platform taps tested positive for total coliform bacteria, including E. coli, at 49 stations in 2022-23 and 56 stations in 2023-24.

Further, bacteriological tests other than total coliforms were found to be unsatisfactory at eight stations across four zones in 2022-23 and 11 stations across five zones in 2023-24.

BJP WOULD INTENSIFY AGITATION IN SUPPORT OF STUDENTS IF GOVT FAILED TO RELEASE FEE-IMBURSMENT DUES: NRR

Hyderabad, Aug 20 : BJP State President N Ramchander Rao today alleged that the Congress government, which came to power promising a welfare state, has now plunged into a severe crisis. "Rao was addressing Mahadharma - 'Fee Bakayi—BJP Ladayi' at Karimnagar organized by BJYM demanding the immediate release of fee reimbursement dues and scholarship issues faced by students across Telangana." BJP state chief strongly warned that uncompromising struggle against Revanth Reddy government would continue until fee reimbursement and scholarships are released. "If this government plays with the lives of students without releasing fee reimbursement and scholarships, the BJP would intensify agitation in support of students." Speaking on the occasion, Rao lambasted the Revanth Reddy government, stating that the Congress party came to power promising a welfare state prior to the elections, but has now sunk into a deep crisis. He criticized that while the previous government left around Rs 8,000 crore in fee dues pending, the current Congress government is also acting negligently by failing to release funds, thereby playing with the lives of students. "He alleged that it was only after receiving a reprimand from the state High Court, a cabinet decision was made to grant Rs. 2,000 crore in advance towards fee reimbursement. But not a single penny has been released so far, he lamented. Rao expressed deep concern that nearly 20 lakh students across the state are waiting for fee reimbursement clearings, and due to non-receipt of funds, college managements are unable to pay salaries to faculty, leading to the closure of educational institutions. He highlighted that students and their parents are enduring severe financial and mental distress as they are unable to pay fees." He criticized that the 'Youth Declaration' promises made by Rahul Gandhi during elections have blown away in the wind, and that the Congress party is acting with a colonial mindset while ignoring the future of students. He asserted that the Bharatiya Janata Party will continue to fight on behalf of the students until the Congress government yields and releases the fee dues." Earlier, BJYM State President Ganesh Kunde stated that BJYM has been fighting relentlessly at the ground level for the past month to secure students' rights and the release of scholarships. He strongly condemned the police for issuing notices to college managements and students out of fear over student unrest, calling it an atrocity.

He warned CM Revanth Reddy to remember history, which shows that when student power revolts, governments have fallen. He warned that if the students' legitimate demands are not met, they will intensify the movement by laying siege to collectorates. "Ganesh Kunde demanded that the Revanth Reddy government immediately release fee dues and scholarships, failing which Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should resign from his post. BJP State Vice President and district in-charge Shanthi Kumar, District President Saini Malleshham, City Mayor Srinivas, Deputy Mayor Sunil Rao, former MLA Bodiga Shobha, along with thousands of students and youth, participated in large numbers in the protest.

AP Rajya Sabha MP's son arrested in Hyderabad accident death case

GNS News Agency, August 20

Hyderabad: The Madhapur police on Thursday arrested Sanjush Lingamaneni, son of a Rajya Sabha MP from AP, for causing the death of a woman in an accident while driving a car three days ago. His father, Lingamaneni Ramesh, is an MP from the Janasena party. The victim, Bharathi Mukhi (26), and her colleague, Pooja Ashok (26), had gone to the vicinity of ITC Kohinoor around 3 p.m. to bring lunch. While returning to Inorbit Mall, Bharathi was crossing the road in front of the mall when an Aston Martin, allegedly being driven at high speed and in a negligent manner by Sanjush, hit her.

CP Sajjanar Rides Through KBR Route to Assess New One-Way Traffic System



“Hyderabad correspondent, August 20 (Indian Chronicle): Hyderabad Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar on Thursday took a first-hand look at the newly introduced one-way traffic system around KBR Park, riding a motor-

cycle in plain clothes to assess traffic movement from a commuter's perspective. Sajjanar travelled from Road No. 45 through Jubilee Checkpost, Venkata Giri, KBR Park Main Gate, Mukdha Junction, Basavatarakam, Agrasen Junction and Film Nagar Junction before returning to Road No. 45. He made two rounds in the morning and later reviewed traffic conditions again during peak afternoon movement. At key junctions, the Commissioner interacted with traffic personnel and sought feedback on ground-level conditions. He said traffic flow around KBR Park had become smoother on the second day of the one-way arrangement, after some initial confusion among motorists over lane changes. The Commissioner said clear signage had been installed at junctions and adequate traffic personnel deployed to guide commuters. He added that Hyderabad Traffic Police was coordinating with GHMC and the construction agency to expedite the H-City project works. He appealed to motorists to follow traffic regulations and cooperate until the ongoing works are completed.

There Has Never Been a Film Like Ameer Log Before; It Is Definitely a Hit: Director Ramana Reddy Soma

“Ameer Log marks the maiden production venture of Madhavi Reddy Soma under the banner of Awwal Number Productions. The film is directed by Ramana Reddy Soma, with Manohar Reddy Manchuri serving as co-producer. MC Hari, Manoj, and Sashidhar play the lead roles, while Veda Jalandhar, Ravan Nittoor, Vishwender Reddy, and Sai Yogi appear in key roles. “Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media is set to release the film grandly in Telugu on August 21. A press meet was held on Wednesday, with the following members of the team sharing their thoughts:” “ Director Ramana Reddy Soma said : “We have watched Ameer Log several times by now, and it is definitely a hit film. A movie like this has never been made before. I have made a great attempt with this film. Looking at the response to the premieres, we understood that we had achieved what we set out to do. People often say that films like those made in Malayalam are not being made here. I believe the Hyderabad era has now begun. The sound that starts in Nizam on August 21 will reach all the other 'woods' as well.” “ Producer Madhavi Reddy Soma said : “I thank my husband Ramana, who has always stood by me and guided me. He took care of everything as the writer, director, and producer. He crafted Ameer Log like a beautiful painting. When audiences walk out of the theatre after watching this film, each one of them will take home some kind of emotion.” “ Actor MC Hari said : “Ameer Log gave me a wonderful opportunity, a family, and a great experience. Rohith's editing is outstanding, and Smaran has given fantastic music. Manoj, Shashi, and I had a lot of fun together on the sets. We learned something new every day during the shoot. I thank Sandeep, SVK, Madhavi garu, and Ramana anna for supporting me throughout this journey. The theatres were absolutely rocking wherever the premieres were held. We hope to receive the same response on August 21.” “ Actor Manoj said : “I am happy that a film like Ameer Log came my way at the beginning of my career. With this movie, I believe we will be able to sustain ourselves for another ten years. The response to the premieres has been phenomenal everywhere. Smaran's music has taken the film to the next level. Our movie represents the spirit and culture of Telangana.” “ Actress Veda Jalandhar said : “The premieres of Ameer Log are receiving a very good response. I heard that everyone who watched the film in my hometown Karimnagar was asking about me (laughs). There is honesty and innocence in our



film. Please watch our movie on August 21. The film has all kinds of emotions. Smaran's music, Rohith's editing, and the efforts of all the artists have contributed immensely to the movie. I thank Madhavi garu and Ramana Reddy garu for supporting us. After watching the film, you will feel completely satisfied, like you have had a full meal.” “ Editor Rohith said : “I have shared a bond with Ramana for the past seven years. He worked extremely hard for Ameer Log. The reward for all that effort will come on August 21. The film has turned out wonderfully, and I am confident that everyone will like it.” “ Co-Producer Manohar Reddy said : “I recently returned from the US, and people there are also asking about this movie. Ramana carried the entire film on his shoulders and gave it his all.” “ Actor Sai Yogi said : “Ramana anna is going to showcase his love for Hyderabad through Ameer Log. The premieres held in Andhra Pradesh also received a good response. The premieres in Karimnagar and Warangal received an excellent response.” “ Cast : MC Hari, Manoj, Sashidhar Kochalakota, Veda Jalandhar, Ravan Nittoor, Vishwender Reddy, Sai Yogi and others.” “ Technical Crew “Banner: Awwal Number Productions“Director: Ramana Reddy Soma“Producer: Madhavi Reddy Soma“Co-Producer: Manohar Reddy Manchuri“Telugu Release: Spirit Media, Rana Daggubati“DOP: SVK“Editor: Rohith Penumatsa“Music: Smaran Sai“Posters: Shakti“Sync Sound & Mixing: Swapnik Rao“Chief AD: Sai Yogi“Executive Producer: Sandeep Borreddy“Line Producer: Sharath Polavarapu“PRO: Sai Satish“End

Struggle to Continue Until ST Status Is Achieved



"Mali" Community Demands ST Status and Establishment of "Mali" Corporation“Kumrambheem, Asifabad.District. "Indian Chronicle"August. 2.“Wankidi Mali Sangham State President Lendugure Shyamrao demanded that the Central and State governments immediately fulfill their promises regarding the granting of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the Mali community. He stated that the Mali community would intensify its movement through unity and continue the struggle until ST status is achieved.“Speaking on the occasion,Shyamrao said that during the previous elections, BJP leaders had promised to grant ST status to the Mali community. However, he alleged that after the elections, the issue has not been raised with sufficient seriousness in Parliament or the Assembly.He appealed to BJP public representatives, including MP Gaddam Nagesh and MLA Harish Babu, to raise the issue of ST status for the Mali community in the upcoming Parliament sessions and put pressure on the Central government to take a positive decision.He also urged the Congress party to fulfill the promises made to the Mali community during the elections.He appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, ministers and other public representatives to consider the social, economic and educational conditions of the Mali community and recommend ST status to the Central government.Shyamrao stated that the Mali community has a population of approximately four to five lakh in the state but continues to face backwardness in social, economic, educational and employment opportunities. He said granting ST status would help the community achieve social and economic development and would not cause injustice to other communities.“Demand for Mali Corporation“Shyamrao thanked the government for recently establishing the Munnuru Kapu Corporation and demanded that a separate Mali Corporation also be established with adequate funds, considering the economic backwardness of the Mali community.He urged the government to provide opportunities for education, employment, self-employment and economic development through the proposed corporation. He also said that the Mali community has a responsibility to carry forward the ideals and legacy of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule.He called upon students, intellectuals, farmers, workers, women and youth from the community to participate in the movement in large numbers. He stressed the need for collective action to secure social justice for future

generations.“Movement to Continue Until the Demand Is Fulfilled“Shyamrao announced that the movement would continue until the Mali community achieves ST status. He said democratic methods would be adopted to put pressure on the Central and State governments and achieve their legitimate demands. He appealed to the entire Mali community to remain united and make the movement successful.State General Secretary of Mali Sangham Vasanth Rao, State Vice-President Narayana, District President Vasu, District Vice-President Gopal, Wankidi Mandal Honorary President Gaurayya, Mandal President Baburao, Mandal General Secretary Jyotibha, Mandal Vice-President Divakar, Baburao and others participated in the programme.

Mahankali Bonalu Celebrated Grandly in Uppal



---Vajresh Yadav, Parameshwar Reddy and Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Attend as Chief Guests““UPPAL , AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Mahankali and Eedamma Bonalu celebrations were held with great fervour in Uppal on Thursday. On the occasion of Bonalu, Medchal-Malkajgiri District Congress Party President Thotakura Vajresh Yadav, Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and former Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, along with Sri Mahankali Temple Committee Chairman Telkala Mohan Reddy, performed special prayers at the Sri Mahankali Temple.Later, they also offered special prayers along with local Congress leaders. The temple committee representatives and priests felicitated the leaders on the occasion.““---May the blessings of the Goddess be with everyone: Parameshwar Reddy“Parameshwar Reddy wished that the blessings and divine grace of Goddess Mahankali would bring good health, happiness and prosperity to all the people of Uppal constituency. He said that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy had sanctioned special funds to temple committees in the state in connection with the Bonalu celebrations.Members of the Uppal Mahankali Temple Committee and local leaders participated in the programme

Massive Joinings into TRS Senior Leaders and Around 15 Youth Join TRS in the Presence of Kavitha Akka



“Kumrambheem, Asifabad.District, August.21.“Hyderabad: On Thursday, a large number of leaders and youth joined the TRS party at the TRS State Office in Hyderabad under the leadership of TRS Asifabad District President Vinod. Along with senior leaders, around 15 young people joined the party in the presence of Kavitha Akka. The new members were warmly welcomed into the party by presenting them with party scarves.“Speaking on the occasion, the newly joined leaders and youth said that they would work together for the strengthening of the TRS party. They expressed their commitment to actively participate in party activities and work for the welfare and development of the people.“The leaders said that they would work to strengthen the party from the grassroots level across Asifabad district and take up public issues with dedication. The joining of senior leaders and youth in large numbers has created enthusiasm among the party ranks.

Young Man Dies After Tractor Overturns

“DCC President Atram Sugunakka Pays Tribute to the Deceased“



“Kumrambheem, Asifabad.Indian Chronicle.August 21.“Jainoor: A young man, Raheel, son of Deputy Sarpanch Saleem, died in a tragic tractor accident that took place on Wednesday in Gudamamda village of Jainoor Mandal. The incident has cast a pall of gloom over the village.“After learning about the incident, Kumram Bheem Asifabad District Congress Committee President Atram Sugunakka visited Raheel's residence in Gudamamda village on Thursday. Along with Agricultural Market Committee Chairman Kudimetha Vishwanath, she paid her respects to the deceased by placing a floral wreath on his mortal remains. “Atram Sugunakka later consoled the bereaved family members and expressed her deepest condolences. She conveyed her grief over Raheel's untimely death and assured the family of her support during the difficult time. She prayed for strength and courage for the family to cope with the loss.DCC executive committee member Pendor Prakash, RGS District Coordinator Kova Indira, Congress Mandal President Sheikh Rasheed, Sarpanches' Association President Madavi Manohar, Gudamamda Sarpanch Kumram Yashoda Keshav Rao, Jandaguda Sarpanch Uyika Chandan Shaw, Powerguda Sarpanch Rajender, Congress leaders Gedam Gopichand, former MPTC member Aju Lal, former Jainoor Deputy Sarpanch Sheikh Abbu, Kotes, Sheikh Azeem, Gauri Sarpanch Bhujang Rao, Youth Congress leaders Krishna, Bhanu Chand, Sidhar and others were present.

AWS Builder Lofts Programme in Hyd



Hyderabad, August 20 (Indian Chronicle) : AWS will launch new AWS Builder Lofts in Berlin, Hyderabad and São Paulo for developers, students and technology professionals, AWS Director of Developer Experience David Nalley said in a statement released in the city on Thursday. He said the Builder Lofts would serve as collaborative spaces where builders can work on projects, learn from one another and exchange ideas. The facilities will offer free workshops, hackathons, pitch nights, networking opportunities and co-working spaces. In Berlin, the programme will focus on digital sovereignty and security. In Hyderabad, training sessions will focus on artificial intelligence and cloud-native technologies. In São Paulo, AWS will conduct free training programmes for developers, universities and startups, he added.

Fisherman goes missing after falling into sea off Vizag coast

Visakhapatnam: A 50-year-old fisherman went missing after falling overboard from a fishing boat off the Visakhapatnam coast, the Marine Police said on Thursday.According to an official, Appanna was part of the eight-member crew that set sail on August 16. During their return at 1 am on Thursday, Appanna (50) went to the rear of the boat to fetch salt used for preserving fish, following which the others heard a sudden splash. When they went back to check, Appanna was found missing.

Uppal Temple Committee Chairman Telkala Mohan Reddy Honours UPPAL PRESS CLUB Print and Electronic Media Representatives on the Occasion of Bonalu



“UPPAL , AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): On the occasion of the Bonalu festival, an affectionate felicitation ceremony was organised on Thursday for print and electronic media journalists of the Uppal Press Club under the leadership of Uppal Sri Mahankali Devasthanam Chairman Telkala Mohan Reddy. “On the occasion, the journalists were felicitated with shawls and extended warm Bonalu festival greetings.”Speaking on the occasion, Telkala Mohan Reddy said that journalists play a crucial role in disseminating in-

formation to the public and society. He appreciated the media's efforts in bringing public issues to the attention of the authorities and the people. “Uppal Press Club Print and Electronic Media President Vaddepalli Kishore, General Secretary Ananda Narasimha Reddy, Vice Presidents Edapaka Suresh, Boda Praveen and Kadukuri Prashanth, Organising Secretaries Yakub Pasha, Nemmadi Venkanna and Deva, along with several other journalists, participated in the programme.

KALPANA INAMDAR LAUNCHES A CAMPAIGN VIZ.

“LOK TANTRIK NYAY ABHIYAAN FOR DEMOGRAPHIC INCLUSION, OBC REPRESENTATION, JUDICIAL REFORMS AND DELIMITATION BY WAY OF A CAMPAIGN”“FOUR PILLARS OF DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE: - CENSUS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATION, JUDICIAL REFORM AND FEDERAL BALANCE.”“Hyderabad, 20 August 2026:“KALPANA INAMDAR, Working President of Lok Andolan Nyas addressing a press conference at the Press Club Basheerbagh ,Hyderabad, today raised three fundamental issues concerning the strength and inclusiveness of India's democratic and constitutional institutions—demographic inclusion, political representation and judicial accountability.”“The KALPANA INAMDAR stated that constitutional guarantees of equality and social justice must be supported by accurate demographic data, meaningful political representation and transparent institutions of justice.”“1. DEMAND FOR A STANDARDIZED OBC COLUMN IN CENSUS 2027”“KALPANA INAMDAR has demanded that the Government of India ensure a dedicated, standardized and scientifically mapped OBC category in Census 2027, rather than relying solely on unstructured caste-name entries.”“The organization has raised concerns that merely collecting caste information through open-ended entries, without standardized classification and mapping, could create substantial difficulties in compiling reliable and legally defensible OBC demographic data.”“The official Census 2027 materials currently provide for caste-related information in the population enumeration schedule, while the Government's published census material also records the historical distinction between the enumeration of SC/ST categories and broader caste information. (Census India)““According to KALPANA INAMDAR, reliable and standardized data is essential for evidence-based policymaking and for defending reservation policies before constitutional courts.”“The KALPANA INAMDAR demands:”“A clearly identifiable and standardized OBC category/column in Census 2027.” “A scientifically designed mechanism for mapping caste names, sub-castes and recognized OBC lists.”“ Uniform methodology across States and Union Territories.”“ Publication of credible, transparent and usable demographic data to strengthen the foundation of social-justice policies.”“2. OBC SUB-QUOTA WITHIN WOMEN'S POLITICAL RESERVATION”“KALPANA INAMDAR welcomed the constitutional recognition of greater women's representation but called for a more inclusive framework that ensures that women from socially and educationally backward communities are not left behind.”“The 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023, popularly known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, provides for one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, including one-third of existing SC/ST reserved seats for women belonging to those communities. It does not presently provide a separate OBC sub-quota. (Indian Kanon)““The KALPANA INAMDAR argued that women cannot be treated as a socially homogeneous category and that political empowerment must also address the intersection of gender and social disadvantage.”“It further expressed concern that, without adequate safeguards and mechanisms for cultivating broad-based women's leadership, political representation could disproportionately benefit established political families and socially privileged groups.”“The KALPANA INAMDAR demands:”“A Constitutional Amendment providing an appropriate OBC sub-quota within women's political reservation.”“ Wider opportunities for women from OBC communities to enter legislative politics.”“ Stronger internal democratic mechanisms within political parties to encourage grassroots women's leadership.”“ Measures to ensure that women's reservation produces substantive political empowerment rather than merely numerical representation.”“The KALPANA INAMDAR emphasized that its demand is intended to make women's political representation more socially inclusive, not to diminish the historic importance of women's reservation.”“3. JUDICIAL REFORMS: TRANSPARENCY, MERIT AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE”“KALPANA INAMDAR also called for comprehensive reforms in judicial appointments and the functioning of the justice delivery system.”“The organization questioned whether India's judicial architecture provides sufficient transparency and equal opportunity for talented lawyers from diverse social and geographical backgrounds to rise through the judicial system.”“KALPANA INAMDAR called for greater transparency, objective criteria and institutional accountability in appointments to the higher judiciary and advocated consideration of open, competitive and nationally standardized mechanisms for judicial recruitment and career advancement.”“It also called for the effective development of an All-India Judicial Service (AIJS) framework. Article 312 of the Constitution specifically provides for Parliament to create an All-India Judicial Service, while stipulating that such a service cannot include posts inferior to that of District Judge. (India Code)““KALPANA INAMDAR believes that a transparent national framework could widen opportunities for first-generation lawyers and talented legal professionals who may otherwise lack access to established professional networks.”“PRIORITY FOR LOCAL LEGAL TALENT IN SUBORDINATE JUDICIARY”“KALPANA INAMDAR further demanded greater recognition of local legal expertise in subordinate courts.”“At the grassroots level, litigation often involves re-



gional languages, local customs, land-related disputes and community-specific social realities. Local legal professionals, the KALPANA INAMDAR said, frequently possess a valuable understanding of these factors.”“The organization therefore called for appropriate policy mechanisms to ensure that recruitment and judicial administration at the subordinate level take into account local language proficiency, knowledge of regional legal practices and accessibility to ordinary citizens, while maintaining constitutional standards of merit and equal opportunity.”“LOK ANDOLAN KALPANA INAMDAR: FOUR CORE DEMANDS”“At the conclusion of the press conference, KALPANA INAMDAR summarized its principal demands:”“1. DEMOGRAPHIC JUSTICE”“Ensure a dedicated, standardized and scientifically mapped OBC category in Census 2027 so that demographic data can serve as a credible foundation for social-justice policies.”“2. POLITICAL JUSTICE”“Amend the constitutional framework governing women's legislative reservation to provide an appropriate OBC sub-quota, ensuring that women from backward communities receive meaningful political representation.”“3. JUDICIAL JUSTICE”“Undertake comprehensive judicial reforms promoting transparency, merit, equal opportunity and institutional accountability, including serious consideration of a robust All-India Judicial Service framework and greater recognition of local legal expertise in subordinate courts.”“DEMOCRACY MUST REPRESENT EVERY SECTION OF SOCIETY”“KALPANA INAMDAR stated that democracy cannot be measured merely by elections or numerical representation. The quality of democracy depends on whether every section of society has reliable data, meaningful representation and equal access to justice.”“The organization urged the Union Government, Parliament, political parties, constitutional institutions and civil society to engage in a substantive national dialogue on these issues.”“KALPANA INAMDAR reaffirmed that its objective is to strengthen the constitutional promise of equality, representation and justice for all citizens.”“4. AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO ENSURE THAT DELIMITATION DOES NOT REDUCE ANY STATE'S EXISTING POLITICAL SHARE IN THE LOK SABHA:”“Any increase in Lok Sabha seats must be allocated to all States in proportion to their existing representation. Establish a clear, transparent and constitutionally guaranteed Delimitation formula through comprehensive consultation and federal consensus among all States, ensuring that no State's political representation is reduced and India's federal political balance is protected.”“Therefore, our demand is a Constitutional Amendment to Protect India's Federal Political Balance.

Agreements to Strengthen Agentic AI, India-Dubai Trade Ties

“Hyderabad, August 20 (Indian Chronicle) : Dubai Chambers has signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with NASSCOM and the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) to promote cooperation in Agentic AI and deeptech, and strengthen trade and investment ties between India and Dubai, Dubai Chambers President and CEO H.E.Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah said in a statement issued in the city on Thursday. He said Dubai's focus on accelerating the adoption of Agentic AI is creating new opportunities for Indian technology companies and innova-



tors. A delegation led by him recently held meetings with NASSCOM DeepTech, CII Karnataka, FKCCI and FICCI Karnataka. The MoU with NASSCOM will promote cooperation in Agentic AI and deeptech, knowledge sharing, innovation and business expansion, while the agreement with FKCCI will support a 'Virtual Dubai Desk', market-entry guidance and business delegations.

Rajiv Gandhi Birth Anniversary Celebrations Held Grandly in Ramanthapur

-Parameshwar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest and Cuts Cake — Habsiguda Division President Kandi Shrayan Reddy Pays Floral Tribute”“RAMANTHAPUR , AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): The birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna awardee, late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, was celebrated grandly under the aegis of the Uppal Constituency Congress Party. “Congress leaders and workers gathered at the Rajiv Gandhi statue located beside Hyderabad Public School in Ramanthapur and celebrated the occasion by cutting a cake. “Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy attended the programme as the chief guest and paid floral tributes to the statue of Rajiv Gandhi. He recalled and praised the late leader's contributions to the nation. “Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy said Rajiv Gandhi was a great leader who became the Prime Minister of India at a very young age and introduced several reforms in the information technology and communications sectors. He said Rajiv Gandhi laid the foundation for the IT revolution in the country and recalled that he reduced the voting age from 21 to 18, thereby bringing the youth closer to the political process. “Habsiguda Division Congress President Kandi Shrayan Kumar Reddy also paid floral tributes to Rajiv Gandhi and highlighted his services to the nation. “Former Uppal Floor Leader Kandi Aagi Reddy, DCC Vice-President Boppanapalli Sudhakar Reddy, District ST Cell President Ganesh Naik, former Habsiguda Division President Gannaram Vijay Kumar, senior leaders Murali Krishna Mudiraj, Kishan Naik, Raju Naik, Malu Naik,



Ganga Yadav, Youth Congress President Vasu Naik, Lakshmi Narayana, Rama Rao, Sai Kumar, Sai Kiran, Kolipaka Shiva, Anil Mamidala, Mahmood and Kaleem, Ramanthapur Division President Sandeep Patel, Venkat Reddy Nagar Division President Naam Rajireddy, Beerappagadda Division President Aagam Reddy, Uppal Division President Eega Anjaneyulu, senior leaders Jaleel Pasha, Vallapu Srikanth Yadav, Mohammed Rafiq, Taufiq, Balaiah Babu, Arun Patel, Bazaar Jagannath Goud, former corporator Singireddy Dhanpal Reddy, Karipe Shankar, Karipe Pawan, Ashok, Sampath, Amareshwari, Ambika Goud, Sandhya Rani, Arun Sai and Lucas, along with a large number of Congress leaders and activists from various divisions of the Uppal constituency, attended the programme.

Rajiv Gandhi was a visionary leader who led India towards modern technology:

DCC President Atram Sugunakka “Kumrambheem, Asifabad.District "Indian Chronicle" August. 21. “Asifabad The birth anniversary celebrations of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna awardee, Late Rajiv Gandhi, were held grandly under the leadership of the Kumram Bheem Asifabad District Congress Committee (DCC) on Thursday. “The programme was organised at Rajiv Nagar in Asifabad town. DCC President Atram Sugunakka paid floral tributes to the statue of Rajiv Gandhi. Congress leaders and party workers also paid their respects and remembered his invaluable contributions to the nation. Speaking on the occasion, Atram Sugunakka said that Rajiv Gandhi was a visionary leader who played a crucial role in taking India towards modern technology. She said his contributions to rural development and strengthening the Panchayati Raj system would always be remembered. “She further stated that Rajiv Gandhi laid a strong foundation for the development of the computer and telecommunications sectors in the country. The technological progress initiated during his tenure has played a significant role in helping India emerge as a global leader in the technology sector, she said. Atram Sugunakka said that Rajiv Gandhi's services to the nation and his vision for a modern India continue to inspire the younger generation. She called upon everyone



to work towards fulfilling his vision of a developed and progressive India. “Later, floral tributes were also paid to Rajiv Gandhi's portrait at the DCC office. AMC Chairperson Irukula Manga, AMC Directors Maruthi Patel, Babapur Sarpanch Rajanna, DCC Vice Presidents Tariq, Bhim Rao and Shankar Sir, Town Congress President Kashif Hashmi, senior leaders Asad, Chitla Narayana, Kashanna, Sheikh Kaleem and Kasturi Nikhil, along with youth leaders Ejaz Ahmed, Balu, Abbu, Bhanu and Igurapu Santosh, besides several Congress leaders and party workers, participated in the programme.

Birappagadda Division Forging Ahead in Development:



BRS STATE LEADER BANNALA PRAVEEN MUDIRAJ”“UPPAL , AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): BRS state leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj said that Birappagadda Division is being developed with the aim of making it the number one division in the Uppal constituency. He inspected the ongoing CC road construction works, estimated at a cost of approximately ₹59 lakh, from Shankaraiah Kirana Shop in the lane opposite the

Ramalayam to the Mudiraj and Goud cremation ground, along with MMC officials. Speaking on the occasion, Bannala Praveen Mudiraj said that development works in the division were being completed in a phased manner. He explained that drinking water pipeline and drainage pipeline works were completed first, followed by the construction of a stormwater drain. With those works now completed, the CC road works are also being taken up and will be completed soon, he said. “He stated that the division was being developed in a planned manner with the objective of making Birappagadda the number one division among all divisions in the constituency. He said that with the support of MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, the required funds were secured and several development works were undertaken to take the division to the forefront. “On behalf of the people of Birappagadda Division and Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, he expressed special thanks and gratitude to MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy for his support. BRS senior leaders Vanjari Narsing Rao, Srinivas Yadav, Vanjari Balaji, Tirupathi Yadav, Venkat Reddy, Banti Goud, Shankaraiah and several local residents participated in the programme.

Jana Sena Leaders Call for Successful Conduct of “Udyami Sadhakula” Meeting



“Manthani, Peddapalli District, August 20 (Indian Chronicle): “Jana Sena Party leaders have called upon party leaders and workers to make the upcoming “Udyami Sadhakula Atmeeya Sammelanam” (Entrepreneurs and Achievers' Interaction Meeting), to be held under the Telangana Jana Sena Party in the Peddapalli–Adilabad Parliamentary constituency, a grand success. “An emergency meeting of the Manthani Assembly constituency was held at Mahalakshmi Gardens in Manthani town under the leadership of Maya Ramesh. Jana Sena Party Joining Committee member and Peddapalli–Adilabad coordinator Gottimukkala Naresh Reddy, along with Manthani Sampath, Saidala Srinivas and Veera Mahila leader Jyothi, participated in the meeting and provided guidance to constituency-level leaders. “The leaders appealed to Jana Sena leaders and workers from the Manthani constituency to participate in large numbers in the upcoming meeting, which will be held with Mancherla as the venue, and make it a success. They urged everyone to work together in coordi-

nation to strengthen the Jana Sena Party. “Later, a Manthani Mandal Committee was formed to coordinate efforts for the successful conduct of the meeting. Teegala Santosh, Kasa Ranjith, Siddhi Kiran, Sunil and Rajendra Prasad were appointed as committee members. “Jana Sena Party leaders and workers attended the meeting.

Telangana faces below-normal rainfall as monsoon weakens

Hyderabad: Telangana is staring at a significantly below-par finish for August, as monsoon systems are forecasted to bypass the Southern Peninsular region, an extended weather forecast between August 20 and September 6, released on Thursday by India Meteorological Department (IMD), New Delhi, indicated. The subdued/ below par rainfall forecast implies the State's dry trend is projected to persist into the first week of September. The assessment comes on the heels of a sharp drop in rainfall so far in August.

Unlike July's steady recovery, the performance of the Southwest Monsoon in August in Telangana has been sluggish, recording an actual rainfall of 92 mm against the expected normal of 141 mm, a 34 per cent deficit, according to Telangana Development Planning Society (TSDPS) rainfall data. The cumulative rainfall from June 1 to August 20 stands at 432.1 mm against a normal of 498.7 mm, with a deficit of 13 per cent, which puts the State in normal category.

Significant Opportunities for Business Expansion in Telangana“-ICICI Prudential Life Chief Distribution Officer Amish Banker

Hyderabad, August 20 (Indian Chronicle) : Telangana offers significant opportunities for business expansion, ICICI Prudential Life Chief Distribution Officer Amish Banker said in a statement released in the city on Thursday. He said the company recorded 60.7 per cent year-on-year growth in its term plan(retail protection) business in Telangana during the first quarter of FY2027. As of March 31, 2026, the company had provided insurance coverage to 6,56,032 people in the state, with assets under management of Rs. 11,708 crore and a sum assured of Rs.1,52,016 crore, he said. Over the past seven years, the company has paid Rs. 4,060 crore in benefits and Rs. 1,192 crore in death claims in Telangana. The company currently has 11 own branches, 3,934 partner branches, 3,372 specified persons and 6,172

advisors across the state. During the first quarter of FY2027, ICICI Prudential Life achieved a 99.3 per cent claim settlement ratio. Individual claims that do not require investigation were settled in an average of one day, Banker said. He said the company is extensively using artificial intelligence, machine learning, data analytics and digitalisation to enhance customer service. Digital platforms such as ICICI Pru Partner Stack and IPRU Edge are being used to support agents and partners. The company's Board of Directors has also approved the change of the company's name to ICICI Life Insurance Limited, he said. 'Telangana offers significant opportunities for business expansion. We will further strengthen our presence in the state through branch expansion, recruitment of advisors and customer awareness initiatives,' Banker said.

A New Beginning for Selfless Service: Lions District Cabinet to Take Oath

“Seva Sambaram” to usher in renewed spirit of service — District Governor Lion Narahari Sudhakar Reddy”-----Education, livelihoods and women’s empowerment to receive a major boost through ‘Seva Sambaram’”“HANAMKONDA, AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE) : The District Lions Cabinet Installation Ceremony of Lions District 320F will be held in a grand manner under the banner “Seva Sambaram” at Reddy Convention Centre, Madikonda, on Saturday, District Governor Lion Narahari Sudhakar Reddy said.”Addressing a press conference at Madikonda on Thursday, he said the newly elected District Lions Cabinet would formally assume office during the ceremony and reaffirm its commitment to serving society with dedication, enthusiasm and a renewed sense of purpose.”“A Past International Director will attend the programme as the Chief Guest and address the gathering on the significance of Lions service activities. Past International Director V.V. Krishna Reddy will administer the oath of office to the newly elected District Cabinet members.”“NABARD Chief General Manager Uday Bhaskar, Lions Area Leaders Deepak Bhattacharjee and Avula Gopal Rao, along with several Multiple District and District-level Lions leaders, public representatives and prominent personalities from various fields, will attend the programme.”“As part of “Seva Sambaram,” several welfare initiatives will be undertaken. With the objective of promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities, 100 sewing machines will be distributed to deserving beneficiaries. To encourage girls’ education and facilitate their independent mobility, 80 bicycles will be presented to girl students. In addition, 1,000 school bags will be distributed to schoolchildren.”“District Lions leaders said the organisation was according priority to education, women’s empowerment, livelihood generation and the welfare of economically disadvantaged sections. They said the initiatives would not only provide immediate support to beneficiaries but also boost their confidence and help them move towards self-reliance.”“Around 1,000 Lions members from across the district are expected to participate in the “Seva Sambaram” programme. The large-scale participation, they said, would reflect the collective spirit of service and the organisation’s



unwavering commitment to the welfare of society.”“Lions Clubs International, one of the world’s largest humanitarian service organisations, has around 50,400 clubs and 1.4 million members across 210 countries. The organisation undertakes humanitarian initiatives in several key areas, including hunger relief, vision care, diabetes awareness, environmental protection, youth development, cancer support, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.”“Lions District 320F is carrying out service activities through 77 Lions Clubs across Warangal, Hanamkonda, Mulugu, Mahabubabad, Jangaon, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Siddipet, Karimnagar, Suryapet and Medchal districts.”“The newly constituted District Cabinet has set a goal of further expanding the reach and scale of service activities across the district, the leaders said. By identifying the needs of people and extending timely and appropriate assistance, Lions would strive to reach more beneficiaries with the guiding spirit of “We Serve.”“The leaders expressed confidence that “Seva Sambaram,” guided by the motto “Service is our Goal – Service to Society is our Mission,” would infuse fresh enthusiasm into Lions service activities and usher in a new direction for community service across the district.”“First Vice District Governor Putta Harikishan Reddy, Second Vice District Governor Revuri Ramana Reddy, District Chief Advisor Mucha Rajireddy, and district leaders Pamu Srinivas, Choppari Somaiah, Dr. D. Ajith Kumar, Katanguri Ramgopal Reddy, Mallikarjun and others participated in the programme and its arrangements.

Sadbhavana Run held to mark Rajiv Gandhi’s birth anniversary



“ Indian Chronicle, “Secunderabad, August 20:”“The Secunderabad District Congress Committee organised a ‘Sadbhavana Run’ on Thursday to mark the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Rajiv Gandhi. “The run began at the Mahatma Gandhi statue on M.G. Road and culminated at the Rajiv Gandhi statue at

Somajiguda Circle.”Addressing the gathering at the conclusion of the event, Congress leaders recalled Rajiv Gandhi’s contribution to the country’s development and hailed the transformative changes introduced during his tenure. They said his initiatives in telecommunications, computers, information technology, software and other emerging technological fields laid the foundation for India’s technological progress.”The leaders also recalled his efforts to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system and local self-governance. They said the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 reflected his vision of providing greater political participation to the youth.”Emphasising Rajiv Gandhi’s commitment to secularism and national unity, the leaders said he sought to bring people of all communities together under the spirit of harmony and fraternity.”Secunderabad District Congress Committee president Deepak John, along with senior party leaders and a large number of workers, participated in the programme.

1,834 Mobile Phones Recovered Through CEIR



-1,834 Phones Traced and Recovered in Seven Months Across Malkajgiri Commissionerate — Uppal Leads with 256 Recoveries”-----Malkajgiri CP Sumathi Releases Details”“UPPAL , AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Malkajgiri Police have successfully traced and recovered 1,834 lost and stolen mobile phones with the help of the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal. Malkajgiri Police Commissioner Sumathi said the recoveries were made during the past seven months from missing and mobile theft cases registered across 29 police stations under the Commissionerate.”Addressing a media conference at the DCP office in Uppal, CP Sumathi said the phones were traced and recovered through the CEIR portal from February 11, 2026, onwards. The recovered mobile phones are being handed over to their respective owners through the concerned police stations. She said the recovery process would continue until the remaining lost and stolen phones are traced.”According to the Commissioner, 753 mobile phones were recovered in LB Nagar Zone, 594 in Uppal Zone, 243 in Malkajgiri Zone and 244 in the Cantonment area.”At the police station level, Uppal Police Station recorded the highest number of recoveries with 256 phones, followed by Hayathnagar with 150, Chaitanyapuri

with 143, Vanasthalipuram with 143, LB Nagar with 129 and Jawaharnagar with 125 recoveries.”CP Sumathi said efforts were continuing to trace the mobile phones that have not yet been recovered. She appealed to people who lose their mobile phones or fall victim to theft to immediately lodge a complaint at the nearest police station and register the phone details on the CEIR portal.She further stated that providing details such as the IMEI number and mobile number would make it easier for the police to trace and recover the lost device.”Senior police officials from the Uppal, LB Nagar and Cantonment zones attended the media conference.”

Telangana launches online complaint system for private schools

Hyderabad: The School Education department on Thursday announced the launch of an online private school complaint monitoring system, which is aimed at facilitating parents, students and people to submit complaints/grievances relating to private schools. The new facility can be accessed via link <https://schooledu.telangana.gov.in>. The complaint can login using their mobile phone number and OTP to lodge their issue. The system also provides a grievance tracking mechanism, enabling complainants to track their complaint status using mobile number of grievance ID.”Private may make use of the online facility for bringing genuine grievances, along with accurate information, to the notice of the School Education department,” said Dr. E Naveen Nicolas, Director School Education department.

Former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar Visits Uppal Sri Sri Mahankali Temple



“UPPAL, AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): On the occasion of the Bonalu festival at Uppal Sri Sri Mahankali Temple, former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar visited the temple on Thursday and offered special prayers to God-

dess Mahankali.During his visit, special rituals and archana were performed for the Goddess. Prabhakar wished that the blessings of Goddess Mahankali would be upon all the people on the occasion of the Bonalu festival.”The temple witnessed a large turnout of devotees as part of the Bonalu celebrations. Devotees arrived in large numbers, offered prayers to the Goddess and fulfilled their vows. A festive atmosphere prevailed in and around the temple premises.”BJP OBC Morcha State Executive Committee Member Mahankali Laxman Mudiraj, BJP senior leader Ravula Balakrishna Goud, Habsiguda leaders Kakkireni Chetan Harish, Puppala Venkateshwarlu, Mahankali Udayabhanu, Sriram, Jyothi, Vijetha, Sadaayi, Ravula Akhilesh Goud, Abhilash Goud and others participated in the programme.On the occasion, the leaders and party workers prayed for the blessings of Goddess Mahankali to remain upon the people always and wished for peace, happiness and prosperity in the Uppal region.

Revanth Reddy should mind his language: Talasani

“ Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, August 20:”“ Former Minister and BRS Deputy Floor Leader Talasani Srinivas Yadav on Thursday advised Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to exercise restraint in his language and maintain the dignity expected of his office.”Addressing a press conference at his camp office in West Marredpally, Mr. Yadav criticised the Chief Minister for allegedly making unwarranted remarks against the previous BRS government and its leaders.”Mr. Yadav said the KCR government had initiated construction of corporate-level hospitals at Sanathnagar, Alwal and Kothapet after the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the shortage of oxygen and hospital beds. Nearly 60% of the works had been completed during the previous government’s tenure, he claimed.”He termed Mr. Revanth Reddy’s claim that the Sanathnagar TIMS hospital was built by the present government as “misleading”. He questioned the need to inaugurate the hospital in haste without providing all the required facilities and amenities.”Referring to the Chief Minister’s remarks at the hospital inauguration, Mr. Yadav alleged that Mr. Revanth Reddy had made politically motivated statements in the presence of doctors and nursing students. Saying that the present government was merely inaugurating projects initiated by the previous BRS regime, he urged the Chief Minister to maintain decorum while speaking about his predecessors.”Mr. Yadav recalled that he had accorded a respectful welcome to Mr. Revanth Reddy when he visited the Mahankali Bonalu festivities in his capacity as the local MLA. The language used against him, despite his having served as an MLA six times and a Minister four times, reflected “arrogance”, he alleged.”He further accused the Congress government of claiming to practise “people’s governance” while resorting to restrictions and filing cases against its political opponents. The people were watching the developments and would teach the Congress government a fitting lesson, he said.”“22-A provision being misused for commissions”“Mr. Yadav alleged that the 22-A provision was being used by the Congress government to collect commissions. He questioned the government’s authority to include houses belonging to poor people and private lands in the 22-A list.”He alleged that landowners were being intimidated in the name of 22-A and accused certain elements of demanding commissions



ranging from 30% onwards. The government was deliberately creating errors and subsequently shifting the blame onto officials to evade responsibility, he alleged.”“Ensure no eligible voter loses their vote”“Mr. Yadav called upon BRS workers to ensure that no eligible voter in the Sanathnagar Assembly constituency was left out of the electoral rolls.”At a meeting with party leaders at his camp office in West Marredpally, he directed the party cadre to verify the draft electoral rolls released by the Election Commission and check whether the names of eligible voters in their respective areas had been included.”He said eligible persons whose names were missing from the rolls could apply for enrolment by submitting Form 6 until September 16. He also urged the Centre and the State government to involve adequate officials and staff in the SIR exercise to ensure that the process was conducted effectively.”Former corporators Naman Seshukumar, Athili Mallikarjun Goud, and several BRS division presidents and party leaders attended the meeting.

Raids on Adulterated Spice Manufacturing Units in Uppal Zone



UPPAL, AUGUST 20 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Joint teams comprising the Uppal SOT, Cantonment SOT, Malkajgiri SOT, Food Safety officials and police conducted raids on two units involved in the manufacture, processing and packing of adulterated spices in the Uppal Zone. Large quantities of adulterated spices, raw materials, packing materials and machinery were seized during the raids.Malkajgiri Commissioner of Police C. Sumathi disclosed the details at a media conference held at the DCP office in Uppal.She said officials found that the spice manufacturing unit operating in Laxminagar, Ramantapur, had only a municipal licence. The unit was allegedly manufacturing, processing, grinding and packing spices without the required Food Safety and packaging permissions. The illegal operation had reportedly been running for around three years.”During the

inspection, officials found expired spices being removed from old packets and repacked in new packets with fresh manufacturing dates before being sold. Investigators also found that chilli powder was being adulterated with sawdust and chilli stalks, reportedly accounting for nearly 30 per cent of the mixture.”Officials further found the use of food colours in spices, packaging resembling popular brands, and fake ISI and Agmark marks. Pepper powder was also found to contain a very low proportion of actual pepper.”Spices, raw materials, machinery and packing materials worth approximately Rs.1.25 crore were seized from the Ramantapur unit. The unit operator, Deveneni Bhupesh, was taken into custody.”During the investigation, officials found that the Ramantapur unit was outsourcing job work to Sai Durman Enterprise in Medipally. A subsequent raid was conducted at the Medipally unit, where officials seized 3,350 kg of chilli powder, 5,140 kg of coriander powder, around 300 kg of turmeric powder, garam masala and other products. The seized material was estimated to be worth around Rs.25 lakh.”In connection with the Medipally unit, Satyanarayana and Rudrashekar were taken into custody.”CP Sumathi said samples of the seized spices would be sent to a food testing laboratory. Based on the laboratory report, additional stringent sections would be invoked against the accused.The CP appealed to the public to inform the Food Safety Enforcement team at 8712662111 if they come across information regarding the manufacture or sale of adulterated food products.

Everyone should work to achieve Rajiv Gandhi's aspirations

Government Whip Beerla Ayilaiah Rajiv Gandhi Jayanti celebrations in grand style at Motakondur Mandal Center — MLA Beerla Ayilaiah unveils statue erected with his own funds ”“(Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. August 20):- The birth anniversary of former Prime Minister of India and Bharat Ratna late Rajiv Gandhi was celebrated in a grand style at Motakondur Mandal Center of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. On this occasion, Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilaiah unveiled the statue of Rajiv Gandhi and paid tributes by garlanding it. As a mark of his respect for Rajiv Gandhi and remembering the spirit of service he showed towards the people, MLA Beerla Ayilaiah got the statue of Rajiv Gandhi erected with his own funds. The statue was officially unveiled and dedicated to the people on the occasion of Jayanti. On this occasion, a grand rally was organized at the Motakondur Mandal Center along with Congress party leaders, activists and the people. First, the newly constructed Anganwadi building was inaugurated. Later, a grand rally was set out from there and reached Ambedkar Chowrasta. There, they garlanded the statue of the architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and paid tribute. Later, MLA Birla Ayilaiah unveiled the newly erected statue of Rajiv Gandhi. Leaders, activists and fans gar-

landed the statue and remembered Rajiv Gandhi’s services. On this occasion, they paid tribute to him by chanting slogans like “Rajiv Gandhi Amar Rahe”. Government Whip and MLA Birla Ayilaiah said that taking forward Rajiv Gandhi’s ideals is the true tribute to him. On this occasion, he recalled the efforts made by Rajiv Gandhi to make the country a modern and technologically advanced India. He said that Rajiv Gandhi left his mark on the development of the country with many key decisions such as giving priority to the youth in politics and governance, encouraging the technological sector in the country, and laying the foundations for the construction of a modern India. He said that his ideas of development of rural areas, youth empowerment, and further strengthening democracy are inspiring even today. Beerla Ayilaiah said that the Congress Party has always worked for the welfare of the poor, farmers, women, youth, and the poor and weaker sections. He said that after the people’s government came to power in Telangana, it is implementing the promises made to the people one by one and giving priority to welfare and development. He explained to the people the schemes being implemented by the government in the fields of education, medicine, welfare, housing construction, women’s empowerment, farmer welfare and other sectors.

‘Can’t fill the form... help us’: Race against time for BLOs in East Delhi where digitisation average is among the worst



GNS News Agency, August 20

With just 13.81% of forms digitised, East Delhi is among the worst performing districts in the Capital in terms of digitising the enumeration forms filled out by electors as the Election Commission holds the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in the city. Digitisation average across districts in Delhi is pegged at around 21%, according to the data provided by the Chief Electoral Office (CEO).From unnumbered houses, confusing addresses to an average elector’s inability to fill the form — booth level officers or BLOs in the East Delhi district say that they are facing a race against time to make sure no eligible electors are left out.The Election Commission of India earlier this week extended the deadline for the ongoing door-to-door visits to August 8, giving BLOs more time to distribute and collect enumeration forms in Delhi.

It’s a humid July afternoon. As Vivek Kumar, an English teacher and BLO of Mangal Bazaar’s Block F in East Delhi, enters the street where he is supposed to distribute enumeration forms, he seeks help from passersby to locate the addresses on his list.Delhi SIR Vivek Kumar, an English teacher, is working as a BLO of Mangal Bazaar’s Block F in East Delhi.As he enters one of the houses, he sifts through hundreds of enumeration forms in his backpack. He puts his register, in which he notes all necessary details, and other stuff on the floor.

Explaining the process to the residents, he gives a suggestion, “Please get the forms photocopied so that you can make mistakes.” Most enumeration forms he gets, he

adds, are riddled with mistakes. To place the residents of the house, he scans the list — the woman in the house is on Page 18 of his list, while her son is on Page 31. Around 45 minutes have passed and they realise that the woman’s husband is assigned to another BLO.Eyes on the list, Vivek is explaining to another resident on a call on how to find his father’s details on the Election Commission Information Network or ECINET app. Multitasking has become necessary during hectic routines. He packs his stuff and makes way to the next home. Annie Gomes, the next elector on the list, is not at her house, and the neighbours are not sure if she lives here or not. “We get a lot of such cases where the owner of the house has moved, but their vote is still registered here,” says Vivek.Around 10 km away is the Chilla Village near the Yamuna. A foul stench pervades the entire colony as open drains remain clogged with garbage. BLO Vinay Kumar is also facing a slew of challenges. As he knocks on the door of the house of 55-year old Brahm Chand to collect the form he had given a couple days back, the resident gives a confused look. “Humse nahi bhara jaave form, tu bharde humara. (We are not able to fill this... you please fill on our behalf).”

A tired Vinay sits inside the house and ends up spending more than 30 minutes as he fills the forms of the family of five. The 31-year old explains that most people in the village don’t have fixed addresses. “While villagers might know each other, so many people are tenants. Sometimes, 15 families are renting out different rooms in one house... it gets very confusing,” Vinay says, adding he has to fill out the forms of most people since they don’t know how to read or write. Next, he goes and sits at the verandah of the house — a lot of people come to clear doubts. “If I can’t place myself on electoral rolls, will I be sent to Bangladesh?” asks 60-year old Anisha Khatum, who has a voter ID, but is not able to find herself or any relative in the 2002 electoral list. A neighbour tells her not to worry. She can show her widower’s pension slip when she is sent a notice, she is told.An election official explains, “In areas like Chilla Village and Kotla Village, a lot of the electors are labourers who are uneducated and don’t understand the process. Also, many of them don’t have any proof of where their parents lived since they even moved around and lived on rent.”

Punjab police officer arrested in FBI-linked extortion case tied to gangster probe

GNS News Agency, August 20

police officer arrestAfter the police officer’s name surfaced in the international investigation, the Punjab Police had removed him from field duties. A departmental inquiry found prima facie evidence against the then SHO of Tanda police station.A former station house officer (SHO) of Punjab’s Tanda police station, who had publicly claimed to have cracked the murder of an AAP worker, was arrested late on Friday in connection with an extortion case linked to an international investigation by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).The action against the police officer, Gurinderjit Singh Nagra, follows revelations made during the FBI-led Operation Hard Ball — a joint investigation involving law enforcement agencies from the United States and Canada into the overseas operations of gangster networks allegedly linked to Lawrence Bishnoi and Jaggu Bhagwanpuria. Investigators also released a photograph purportedly showing him with alleged gang associates.

After Nagra’s name surfaced in the international investigation, the Punjab Police had removed him from field duties. A departmental inquiry found prima facie evidence against Nagra, the then SHO of Tanda police station.Just two months ago, the officer had claimed to have cracked the murder of an AAP worker and hardware trader — Balwinder Singh Satkartar, an AAP worker and hardware businessman — in Punjab’s Hoshiarpur district on January 15. Soon after the killing in Tanda, gangsters Jashan Gill and Gural Khokhar claimed responsibility for the murder through social media posts.US authorities alleged that an Indian police officer was involved in an attempt to extort \$400,000 from a family living in the United States by exploiting a murder investigation in Punjab. The officer was identified as Gurinderjit Singh Nagra. The allegations surfaced during coordinated raids conducted on July 10, when agencies in the US, Canada and Europe targeted transnational organised crime networks.Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Navin Singla marked him to the police lines and assigned Superintendent of Police Vineet Ahlawat to conduct the probe. A case has been registered under extortion and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.The allegations of extortion are rooted in the investigation into the murder of Satkartar, who was shot dead by three motorcycle-borne assailants in Miani village of Tanda on January 15, 2026. During the investigation, the police



identified the alleged shooters and brought them on production warrants for questioning.

On May 24, then SHO Nagra addressed a press conference claiming the investigation had established that the murder was the result of a family dispute.He alleged that Charanjit Singh, a retired assistant sub-inspector settled in the United States and the father-in-law of the deceased’s daughter, had orchestrated the killing over a matrimonial dispute involving his daughter. The police claimed the shooters had been hired to execute the murder.However, US investigators have alleged that after Charanjit Singh and his family were named in the murder case, they were allegedly contacted by individuals linked to the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria network, who demanded \$400,000 in exchange for ensuring relief in the investigation and preventing further legal action.According to US authorities, members of the gangster network allegedly gathered information about the family in America, passed it on to their contacts in India and then attempted to use the murder case to extort money.US Attorney Bilal A “Bill” Essayli has alleged that some Indian police officers were also involved in the conspiracy and specifically named Nagra among those suspected of facilitating the extortion attempt.Naveon Singla, DIG, Jalandhar Range, confirmed his arrest in corruption and other charges.The Punjab Police have not yet disclosed whether additional arrests are likely in the case. They said the investigation is continuing to determine the extent of the alleged nexus between organised crime networks and those accused in the extortion case.

Maharashtra turns to grassroots innovators in \$1 trillion economy push

GNS News Agency, August 20

Maharashtra will soon launch the CM Maha Fund to support 25,000 entrepreneurs over five years, with Rs 500 crore allocated for the initiative. The state will also set up micro-incubators, platforms offering early-stage startups mentoring, laboratories, workspaces, business knowledge and access to investor networks —in every district over the next few months.“This will support district-level problem statements, budding entrepreneurs and startups in the districts. We also want to give innovators in districts opportunities for prototyping, testing and receiving mentoring,” said Shrikant Patil, CEO of the Maharashtra State Innovation Society, a nodal government agency that promotes an innovation-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem in the state and is chaired by the Chief Minister.

According to Manisha Verma, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, one purpose of micro-incubators is to support school dropouts who have received hands-on training in manufacturing and other workshops. “A micro-incubator in districts will give them an opportunity to become future innovators, as many of them do have ideas,” Verma said, adding that startup clusters were emerging in every district and Maharashtra led the country with 50,000 women-led startups.

Patil and Verma were among the panellists and chief guests at the CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory for “A Celebration on Energy Innovations”, an event marking the

inauguration of Venture Center’s Centre of Excellence for Clean Energy and Green Hydrogen Innovation on Thursday. The state will also launch a regional innovation hub to support large-scale problem statements and startups working on advanced technologies such as AI and green energy. “The Chief Minister has a vision of a \$1 trillion economy by 2029. It will not be possible to achieve this target with typical manufacturing practices; we have to go with an innovation-led economy,” Patil said.A “state-of-the-art innovation city” will also come up in Mumbai on a 300-acre land parcel to cater to all sectors and types of innovation.Another initiative, Startup Week, is supporting 50 selected startups across sectors. Without going through government tenders, the startups receive grants of Rs 25 lakh to support innovation. “The startup can work with various municipal corporations and zilla parishads, among others, for local problems,” Patil said.Startup Yatra, aimed at promoting innovation across all blocks in Maharashtra, and the Birsra scheme for tribal innovation are among the other initiatives to boost innovation in the state. “We are supporting 200 tribal startups in capacity building to nurture the mindset of tribal youth,” Patil said.Maharashtra, which has the largest number of startups among Indian states, already has schemes such as the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Women Startup Scheme, under which women-led startups can receive Rs 5-25 lakh. “You can see a lot of tech leadership here,” Verma said.

2 minor cousins’ underage pregnancies trigger Karnataka Pocso probe



Two minors from the same family in Karnataka’s Hubballi-Dharwad district were found to be victims of separate instances of sexual assault, leading to underage pregnancies. The Hubballi-Dharwad police on Friday launched a comprehensive investigation into the cases.The investigation was launched after a 15-year-old girl conceived for the second time within a year of delivering her first child. This incident follows closely on the heels of a separate case last week involving her 14-year-old cousin, who delivered a baby at home under highly suspicious circumstances, the police said.

According to a complaint filed on Thursday by an officer with the Dharwad District Child Protection Unit, the 15-year-old girl was forcefully taken by the accused, Karim, to an abandoned area near a railway station, where she was allegedly sexually assaulted multiple times between July and August 2025.

Following the assault, the girl conceived and received medical treatment from a practitioner in a village, as well as at a private hospital, eventually delivering a baby. The Dharwad District Child Protection Unit has alleged that the girl’s parents subsequently gave the newborn away to an unknown party.In May 2026, the minor was allegedly subjected to sexual assault by the same accused, resulting in her second pregnancy within a year.Speaking to the media, District Child Protection Officer Prakash Kodliwad stated

that after receiving information regarding the minor’s pregnancy, officials visited her home and school to verify her age, confirming she is under 18. While the family claims that the newborn was given away, authorities strongly suspect foul play. “We suspect that the child was sold or trafficked,” Kodliwad said.The police are also verifying the parents’ claim that the newborn is with a relative. “The parents have claimed that the newborn was unwell and is currently with a relative in Karwar for treatment. We are verifying that claim as well,” a senior police officer said.The Dharwad District Child Protection Unit has demanded stringent action against those involved. Legal action has been demanded against both the village doctor and the medical staff at the private hospital for failing to report the sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement.Consequently, the police have registered a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, naming Karim, the survivor’s parents, the village doctor, and the doctors at the private hospital.The previous case

The current investigation unfolded under the shadow of a separate case reported last week in the locality. On July 8, the survivor’s 14-and-a-half-year-old cousin sister delivered a baby at her residence, the police said. She was later rushed to the Karnataka Medical College and Research Institute due to severe postpartum bleeding and trauma.Investigations into this case revealed she was allegedly abducted and confined to a room a year ago, where she was repeatedly sexually assaulted. Her parents allegedly hid the pregnancy.

The hospital later alerted the police, and a Pocso case was registered on July 11.Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar confirmed that both survivors are from the same family. “Currently, both are out of danger but are not in a position or willing to give any statements. We are allowing them time to recover.”Shashikumar added that notices have already been issued to the family members as police actively map out the timeline and systemic failures that allowed these crimes to occur. “A comprehensive investigation is underway as several aspects of the case remain unclear, he said.

Join new scheme today or face the axe: Punjab to 2,000 rural employment staff

GNS News Agency, August 20

Escalating its stance against the ongoing strike by over 2,000 contractual employees engaged under the now-defunct Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Punjab government has warned that those who refuse to join duty under the newly launched Viksit Bharat-Guaranteee-Rozgar Aajeevika Mission-Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) by July 18, Saturday, will have their contracts terminated.The Viksit Bharat-Guaranteee-Rozgar Aajeevika Mission-Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) came into force on July 1, bringing down the curtains on the two-decade-old MGNREGS. Consequently, contractual employees working under MGNREGS are required to execute fresh contracts before being deployed under the new project.The employees’ union, however, has decided not to join duty on Saturday and instead stage another protest outside the house of Rural Development and Panchayats (RDP) Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond at Khanna on Monday.

The Additional Project Commissioner, Department of Rural Development and Panchayats, on Friday directed all deputy commissioners-cum-chief district programme coordinators and additional deputy commissioners to terminate the contracts of employees who fail to sign fresh agreements under the VB-G-RAM-G project. The department has also circulated a draft termination order along with a sample contract to be executed with employees joining the new scheme.The order, issued with reference to an earlier communication dated July 10, said that district authorities had failed to act despite clear directions to initiate action against employees whose non-joining or non-performance was adversely affecting implementation of the new scheme. It said no district had taken the required action so far.Under VB-G-RAM-G, every job card holder will now get 125 days of employment per annum, instead of 100 days.The order also reiterated instructions issued on July 10 that employees under the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) should be assigned additional responsibilities under the VB-G-RAM-G project. These include generating muster rolls, monitoring development works and carrying out other project-related duties. It added that separate instructions regarding payment for the additional work would be issued, while technical duties would be assigned to junior engineers of the panchayati raj department.Over 2,000 MGNREGS contractual employees have been protesting since June 1 over non-payment of wages for more than five months and demanding regularisation of their services in the Rural Development and Panchayats Department. The employees were earlier responsible for logistics operations, field management and implementation of MGNREGS and are now



proposed to be deployed under the VB-G-RAM-G project.Reacting to the government’s warning, the MGNREGA Workers Union Punjab accused the state government of threatening employees instead of addressing their long-pending demands.“We have not received salaries for more than five months, and our demand for regularisation has also remained pending. On July 15, our members were lathi-charged while marching towards the residence of Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond. Several protesters were injured, and one worker suffered a fractured leg. Now, instead of resolving our issues, the government is threatening to terminate us,” said union patron Varinder Singh.Varinder Singh said the union would hold a massive protest along with workers’ families outside Minister Sond’s residence in Khanna on July 20.“

On one hand, the government claims to be creating employment opportunities, while on the other it is threatening to terminate contractual employees who have been working for nearly 18 years on meagre salaries,” Varinder Singh alleged.Gursewak Singh, union president, said, “On July 15, the minister had met us at Khanna and assured us that our file for the regularisation process will be sent to the government, after following the due process. In addition to this, they agreed to give us wages as per a pay scale rather than a lump sum. On July 17, the department issued a warning letter. So the minister is playing a dual game. We all have decided not to join duties and stage another dharna outside the minister’s house on Monday.”The ongoing strike has also affected employment generation under the newly launched VB-G-RAM-G scheme. According to officials, around 26 lakh registered workers have been shifted from MGNREGA to the new programme, but employment generation has been severely impacted due to the continuing boycott of work by contractual staff responsible for implementing the scheme.

Pune Christian Forum holds protest march against misuse of anti-conversion law



The Pune Christian Forum organised a peaceful protest march on Wednesday demanding an end to the misuse of the Maharashtra Dharma Swatantrya Act, 2026, the anti-conversion law enacted by the state government earlier this year.

GNS News Agency, August 20

The Pune Christian Forum organised a peaceful protest march on Wednesday demanding an end to the misuse of the Maharashtra Dharma Swatantrya Act, 2026, the anti-conversion law enacted by the state government earlier this year.The forum also condemned what it claimed were false allegations of religious conversion, demanded an end to atrocities against the Christian community as well as the protection of constitutional rights to religious freedom.More than 500 members of the Christian community and its representatives from various churches partici-

pated in the protest march.The march began at the Pune District Collectorate and concluded at the Police Commissionerate, calling for a constitutional and legal review of the Maharashtra Dharma Swatantrya Act, 2026 and safeguards against its misuse. Express photographs by Arul Horizon. 20/08/2026, Pune The march began at the Pune District Collectorate and concluded at the Police Commissionerate, calling for a constitutional and legal review of the Maharashtra Dharma Swatantrya Act, 2026 and safeguards against its misuse. (Express Photo by Arul Horizon)

Pastor Rajesh Kelkar, president of the Pune Christian Forum, said this was the first protest in the state against the Maharashtra Dharma Swatantrya Act, 2026.The Forum expressed hope that similar peaceful and constitutional protests would be organised on a larger scale across Maharashtra to ensure that the law is not misused against any community.Forum members submitted a memorandum of their demands to Deputy Collector Jyoti Kadam and Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar. Memorandums were also submitted to the Pimpri-Chinchwad Police Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police, Pune Rural.The memorandum called for a constitutional and legal review of the Act, measures to prevent false conversion complaints, clear legal distinction between religious programmes and religious conversions, and safeguards against selective use of the law against any minority community.

‘Central agencies conspired’: Karnataka minister Nagendra rules out resignation



GNS News Agency, August 20

Proceedings in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly were disrupted for the third consecutive day Wednesday as the Opposition BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) continued their protest demanding the resignation of minister B Nagendra. The ruling Congress government dared the Opposition to engage in a formal debate on the issue while firmly ruling out Nagendra’s resignation. The minister, who handles the Planning, Programme Monitoring, and Statistics portfolios, has claimed innocence.

Nagendra resigned as minister in June 2024 after allegations of misappropriation of funds in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Corporation Limited. The Enforcement Directorate later arrested him, and the

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a chargesheet in June this year, naming him and others in connection with the case in which Rs 89.63 crore was fraudulently diverted. He was inducted into the Cabinet on August 3, the Assembly convened for a short period to offer condolences to former minister B C Nagesh, who died of illness Tuesday evening. When it resumed post-lunch, BJP and JD(S) legislators continued their dharna inside the Assembly. Speaker G S Patil adjourned the House. The post-lunch session lasted eight minutes. Earlier in the day, Nagendra held a news conference and said that he was ready to accept punishment if he was found guilty in the case. “... Central agencies conspired against me. Yet, after the court granted me bail, I had asked the party to give me an opportunity,” he said.

The minister said he was ready to discuss the scam in the Legislative Assembly, but the BJP did not agree. “Why? Because a Dalit from the Adivasi community has become a minister again. These Manuvadis are plotting to remove me by any means,” he said. Out of 326 ministers in BJP governments in the country, 126 have serious cases against them, Nagendra claimed. “Why don’t you seek their resignation? ... They have heinous charges like kidnapping, murder, rape and others. West Bengal CM Suvenudh Adhikari has 29 cases,” he added. To questions on whether he would resign, Nagendra and his Cabinet colleagues present at the news conference replied in the negative in unison.

Three toppers, 200/200 after normalisation: Mumbai engineer exam row explained



The Maharashtra Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has appointed a three-member independent high-level committee to look into the complaints linked to the recruitment row, including the perfect 100 percentile scored by some candidates. Until the review is completed, the authority has frozen the recruitment process.

Chaired by Johnny Joseph, former chief secretary, the committee comprises Professor Shyamprasad Karage, Ph.D., and Professor Daska Satyanarayana Murthy, Ph.D., at IIT Bombay. “The committee will objectively verify all complaints and accompanying evidence received within the stipulated timeframe. The Authority has also sought a clarification from TCS regarding this matter,” said the MMRDA in a statement. The Maharashtra Metropolitan Region Development Authority’s (MMRDA) recruitment exam has come under scrutiny after several candidates secured perfect scores following normalisation. Engineers’ groups and political leaders have questioned the results and sought an independent inquiry. The MMRDA, however, has rejected the allegations, saying the examination was conducted by a government-approved agency and the results were prepared according to prescribed rules.

The association has also flagged the concentration of top-ranked candidates at one examination centre.

According to its analysis, 13 of the top 20 civil engineering candidates appeared at the Wadi centre in Nagpur. This included the top three candidates. “This is too much of a coincidence,” Jadhav said.

The association has sought examination centre records and other digital evidence to establish whether there was anything unusual about the pattern.

Q) What are those questioning the exams demanding?

The Engineers Association has sought CCTV footage from the examination halls, audit log reports showing candidates’ answering patterns and response times, and response sheets of candidates who secured perfect scores and those selected for the 82 civil engineering posts. It has also sought independent verification of the selected candidates.

The association has raised concerns over the delay in publishing the results, saying CCTV footage from examination centres may be retained only for a limited period. It has therefore asked the MMRDA and the state government to preserve the relevant records. Shinde has also demanded an inquiry, a call supported by NCP leaders Supriya Sule and Rohit Pawar.

Q) What does the MMRDA say?

The MMRDA has rejected the allegations and said the entire recruitment was conducted as per the government-prescribed procedures.

On the perfect scores, officials said the candidates had not actually scored 200 marks in the examination. The scores reached 200 after normalisation, which was carried out using the mean standard deviation formula because the examination was conducted in multiple sessions over two days. The authority said the normalisation process was based on a 2022 government resolution.

It also said candidates were allowed to raise objections after the examination. A total of 340 objections were received and resolved, the MMRDA said. “Criticism and allegations regarding a scam or malpractice in this recruitment examination are entirely baseless. No malpractice of any kind has occurred during this process,” the authority said. The MMRDA said the examination was conducted by a government-approved agency and that the normalisation and calculation of marks followed government-mandated methods. The provisional merit list is currently being verified, and the final list will be published after the process is completed.

CJP founder urges PM CARES Fund use for rural school infrastructure

New Delhi: Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Wednesday said the PM CARES Fund can be used to improve infrastructure in rural schools and build more than 1,000 new high-tech schools.

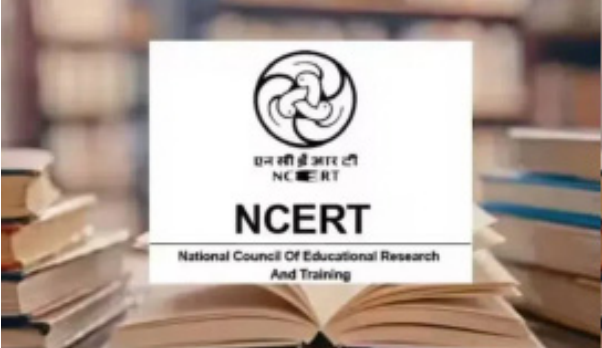
The national convenor of the CJP, which has launched the ‘School Thik Karo’ campaign to highlight gaps in rural school infrastructure, claimed children of this country are crying for good roads to their schools, benches and drinking water in their schools. The total balance in the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund stood at Rs 8,452 crore as on March 31, 2025, up from Rs 7,173 crore a year ago, according to its latest audit report.

Total payments made during the year 2024-25 stood at Rs 87.85 lakh, as against Rs 15.6 crore in the previous fiscal.

In a video statement on X, Dipke said, “On one hand, Rs 8,500 crore is lying unused and on the other hand we see that the children of this country are crying for a good road to school, for good benches in school and for drinking water in their schools. The total balance in the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund stood at Rs 8,452 crore as on March 31, 2025, up from Rs 7,173 crore a year ago, according to its latest audit report.

“When I asked the authorities why there were no basic facilities here, I was told that there was a shortage of funds,” he said. He further said, “So on one hand, it is being said that there are no funds and on the other hand Rs 8,500 crore is lying in the PM CARES Fund. So, should this money not be used for the schools?” Dipke appealed to people to call on PM Modi to use this money for children’s education.

NCERT reconstitutes political science textbook development team



New Delhi: The NCERT has reconstituted the Textbook Development Team for Class 11 and 12 political science with a mandate to integrate cultural rootedness, Indian knowledge systems and inclusion, with at least four of the members having direct or indirect links with the RSS. The team has been asked to develop the Class 11 textbook by November and the Class 12 book by July next year. The textbook team will be led by academic and political analyst Sandeep Shastri, vice president of Karnataka-based deemed university Nitte.

Among the members of the textbook development team are at least four academics and educationists with direct or indirect documented backgrounds in the RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the BJP. Yadunath Deshpande, now a senior consultant with the Ministry of Education, has a longstanding organisational background in the ABVP. The organisation’s own records identify him as its joint state organising secretary for Maharashtra in the past. He subsequently served as an organising secretary in the ABVP’s Mumbai-Konkan structure. His LinkedIn profile also describes him as a political consultant for BJP.

Prashant Divekar has a longstanding association with Pune-based Jnana Prabodhini, an RSS-affiliated institution. It was founded in 1962 by Vinayak Vishwanath, an RSS member and pracharak. In his profile on the National Council for Teacher Education’s National Mission for Mentoring portal, Divekar describes his approach as being “rooted in

Bhartiya educational philosophy” and says he has contributed to the National Curriculum Framework. Vandana Mishra, professor at JNU’s Centre for Political Studies, is a former national secretary of the ABVP. Ravi Rameshchandra Shukla, Associate Professor at JNU’s Centre for Comparative Politics and Political Theory, has been a member of the editorial board of the Indian Journal of Democratic Governance, published by the Indian Institute of Democratic Leadership-Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini, which is an RSS affiliate. In 2021, Devendra Fadnavis had become its president. Shukla has also undertaken research centred on cultural and spiritual nationalism. He is the principal investigator of an ICSSR-funded JNU project titled “The Role of Fests in Shaping of Spiritual and Cultural Nationalism of Bharat: A Study of Kumbha and Magh Mela”.

The team also comprises Prakash Kandpal from JNU, Needhi Gupta from National Law University, Chetan Singhai from Chanakya University, Sukanshika Vatsa from Delhi University, Satish Kumar from IGNOU, Deevanshu Shrivastava from National University of Study and Research in Law, Pranav Gupta from Jindal Global Law School, Nanda Kishor from Pondicherry University and Swapna Prabhu from Utkal University. Other members include NCERT’s Savita Sagar, M N Suresh Kumar from Bengaluru-based Government First Grade College, Diana Isabel from Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation School, N. Bharani from SHVM Government PU College for Girls. Vanthangpui Khobung and Subhash Singh of NCERT will be member coordinator and co-coordinator, respectively.

According to an NCERT notification, the team will seek guidance from the curricular area group on social science, languages, Indian knowledge systems, environmental education, innovative pedagogy and teaching-learning material. It will also consult other curricular area groups to ensure linkages with other grades, interdisciplinarity among subjects, and the integration of multilingual perspectives. “Review of each of the textbooks will take place to oversee the integration of cross-cutting themes, such as cultural rootedness, Indian knowledge systems, inclusion, educational technology, assessment, etc,” the notification issued by NCERT Director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said.

Minor raped by father; fake papers used to facilitate delivery, sell her baby; 8 held



GNS News Agency, August 20

Raipur: A minor girl was allegedly repeatedly raped and impregnated by her father, who later arranged her delivery at a hospital by using forged documents to show her as an adult and married, in Chhattisgarh capital Raipur, police said on Wednesday. The newborn son of the 16-year-old girl, who had also allegedly been forced to undergo an abortion on one occasion, was later sold to another person, they said. After the matter came to light on Monday, eight persons, including the teenager’s father, aunt and a nurse, have so far been arrested in connection with the case, they said. The alleged abuse began in 2023 after the minor’s mother separated from her husband, leaving their three daughters with him, a police official said.

According to the complaint, the 38-year-old father allegedly raped the girl, the eldest of the three sisters, at the house of a relative within the jurisdiction of the New Rajendra Nagar police station in 2023 and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident to anyone. The accused allegedly continued sexually abusing her, following which she became pregnant, the official said. When the girl told her aunt (father’s sister) about the pregnancy, the aunt informed the accused.

He assaulted the girl, got abortion pills with the help of the aunt and forced his daughter to consume the medicine, resulting in a miscarriage, the official said.

The man allegedly continued to abuse her, and she again got pregnant in 2025, following which he took her to the house of a nurse identified as Varsha Mandal, the official said. Mandal sent the girl to the house of her acquaintance Geeta Rai, also a nurse, where the survivor stayed for around two months, he said. Rai allegedly concealed the girl’s age, portrayed her as an adult and married, and got her admitted to a private hospital in Raipur’s Dangania area using forged documents, including a fake Aadhaar card, the official said. The girl subsequently gave birth to a baby boy through a surgical procedure. After the delivery, the newborn was allegedly sold to another person by the doctor, the girl’s father and other accused persons, he said. She was then kept at Rai’s house for around 15 days after the delivery and was subsequently taken back home by her father, the official said.

The survivor later managed to contact her mother through social media and narrated her ordeal. Her mother accompanied her to the police station on Monday, following which a complaint was lodged, police said. A case has been registered at New Rajendra Nagar police station under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections, including those relating to rape, forgery, criminal intimidation, causing hurt, acts intended to cause or prevent miscarriage and common intention. Sections under the stringent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Juvenile Justice Act have also been invoked, he said. Those arrested include the teenager’s father and paternal aunt, Rohit Kumar Rai (35), his wife Yogita Rai alias Geeta (32), Saheb Mandal (42), a supervisor at a private hospital, his wife Varsha Mandal (34), a man who allegedly purchased the newborn and another woman, police said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Farmer panel ends BJP’s 20-year control of Gujarat’s largest co-op sugar factory



GNS News Agency, August 20

The BJP in Gujarat suffered a setback in the sugar co-operative sector as a farmers’ panel swept the elections to the Shree Khedut Sahakari Khand Udyog Mandli Ltd—popularly known as the Bardoli sugar factory—ending the ruling party’s 20-year dominance over the factory management. The panel defeated senior leaders, including BJP’s Bardoli MLA Ishvar Parmar. With an annual turnover of Rs 600 crore, the factory in Surat district was founded in 1955 and is Gujarat’s first co-operative sugar factory. It is also reportedly one of the largest co-operative sugar factories in Asia. The elections to the management committee were held on August 16, and the results were declared on Tuesday. Elections were held for 14 of 15 seats and were contested by the BJP-backed Sahakar Panel and the Kisan Parivartan Panel formed by sugarcane farmers. The Sahakar Panel won only one seat while the remaining 14 went to the farmers’ panel. The lone seat of the Sahakar Panel was won uncontested by Anil Patel. “The major reason behind our panel’s victory is that voters did not want politics to enter the cooperative sector. The Bardoli sugar mills, which have great importance in the political arena in Surat district, have become a centre for BJP party activities in Surat district. The people have voted for us, and now we will work hard to fulfil farmers’ demands,” Mukesh Patel, a winner from the

Kisan Parivartan panel, said. The Bardoli sugar factory’s 19-member board includes four de facto appointees: one from the Directorate of Sugar as the government representative, one from the Surat District Bank, one from the Kisan Sangh, and the managing director. The remaining seats go to polls every five years. The outgoing body had just two members from the Kisan Parivartan Panel. Big upsets: Bardoli MLA, sugar factory vice-chairman Bardoli MLA Ishvar Parmar, a Sahakar Panel candidate who contested from the SC/ST seat, was defeated by Kisan Parivartan Panel candidate Tarunkumar Vaghela. Vaghela, who had earlier lost the Bardoli seat to Parmar in the 2022 Assembly polls on a Congress ticket, secured 1,424 votes against Parmar’s 882 in the August 16 election. “We fought bravely, taking up the issues of the sugarcane suppliers, as they were not getting the minimum support price and other issues faced by the farmers, including delays in payment to the farmers for their crushed crops,” Vaghela told The Indian Express. “My opponent was senior BJP leader Ishwar Parmar, but we touched farmers’ sentiments and assured them that we would do better than the outgoing panel. The public kept faith in us, and we won.”

Similarly, former Surat district panchayat president and vice-chairman of the Bardoli sugar factory, Bhavesh Patel—a Sahakar Panel candidate from the Mota seat—lost to Kisan Parivartan Panel candidate Satish Patel. Another notable win was that of former Surat district panchayat president Bhavini Patel’s husband, Atul, who contested from the farmers’ panel and defeated BJP-backed Sahakar Panel candidate Parimal Patel, the Surat district president of Khedut Samaj Gujarat, an independent farmers’ body. Two women candidates of the Kisan Parivartan Panel also won the election. While the Kisan Parivartan Panel was led by Mukesh Patel, who won from the Tundi seat, the Sahakar Panel was led by Bhavesh Patel. Surat district BJP president Bharat Rathod put on a brave face, saying, “Those who contested the election from Sahakar Panel and Kisan Parivartan Panel are both BJP functionaries, except Tarun Vaghela and Parimal Patel.”

Baloch leader urges Trump to act over Pakistan airstrikes in Balochistan



GNS News Agency, August 20

Washington: The Baloch American Congress president, Tara Chand, has written to US President Donald Trump seeking urgent intervention over recent Pakistani military airstrikes in Balochistan’s Surab district that reportedly killed more than 30 civilians, including women and children. In his letter addressed to Trump, Chand wrote, “We respectfully urge your administration to investigate these serious allegations and determine whether any US-origin aircraft, weapons, drones, technology, components, or other military equipment were used in the reported operation.”

On behalf of the Baloch community, he also urged the American administration to investigate the reported airstrikes and civilian casualties in Surab, determine whether US-origin military equipment or technology was involved, and conduct appropriate end-use and compliance reviews of relevant US defence equipment supplied to Pakistan. Chand further called on the American authorities to support an independent investigation and accountability for any violations of US law, arms-transfer conditions, or international humanitarian law as well as review relevant US military assistance or transfers if credible evidence establishes that such equipment was misused against Baloch civilians.

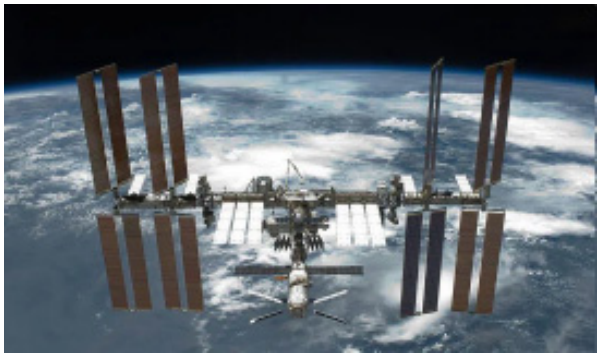
“Mr. President, a Baloch child’s life is as precious as the life of any child anywhere in the world. We are not ask-

ing the United States to prejudge the evidence—we are asking your Administration to establish the truth, protect civilians, and ensure accountability. We would welcome the opportunity to provide available documentation and meet with appropriate US officials regarding this urgent matter,” the letter mentioned. The incident took place in the early hours of August 12 when the Pakistani Air Force reportedly carried out indiscriminate bombardment in residential areas in the Gidar area of Surab, killing civilians and causing significant damage to properties.

Last week, several Baloch activists and human rights bodies strongly rejected the statement issued by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)- the official media and public relations wing for Pakistan’s Armed Forces, following the Pakistani airstrikes in Surab, describing it as “false and fabricated”. The criticism came after the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) attempted to downplay the Surab attack by attributing it to the premature detonation of a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) allegedly linked to a militant group.

Slamming Pakistan’s official remarks, a leading Baloch human rights defender, Mir Yar Baloch, took to X and posted: “DGISPR, which serves as the official spokesperson for the Pakistani military, has long faced severe criticism over its misleading and fabricated statements and official positions regarding controversial military operations.” “The Surab massacre was a planned act of collective punishment, and local residents of Surab stand as witnesses to the fact that the Pakistan Air Force deliberately targeted a civilian population under the cover of darkness, severely affecting an entire village and leaving its residents to bear the devastating consequences,” he added. Human rights body Baloch Voice for Justice (BVJ) alleged that the DGISPR resorted to “extreme exaggeration” and made a failed attempt to construct a “so-called narrative” that contradicted the facts, apparently to conceal the ongoing “war crimes” in Balochistan by Pakistani forces. The rights body noted that the reality on the ground can no longer be concealed by “distorting the facts.”

Astronauts remove faulty ISS antenna during spacewalk; out of time to install spare



Washington: Astronauts Anil Menon and Sophie Adenot ran out of time to replace the space-to-ground antenna of the International Space Station (ISS) during a spacewalk, with the task now set for a future date. The two astronauts managed to remove the failed antenna and stow it away in their six-hour-23-minute space walk that began at 8.29 am EDT. This spacewalk will be the second for Menon, who traces his origins to Kerala in India, and the first for Adenot. Adenot, an astronaut with the European Space Agency, became the first French woman to undertake a spacewalk. The astronauts had twin tasks – remove the failed antenna and install a replacement. However, they ran into delays in removing the tight power and data connectors, installing locking pins in the antenna’s gimbal assembly and unbolting it from its boom. The astronauts were seen putting in extra effort with the ratchet wrench as they removed the antenna from its boom. The mission control decided there wasn’t enough time for the astronauts to move the failed antenna to its permanent storage location or to retrieve the spare antenna and install it.

“The installation work is expected to be completed during a future spacewalk,” NASA said in a statement. It said near the end of the spacewalk, the crew also performed cleanup tasks and an inspection and swap of a portable foot restraint near the Quest airlock of the ISS. “We got into this with the mindset that we wanted everything to go perfectly,” said Menon as the spacewalk came to an end. “Things were a lot different than expected, but what I would say that I am really impressed with is that all of those contingencies were well thought out,” Menon said. The antenna is a critical link NASA uses to transmit data, enabling high-speed communications between the Mission Control Centre in Houston and the space station.

The space station continues to operate with a fully functional Space-to-Ground antenna, which provides high-data rate communications with NASA’s Tracking Data and Relay Satellites and control centres across the world, including the agency’s Mission Control Center in Houston. This spacewalk was the 282nd in support of space station assembly, maintenance, and upgrades. Earlier this month, Menon and NASA astronaut Jessica Meir spent six hours and 27 minutes outside the station, preparing part of its power system for the future installation of another roll-out solar array. The operation forms part of essential maintenance work required to keep the station operational as it approaches its third decade of continuous human habitation. The spacewalk of August 18 was originally scheduled for August 13, but had to be delayed. The decision to put it off was taken after a carbon dioxide sensor on Menon’s spacesuit gave “an unexpected data reading” after the August 6 spacewalk. On the ground, mission planners will discuss the forward plan for the work scheduled to be completed during the next spacewalk, which is currently planned for August 25.

New US green card rule may hit Indians



GNS News Agency, August 20

Washington: Thousands of Indians seeking US green cards could face wider scrutiny of their finances and use of public benefits under new immigration guidance taking effect on September 18. US Citizenship and Immigration Services said officers may consider housing assistance, food stamps, college financial aid and other means-tested benefits when deciding whether an applicant is likely to become a public charge. The guidance follows the Department of Homeland Security’s decision to rescind the 2022 Biden-era public charge regulations. The final rule was announced on July 16 and published in the Federal Register on July 20. It will apply to Forms I-485 seeking permanent residence or adjustment of status that are postmarked or electronically submitted on or after September 18.

Applications submitted from December 23, 2022, through September 17, 2026, will continue to be decided under the 2022 regulations and related guidance. The change could affect Indians seeking permanent residence through family and employment categories. It does not apply to people who already hold green cards or US citizenship. Most family-sponsored applicants will be subject to the public charge assessment. They include spouses, children and parents of US citizens, as well as spouses and children of lawful permanent residents. Adult children and siblings of US citizens, fiancé(e)s of citizens, and widows or widowers of citizens are also covered. Employment-based categories subject to the assessment include priority workers, professionals holding advanced degrees, people of

exceptional ability, skilled workers, investors and religious workers. Foreign medical school graduates, international broadcasters and certain current or former US government employees abroad are also listed among those subject to the provision. Congress has exempted several humanitarian and special immigration categories. These include refugees, asylees, applicants for Temporary Protected Status, victims of human trafficking and qualifying criminal activity, and certain self-petitioners under the Violence Against Women Act. Special immigrant juveniles, certain Afghan and Iraqi nationals who worked for the US government, Cuban Adjustment Act applicants and some surviving relatives of military personnel are among the other exempt groups. USCIS officers must consider five statutory factors: the applicant’s age, health, family status, assets and financial position, and education and skills. They may also consider Form I-864, an affidavit through which a sponsor agrees to use personal financial resources to support the immigrant. For benefits received before September 18, USCIS will consider only public cash assistance for income maintenance and government-funded long-term institutional care. For means-tested benefits received on or after that date, officers may consider any such benefits, including housing and food assistance. The agency said officers must examine all relevant evidence and decide applications individually under the totality of the circumstances. Receiving a covered benefit will not by itself lead to rejection. No single factor, apart from the absence of a sufficient affidavit of support when one is required, can alone establish that an applicant is likely to become a public charge. An applicant found inadmissible solely on public charge grounds may be invited to post a cash or surety bond. The amount will be based on the government assistance the person could potentially receive over the next five years. Applicants may submit Form I-945 for a public charge bond only after USCIS issues a Notice of Intent to Deny containing an invitation to post one. The agency will not accept unsolicited bonds. About 66,800 India-born immigrants obtained US green cards in fiscal 2024, accounting for 4.9 per cent of the 1.36 million people granted lawful permanent residence that year, according to Department of Homeland Security data. About 61 per cent of the Indian recipients secured permanent residence through adjustment of status while already living in the United States.

In upset, Florida democratic socialist Nixon wins Democratic Senate primary



GNS News Agency, August 20

Democratic socialist Angie Nixon scored an upset victory on Tuesday in Florida’s Democratic primary race for the U.S. Senate, as voters in several states picked candidates for elections that will determine control of Congress. The surprise result was the latest in a string of victories for insurgent progressive candidates in Democratic contests this year, as many of the party’s voters have grown frustrated with a party establishment that they see as too old and ineffective in opposing Republican President Donald Trump. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

While the movement has stirred enthusiasm on the party’s left flank, analysts warn it could complicate the party’s drive to win control of the House of Representatives and the Senate in November, when members of both parties and independents cast ballots. No such divisions were on display in Alaska, where Democrat Mary Peltola secured more votes than incumbent Republican Senator Dan S. Sullivan in the state’s unusual nonpartisan U.S. Senate primary.

Democrats see the contest among their best opportunities to pick up one of the one of four seats they need to win control of the 100-seat chamber in November’s midterm election. Florida’s Senate race is not seen as promising for Democrats. The state, once a top political battleground, has grown increasingly Republican in recent years, and analysts say Nixon’s victory likely puts it further out of reach. Nixon, 42, has been active in Florida’s labor movement and was reprimanded this year for disrupting a Florida House vote when she protested congressional redistricting legislation with a pink megaphone. She defeated former national security official Alex Vindman, who rose to prominence in 2019 when he testified to Congress during Republican President Donald Trump’s first impeachment. Vindman raised 16 times as much money as Nixon, and analysts said he would likely have had a better chance of defeating incumbent Republican Senator Ashley Moody in November’s general election. The winner will finish out the remaining two years in the term of former Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who now serves as Trump’s secretary of state.

Alaska has not had a Democratic senator since 2014,

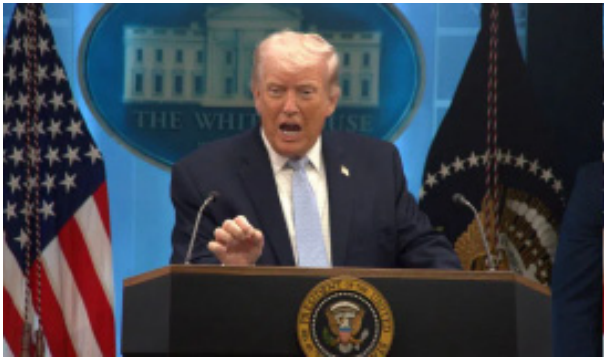
but the race is seen as competitive. Peltola, a moderate who formerly held the state’s sole House seat, easily advanced to the November general election, taking 48% of the vote, compared with Sullivan’s 42.8%, with 93% of precincts reporting. Peltola, a moderate who formerly held the state’s sole House seat, stands to benefit from Alaska’s ranked-choice voting system, which could allow her to consolidate support among independents. She also could benefit from having two Republican rivals with very similar names. Retired schoolteacher Dan J. Sullivan, a Republican, was in third place in the primary with 2.4% of the vote.

The Republican establishment has tried to knock Dan J. Sullivan off the ballot, so far with no success. Trump called him an “imposter,” and the U.S. Justice Department launched an investigation into whether he entered the race to confuse voters and siphon votes from the incumbent, according to a source familiar with the probe. Dan J. Sullivan has told other news outlets that it is not his aim. In the state’s other congressional race, incumbent Republican Representative Nick Begich III advanced to the general election, as did former school administrator Bill Hill, who is listed as an independent but has donated to Democratic candidates in the past.

VETERAN DEMOCRATS SURVIVE REDISTRICTING, FOR NOW Two veteran Democratic lawmakers cleared their first hurdle as they sought to survive a Republican redistricting in Florida that forced them to run in new seats. Representative Jared Moskowitz defeated rival Oliver Larkin, who was backed by the Democratic Socialists of America, and will face Republican Scott Singer, a former Boca Raton mayor, in one of the few congressional races in the state seen as competitive in November. Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, first elected to Congress in 2004, won her party’s nomination to represent a Black-majority district centered in Broward County. After a Supreme Court decision weakened a landmark civil rights law in April, some activists who worried about losing Black representation in Congress criticized Wasserman Schultz, who is white, for running in the historically Black district.

Florida’s new map, pushed through by the Republican-controlled legislature this spring, could leave the state with a House delegation of 24 Republicans and only four Democrats. States usually redraw their congressional maps only at the beginning of every decade, to reflect census results. But several have redistricted over the past year at Trump’s urging to shore up the Republican majority in Congress, prompting some Democratic-led states to redraw their own maps in response. Republican Representative Cory Mills, who is embroiled in ethics investigations, was defeated in his central Florida primary for reelection by former broadcast news anchor Ryan Elijah. Mills has denied allegations of campaign finance law violations and sexual misconduct now being probed by the House Ethics Committee. Democrats had seen the seat as a potential pickup opportunity if Mills had won the nomination.

Trump orders halt to Iran talks



GNS News Agency, August 20

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday (US local time) instructed his top envoys to halt their conversations with Iran, according to a CNN report, citing US officials. Trump told his negotiating team, including Vice President JD Vance and envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, not to engage with Tehran despite what officials described as some “positive discussions” with Iran, the report said.

Signaling his readiness to put the conflict at arm’s length, Trump has been unsatisfied with Tehran’s unwillingness to bend to his demands, according to the report.

He wants to wait until Iran’s leaders signal fresh willingness to strike the deal he is seeking before reengaging, reports Xinhua news agency. The White House is shifting strategy to “strangle” Iran over time rather than resort to further strikes, CNN quoted a source familiar with the matter as saying. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday that the United States would impose measures on Iran that have “never been seen,” and Washington is stepping up a financial campaign against Tehran. He added that the Treasury Department has targeted Iranian “bank accounts, crypto wallets, assets around the world, cutting off payments into both the leadership in the regime and the government itself.”

Despite repeated earlier assertions that talks were proceeding well, Trump announced on social media on Tuesday that there were “no talks or conversations going on, or scheduled” with Iran. “The Naval Blockade remains in full force and effect,” he added, claiming the Strait of Hormuz “is open and operating” and “all water mines have been removed or detonated,” contradicting reports that traffic through the global energy waterway remains sharply reduced. The United States and Iran remain at odds over the Strait of Hormuz and the terms for ending the conflict, with the future of the talks uncertain after a 60-day negotiating period set under a memorandum of understanding ended on Monday.

Honourable reception awaits Bangladesh PM Rahman if he visits India, says envoy



GNS News Agency, August 20

Dhaka: Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi has said that Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman would be accorded an “honourable reception” if he decides to visit India, local media reported. Addressing a reception hosted for leading Bangladeshi business leaders and a delegation of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) at a Dhaka hotel, Trivedi said, “After meeting the prime minister here, I went straight to Delhi and had a great meeting with our prime minister. He (PM Narendra Modi) just mentioned one thing: we need to meet.”

According to Bangladesh’s leading newspaper The Daily Star, the Indian High Commissioner mentioned that PM Modi has stated that when the Prime Minister of Bangladesh visits India, he will have such an “honourable reception as he deserves”. Last week, Trivedi called on Prime Minister Modi in New Delhi, a day after he paid a courtesy call on PM Rahman in Dhaka.

Emphasising that Rahman’s potential visit would be a “memorable” one, Trivedi said it could benefit people and businesses in both countries. He admitted that the bilateral

relationship had encountered “hiccups”, but maintained that such setbacks should not erode the longstanding ties between the two nations. “I can tell you I fully understand there are issues, but these issues can definitely be sorted out once the prime minister of Bangladesh and our Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet,” said the Indian High Commissioner.

“We need to get ourselves together... I’m not telling you to forget the past. Keep it, but sort out the differences. And move on. Don’t get stagnant,” he added. Trivedi highlighted people-to-people ties, employment, education and healthcare as key areas in which the two countries could further expand cooperation.

He said that New Delhi’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy underscores the importance India places on its relationship with Bangladesh. He noted that a series of high-level engagements, including visits by India’s External Affairs Minister and Speaker, as well as his own posting to Dhaka, reflected New Delhi’s desire to give fresh impetus to bilateral ties. He said that Indian officials had been working closely with the Bangladeshi leaders in recent weeks to resolve differences and gain an understanding of the concerns of the people of Bangladesh, adding that the relationship should be seen as “a partnership of equals”. Meanwhile, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka hosted the business reception on Tuesday, bringing together the visiting delegation from the CII and leading members of the business community in Bangladesh for meaningful interactions. According to the Indian High Commission, the discussions were aimed at advancing bilateral economic and commercial cooperation and fostering stronger business-to-business linkages between India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh’s State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam also attended the programme and delivered the keynote speech.

The Teesta dam and the long shadow of climate change



2025, an expert committee constituted by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change recommended a proposal to rebuild the Teesta-3 dam on the Teesta river in Sikkim. In October 2023, a powerful glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) from the South Lhonak lake had decimated the dam and its hydroelectric power generation facility. The waters also carried debris from the dam forward like a fluid battering ram, heightening the damage further downstream. In all, over 100 people were killed while more than 80,000 people in four districts were affected. It became clear later that a moraine on the South Lhonak lake's flank suffered a slope failure, weakening the terminus. The failure also sent rocks tumbling into the lake, generating a strong ripple. The outlet subsequently gave way, with satellite data indicating that around 50 billion litres of water had spilled into the valley. The event also set off multiple landslides about 30 to 40 kilometres downstream. Experts who have since been monitoring the lake also said the moraine has remained unstable. The link with global warming

As global warming and particulate matter — especially black carbon, also known as soot — accelerate the melting of Himalayan glaciers, more runoff is pooling into new lakes or adding to the existing ones. The rate of melting is inversely proportional to the volume, so, as glaciers shrink, they melt faster. A report by the Central Water Commission of last year found that the number of “glacial lakes and other water bodies” in the Himalayan region had become 10.8% more numerous between 2011 and 2024 and that their combined surface area had increased by 33.7% in the same period. The South Lhonak lake itself was formed in the early 1960s and grew to 167 hectares by 2023. Glacial retreat has also been known to destabilise extant geological formations and create new sources of risk. Against this background, the expert committee's decision to recommend the rebuilding of the Teesta-3 dam is worrisome.

As The Hindu has reported, the committee's decision was motivated by the fact that Teesta-3 was “successful” and “commercially viable” and that its power-generating equipment “was largely intact” following the GLOF. Environmental activists and hydrogeology experts alike have expressed misgivings about large hydroelectric power projects in the Himalaya and have questioned the new design's green clearance. Teesta-3 has also been the subject of several public interest litigations asking for it be scrapped: because of its location (in an earthquake- and landslide-prone area); issues in its techno-economic clearance; its non-compliance with a 1996 notification to have Sikkim hold 51% equity; and alleged corruption. According to the committee, Teesta-3 2.0 is to be built with concrete alone rather than concrete and rocks as before; to have a spillway nearly three-times more voluminous; and to have an early-warning system for flooding. The facility's new design is reportedly based on a “worst-case scenario” modelled by the India Meteorological Department, with the “maximum possible rain” in the next century in the region. But one of the hallmarks of climate change is that it is a risk-multiplier. If the slope failure off the South Lhonak lake had

occurred without there being a lake, there is unlikely to have been a flood. Likewise, if the moraine had not collapsed, the gradual accumulation of water may have caused the overtopping to flow into the valley less violently than during a GLOF.

The proliferation of glacial lakes, geological instability, dynamics of transient landscape features, and even the flux of atmospheric soot blowing in from industrial centres in the Gangetic plains all increase risks in a way that cannot reasonably be captured by a rainfall-centric model, however. Experts had already doubted whether the 2023 GLOF was triggered by heavy rain because local weather stations recorded only moderate rainfall or less in the area around the time. Professor Raghu Murtugudde has also written in The Hindu (“The value of attributing extreme events to climate change | Explained”, May 24, 2024) that the relationships between climate change and local rainfall are hard to characterise because the data for modelling is seldom sufficient. In his words, climate models are “notoriously bad at properly capturing normal rainfall and worse at extreme ones”. On January 30, 2025, an international team including experts from the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, the Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru, the Indo Tibetan Border Police, and the Government of Sikkim published a comprehensive assessment of the GLOF (“The Sikkim flood of October 2023: Drivers, causes and impacts of a multihazard cascade”). Among other things, they wrote: “Prevailing GLOF modeling and assessment approaches insufficiently account for processes of erosion and sediment transport, as well as hillslope-channel interactions such as riverbank collapses and landslides triggered by toe-undercutting as well as the impact of sediment transport on local bed elevations and hence water levels. The latter is of particular importance in large river basins because water waves move faster than sediment waves...”

The commercial viability of Teesta-3, pre-GLOF, speaks to India's soaring power demand and the pressing need to produce it somewhere. But since climate change multiplies risk everywhere, production in specific locales should be weighed against the consequences. Property and livelihoods downstream of Teesta-3 1.0 suffered greater damage due to the dam being in the swelling river's way. If the new design holds, Teesta-3 2.0 may be able to reduce the downstream damage due to a (hypothetically) identical flood. But if a stronger and/or significantly different flood occurs, the damage could be even greater. A new facility with more moving parts will also create both new success and failure modes. The social security of the region's residents will have to be improved accordingly so that, in the event of a disaster, they are able to piece their lives back together without slipping on any social, health, and/or economic indicators. Brian Stone, Jr., a professor in the School of City and Regional Planning at the Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S., wrote in a 2024 article (“The lunacy of rebuilding in disaster-prone areas”), “We cannot engineer our way out of climate change; retreat is inevitable.” That is, if the climate-change-induced risk to X in an area is to be kept constant, in time either the area will shrink or the costs of maintaining X will increase. X could be property, livelihoods, even human lives.

That the facility was commercially viable is an insufficient excuse to restore it. Instead, the decision should be made within a framework of priorities led by the need to minimise risk to locals, their property, and their livelihoods and maximise their socio-economic resilience. The framework should also include a risk determination matrix with a response plan and a hard ‘unacceptable risk’ level. The cost of these measures should be included in the dam's hydroelectric power tariff rather than externalising it in the determination of commercial viability. Anything else would be unsustainable by definition.

Addressing the growing threat of forest fires

As wildfires swept throughout Los Angeles last month, destroying homes and causing casualties and displacements, the urgency of addressing and preventing forest fires took centre stage once again. Unfortunately, forest fires become a point of conversation only when some major incident causes irrevocable damage and captures media and public attention. The fires are a stark reminder that no place is immune from their impacts and that we need a clear pathway to prevent and manage them as their frequency increases. In India, the situation is equally alarming. According to the Forest Survey of India, more than 36% of the country's forest cover is prone to fire. An analysis by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water states that there has been a 10-fold increase in forest fire incidences in the last two decades, whereas the total forest cover has increased by merely 1.12%.

Living on the fringes of the Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand, I see the immense value of India's forests, not just as critical enablers of wildlife conservation and sources of biodiversity, but as lifelines for local communities that live around them. While Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh often capture headlines for forest fires, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Karnataka, among others, are also grappling with the frequency and intensity of forest fires. According to various reports, nearly 90% of these fires are caused by human activities such as deliberate land clearing, slash-and-burn agriculture, and unattended campfires. These factors, coupled with climate change-driven factors such as rising temperatures and extended dry spells, intensify the risk of forest fires. Forest fires have widespread consequences — natural, social, and economic — that are all interconnected. Besides the direct loss of trees, wildlife, and biodiversity, they contribute significantly to carbon emissions. A report by the World Resources Institute estimates that Indian forest fires emit approximately 69 million tonnes of CO2 annually. Forest fires result in the loss of timber and non-timber forest products, essential for forest-dependent communities, contributing to direct economic losses. A 2018 report by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change estimated that forest degradation (including forest fires) results in an annual economic loss of approximately ₹1.74 lakh crore. Forest fires also disrupt the water cycle, cause soil fertility degradation, and worsen human-wildlife conflict as animals seek refuge in human settlements. India has put in place several policies and schemes to address forest fire management, such as the National Action Plan on Forest Fires and the Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FFPMS). The centrally sponsored FFPMS assists State governments in strengthening their forest fire prevention and management capabilities.

A more robust response However, given the growing intensity of forest fires in India, much more remains to be done. First, Budget constraints have proven to be an obstacle. For example, the FFPMS's funding allotment has



fluctuated over time. In 2019-2020, it received ₹46.40 crore, followed by ₹32.47 crore in 2020-2021, ₹34.26 crore in 2021-2022, and ₹28.25 crore in 2022-2023. The budget projection for 2023-2024 was ₹51 crore, which was revised to ₹40 crore. The planned allocation for 2024-2025 is ₹50 crore. This shows the need for more steady support. On the technology front, the existing Forest Fire Alert System cannot distinguish between forest fires and other types of fires, delaying ground-level validation and response. India could use advanced predictive modelling to help identify high-risk areas based on climatic and geographic data. This must be supplemented by using drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras to monitor fire-prone areas, assess damage, and guide firefighting efforts. States such as Tamil Nadu and Odisha have already piloted such initiatives, which could be scaled nationally. In addition, there is merit in also exploring how relevant and existing data from the Forest Survey of India, the India Meteorological Department, and the Indian Space Research Organisation can be integrated and analysed for better forest fire management.

Equipping more and more local communities to collect and share real-time data to report fires as soon as they are sighted through mobile applications, toll-free helplines, and SMS-based systems can strengthen early warning systems and ensure rapid, localised response. In Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, self-help groups, primarily women, collect pine needles to blunt future fires. India can also draw from Nepal's Community Forest User Groups and Indonesia's Fire-Free Village Program to strengthen community forest fire management. Empowering communities with awareness, training, and resources and engaging youth as ‘forest fire scouts’ can foster stewardship, combining local knowledge with modern tools like fire risk mapping and controlled burns. Forest fires are not just an environmental issue — they are societal and economic, affecting livelihoods, health, and the foundation of our ecosystems. Addressing this challenge requires the collaboration of policymakers, scientists, civil society groups, and communities. From creating supporting infrastructure through policy intervention, improved budgeting, technology adoption, and building a cadre of trained personnel to empowering communities — all measures must go hand-in-hand to turn the tide.

Bandipur authorities intensify awareness drives in villages surrounding the tiger reserve to prevent forest fires



GNS News Agency, August 20

Bandipur is rich in wildlife, including tigers and elephants, and fire prevention measures are taken seriously to protect the habitat. Bandipur is rich in wildlife, including tigers and elephants, and fire prevention measures are taken seriously to protect the habitat. | Photo Credit: M.A. SRIRAM Authorities in Bandipur are bracing for a scorching summer in the coming weeks and have launched awareness campaigns in local villages and hamlets surrounding the tiger reserve to emphasise the importance of preventing forest fires during the season.

So far, 65 awareness camps and drives have been conducted in a bid to curb the outbreak of fires, which are a major concern in Bandipur during the dry season. The tiger reserve has a history of devastating fires that have previously ravaged vast stretches of forest. S. Prabhakaran, director of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, told The Hindu that the awareness drive will continue until nearly all the hamlets and villages bordering the forests are covered. “This is a proactive measure to build goodwill and gain the trust of the local community in protecting the fragile ecosystem, which is highly vulnerable to fire,” he said. The importance of this initiative stems from the need to enlist local cooperation in the early detection of fires. Also, fire prevention is most effective when the community is involved and feels a sense

The two sides of the rising phenomenon of internet-based self-diagnosis of mental health disorders

People in general are more aware now in terms of both physical and mental health due to the widespread dissemination of information on the internet, say doctors. People in general are more aware now in terms of both physical and mental health due to the widespread dissemination of information on the internet, say doctors. | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto Have you ever seen a list of symptoms on social media and thought you had a mental disorder? It turns out that many people especially youngsters, have begun diagnosing themselves with mental health disorders after checking out symptoms on social media or through internet search engines.

Both psychologists and psychiatrists in Bengaluru say they have noticed an increase in the number of patients who walk into their clinics with such diagnoses. Anxiety, depression and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are some commonly self-diagnoses in such patients. “We see many young adults, specifically in their 20s or early 30s, coming in with information they have derived from social media. For instance, they say things like, “I procrastinate, so I have ADHD. Medical terms are very loosely used on the internet and people see these broad, vague, non-specific criteria and diagnose themselves,” said Arohi Vardhan Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at Cadabams Hospitals. In a country like India, where speaking about, or seeking help for mental health issues has been taboo and stigmatised for a long time, doctors believe that celebrities coming out and speaking about their mental health issues has led to greater awareness and openness, and may have led to more people trying to identify their own issues. “People, in general, are more aware now in terms of both physical and mental health due to the widespread dissemination of information on the internet. One in five persons usually suffers from either anxiety or depression and while these problems existed in society for a long time, there was a lot of stigma around it. It is evident in literature that when there is more awareness in the community, people reach out for help more and that leads to better outcomes,” says Senthil Reddi, professor of psychiatry at NIMHANS. He added, “A lot of famous people have spoken about their disorders, including learning disabilities and this has been helpful in starting a conversation around mental health. The fact that people are coming in and seeking help is a good thing, as there have been some changes even in the classification of diseases recently. It has been recognised that there is



an overlap of disorders and when it comes to ADHD, autism and similar diseases, it is difficult to compartmentalise, and it is important to identify those who are struggling across the spectrum and not just the ones struggling with severe symptoms.”

While being largely appreciative of the fact that people are seeking help, doctors have also noticed that a chunk of such patients tend to convince themselves that they have a specific disorder or that medicines have side effects. This sometimes leads to the development of the infamous ‘Internet Derived Information Obstructing Treatment (IDIOT) syndrome, doctors have observed. “While patients may have some features of a disorder, it should be decided by a professional as to whether they actually have that disorder. But some patients decide that they have a specific disorder and seek specific treatment. It is very difficult to convince them that their symptoms indicate a different disorder. We usually evaluate them in the first few sessions and then tell them what the core disorder is. Then, most people are very understanding,” Dr. Vardhan said. Similar issues were also flagged by Shashidhar Bilagi, a practising psychiatrist in Bengaluru. “Most people seek information on the internet and just go to a therapist. However, for severe disorders, it is very important to consult psychiatrists. When it comes to medicines especially, there is a lot of misconception and wrong information on the internet about side effects. Patients refuse to take these medicines and suffer from severe disorders. To reduce the stigma, they go on the internet, but fail to seek the right kind of treatment. It is important that patients do not rely on the internet for help,” he said.

Why mainframe education is key to thriving in Hybrid IT

As we navigate the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in IT, mainframe technology remains critical. Once viewed as legacy systems, mainframes now play a vital role in Hybrid IT environments, supporting essential applications across sectors such as banking, healthcare, and government. However, for mainframes to remain competitive, we must bridge a notable skills gap, one that is compounded by rapid digital transformation and evolving industry needs. To meet the demands of Hybrid IT, an enhanced focus on mainframe education is essential. Here is why fostering specialised skills and encouraging advanced educational initiatives is critical to thrive in this field. As AI enhances mainframe capabilities, traditional mainframe expertise and advanced AI-driven skills are required. This new skill set encompasses machine learning, data analysis, cybersecurity, and generative AI integration and requires an interdisciplinary approach where mainframe experts not only handle legacy systems but also manage and optimise AI-powered processes, using tools to modernise applications for the cloud. To address this, mainframe education must expand beyond foundational knowledge to include training in AI integrations, Hybrid IT architecture, and secure coding practices. Universities and technical institutes play a crucial role in preparing students for a career in mainframe technology. While traditional programming and IT management remain important, there is a growing need for partnerships with tech organisations to introduce advanced mainframe courses. Collaborative programmes such as IBM's Academic Initiative offer hands-on experience and tailored certifications for students to acquire theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Moreover, institutions could enhance curriculums by including industry-led workshops, simula-

tions, and real-world case studies. In doing so, they equip students with applied skills in areas such as mainframe application modernisation and Hybrid IT integration, bridging the gap between academia and industry expectations. Technology has redefined educational delivery methods. Virtual labs, interactive simulations, and AI-driven tutoring platforms are reshaping how students engage with mainframe technologies. Online certification programmes such as those offered by IBM, Coursera, Interskills and BMC make it easier to gain credentials in specialised areas such as mainframe administration and AI-powered system management. Additionally, advanced learning platforms incorporate gamification to make learning more engaging, especially for complex topics such as mainframe security and hybrid cloud management. Digital tools also facilitate remote internships and mentoring programmes. For example, BMC Software's DevOps initiatives integrate mainframe training into development processes, enabling students to practice real-world mainframe applications and collaborate on virtual projects with industry experts. By harnessing these technologies, students and professionals can acquire skills that are practical and directly applicable in today's IT environments. Certifications are increasingly recognised as a valuable means to stay competitive in the mainframe space. Popular certifications such as IBM's z/OS Mainframe Practitioner Professional Certificate focus on foundational skills, while advanced certifications in AI integration, cloud computing, and cybersecurity are now also available. BMC's AMI for Security certification, for instance, is gaining popularity as companies prioritise secure, AI-enhanced mainframe operations to safeguard sensitive data.

Ishant Sharma says Anushka Sharma has made Virat Kohli calmer: ‘We talk a lot about...’



Virat Kohli-Anushka Sharma’s love story continues to take the world by charm. Whether it is Virat blowing flying kisses to Anushka in-between matches; the actor cheering for the former Indian Men’s cricket captain, or him taking out a few moments to celebrate a win with Anushka and their children on video calls, they surely set massive couple goals! But Anushka’s influence on Virat’s life goes beyond what is visible to the public, according to long-time friend and cricketer Ishant Sharma. “After Anushka’s arrival, Virat has become calmer in life. We talk a lot about god and spirituality. He is a very chill person otherwise. But it is not easy for him to be casual with everyone,” the bowler told Ranveer Allahabadia.

How can partners be a source of calm in each other’s lives?

Dr Santosh Bangar, senior consultant, and psychiatrist, Gleneagles Hospitals Parel Mumbai said that often relationships come with great responsibilities and problems like disagreements, arguments, differences in opinions, unrealistic expectations, and trust issues. “This can take a toll on a couple’s physical and psychological health, leading to feelings of frustration, agitation, anger, sadness, guilt,

and irritation,” said Dr BangarThis is where being calm and composed helps. “Being assured that someone is by your side through ups and downs can lead to a sense of peace and stability,” added Dr Bangar.

Maintaining open and honest communication can help overcome these shortcomings of a relationship. According to Dr Bangar, sharing or expressing thoughts, feelings, and concerns with your partner can significantly lighten up your mental load and reduce stress. “This approach could provide emotional support and stability in the relationship resulting in a more grounded state of mind. During tough times of stress or anxiety, a partner can exercise calmness and try being patient until the situation cools down to avoid further problems,” Dr Bangar told indianexpress.com. Being empathic, and showing comfort and understanding can help induce calmness in life. Dr Bangar said that factors like communication, mutual respect, and creating a safe space can help create deep connections. “Seek professional advice from experts to discuss concerns related to relationship issues. Their expert guidance can help you address the root cause of the problem leading to a stable and healthy relationship,” said Dr Bangar.

The double-layer technique for sunscreen application, and its effectiveness

Wearing sunscreen is one of the easiest and most effective ways to protect your skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Sunscreen can be rewarding in numerous ways and should be applied every day for better results. But have you ever tried the double-layer sunscreen technique? According to dermatologist Dr Aparajita Lamba, the double-layer technique ensures that you “apply the sunscreen correctly, in a layered way”. “In this technique, whatever the amount of sunscreen, you are supposed to apply half as one layer, wait for five minutes, and then go for the second layer. You don’t necessarily need to apply more sunscreen. All you need to do is layer it,” said Dr Lamba, adding that it is a tan-proof technique.Dr Rinky Kapoor, consultant dermatologist, cosmetic dermatologist, and dermato-surgeon, The Esthetic Clinics shed light on the technique.

She said that abiding by the technique would mean that the quantity of sunscreen that was supposed to be applied in one go, “will now be divided and used in two stages”. “Apply the first layer generously, covering all the essential areas that are directly exposed to UV rays such as the face, neck, and also behind the neck, hands, legs, and feet. Apply the second layer of sunscreen once the first layer is absorbed, which is mostly after 10 to 15 minutes,” explained Dr Kapoor.She said that this double-layer application “can provide maximum coverage to your skin ensuring no spots are missed and also provides a thicker barrier against harmful UV rays”. Dr Kapoor cautioned that



some might feel greasy or heavy due to the thicker layer of sunscreen. “Increased amounts of sunscreen may result in clogged pores, and breakouts, especially for those with sensitive, oily, and acne-prone skin. To avoid clogged pores, individuals can use non-comedogenic sunscreen for fruitful results,” shared Dr Kapoor.For those with sensitive skin, layering your sunscreen could exacerbate existing conditions like rosacea. “For such individuals, it is instead advisable to thoroughly apply a good sunscreen, with SPF 30 and above, and reapply as needed,” said Dr Niti Gaur, board-certified dermatologist founder of Citrine Clinic, Gurgaon. “However, for those who wish to try this trend, it is advisable to consult a dermatologist, who will guide you to the appropriate products meant for your skin type and its needs,” said Dr Gaur.

Experts debunk viral remedy to reduce uric acid: ‘We cannot endorse...’

Some people experience unexplained heel pain that is often diagnosed as a high concentration of uric acid. For the unversed, uric acid is a chemical created when the body breaks down purines — found in foods like dried beans, urad dal, peas, and beer. “Uric acid is a chemical formed when purines break down. High uric acid levels can increase the risk of developing health issues like gout, kidney stones, and arthritis,” said Dr Ashutosh Baghel, consultant urologist, Wockhardt Hospitals Mira Road.While lifestyle changes help manage the condition, there are many takers for home remedies, too. One that we recently came across claimed to reduce uric acid levels in just 10 days. The Instagram reel from Satinder Kaur claimed that the juice of fresh cucumber with a pinch of fresh cumin powder, lemon juice, and black salt when consumed on an empty stomach every morning can help reduce uric acid production in the body. “Reduce the quantity of protein in your food,” added Kaur.

Is this remedy effective?

According to Dr Baghel, “There is no scientific study on such a remedy. We cannot endorse claims. They need to be medically proven.”To reduce uric acid concentration in the blood, it is advisable to avoid alcohol, processed foods and drinks, and reduce consumption of red meats, said Dr Aashish Chaudhry, managing director, senior consultant, and head, department of orthopaedics and joint replacement, Aakash HealthcareMaintain a moderate weight: Keeping a moderate weight can help lower blood uric acid levels and enhance overall health. “Experts suggest focusing on long-term, sustainable changes for weight management, such as increasing physical activity, eating a balanced diet, and opting for nutrient-dense foods,” said Dr Chaudhry.Avoid alcohol and sugary drinks: High consumption of alcohol and sugary drinks, like sodas and sweetened juices, is linked to an increased risk of developing gout. “These beverages also contribute unnecessary calories to the diet, potentially leading to weight gain and metabolic issues, which can raise uric acid levels,” elucidated Dr Chaudhry.Increase vitamin C intake: “Research indicates a positive relationship between vitamin C intake and lower blood uric acid levels. However, no study has conclusively shown that vitamin C can prevent or reduce gout attacks. Individuals should consult their doctor to determine if they should take vitamin C supple-



ments or simply increase their dietary intake of vitamin C,” said Dr Chaudhry.Increase dietary fibre: A diet high in fibre may help reduce blood uric acid levels. “

YouTube launches new feature for registered health professionals to reach people

New Delhi: Google-owned YouTube on Tuesday announced new features to help Indian viewers find high-quality health information from healthcare professionals.

Building on its previously launched health source information panels and health content shelves, it is bringing up applications for registered doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, and health information providers to make their channels eligible for their health product features. “This will allow us to expand to include high quality information from a wider group of healthcare channels,”• Dr. Garth Graham, Director and Head of YouTube Health, in a blogpost.

“The expansion represents a big step towards helping people more easily find and connect with content that comes from the extraordinary community of healthcare creators on YouTube, the smart, dedicated and creative folks who are transforming the ways that we share medical information,” he added.

Bengali Chingri Malai grabs spot in Top 50 best seafood dishes in the world

India’s Bengali Chingri Malai has grabbed a spot on the World’s 50 Best Seafood Dish list by Taste Atlas. Standing at rank #31, it also became the best Indian seafood dish, and the only entrant from the country.But do you know the fascinating history and culinary secrets behind the Bengali Chingri Malai? The prawn curry is not just rich in taste, but also tradition.The story of Chingri Malai is intricately woven with the cultural evolution of Bengal, according to Chef Vaibhav Bhargava. He highlighted a clear division between East and West Bengal’s food styles. Traditionally, East Bengal favoured vegetarian dishes and fish cooked without onion and garlic, while West Bengal embraced influences from the British East India Company. This is where Chingri Malai takes centre stage.

Prior to partition, Hilsa fish reigned supreme in Bengali cuisine. However, the British, with their preference for softer textures, found prawns more appealing. This shift in tastes led to the rise of Chingri Malai, a dish fit for the British aristocracy, explained Bhargava.Chingri Malai’s journey reflects Bengal’s openness to cultural influences. The dish incorporates elements from Southeast Asia, with the introduction of prawns and coconut milk through trade routes. Furthermore, the creamy texture caters to foreign palates, making it a bridge between robust Bengali fish curries and a more delicate style, he added.

Creating the perfect Chingri Malai requires patience and meticulous attention to detail. Chef Bhargava emphasises two key methods:Slow Caramelised Onions: Gently simmering chopped onions in ghee unlocks their



sweetness, forming the base of the curry.Grated Coconut Magic: Freshly grated coconut and coconut milk add a creamy texture and depth of flavor to the dish. A touch of sugar further enhances the taste.While the creamy coconut and succulent prawns are the stars, the secret weapon lies in the prawn heads. Traditionally, Bengalis relish the “Ghilu,” the grey matter inside the head, for its intense flavour. Chef Bhargava suggests using “Baghda Chingri” (tiger prawns) for their superior head quality.For those seeking a quicker method or lacking access to fresh ingredients, Chef Bhargava offers substitutes. Prawn paste can be used to replicate the umami flavor of the prawn heads, while canned or powdered coconut milk can be used in a pinch. However, he emphasises the unmatched quality of fresh ingredients.

The key to India’s e-bus adoption strategy

As India develops standards for swappable electric bus batteries to ensure interoperability and ease of battery change, parallelly addressing range anxiety, there continues to be a focus on creating common swapping stations for all e-buses. This will improve overall efficiency while reducing infrastructure constraints.As of early July 2024, 8,583 electric buses were registered across India. That number is set to increase fairly dramatically soon as by 2030, the Indian government intends to replace 800000 diesel buses with electric buses.

In an effort to boost the adoption of electric buses, the Central Government is planning to implement uniform battery standards for e-buses.NITI Aayog’s draft Battery Swapping Policy primarily targets electric two and three-wheelers segments. However, introducing uniform battery standards for e-buses is expected to enhance interoperability and promote battery swapping within the e-bus sector.

While national schemes such as FAME, National Electric Bus Program, and PM e-Bus Sewa have supported State Transportation Undertakings (STUs) in increasing the number of electric buses in their fleets, electric bus adoption in the private sector is limited. Only a few established private operators with sufficient financial capacity are making noticeable progress.Currently, there are central government subsidies for STUs to procure electric buses through Gross Cost Contracts (GCC) that cover bus supply, operation, maintenance, charging infrastructure, and driver costs. But for the private sector, which constitutes 94% of the 2.39 million buses registered across India, if not through such subsidy, could battery swapping with certain financial incentives be a catalyst for faster adoption of electric buses?The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), supported by NITI Aayog, explored battery swapping for electric two-wheelers in India by analysing factors affecting the total cost of ownership (TCO). That work provides a strategic framework from which to also explore adopting battery swapping in the private bus market.Current contextAll electric buses in India rely on plug-in charging. To attain a full charge, these typically take 20-40 minutes using DC fast charging or 6-8 hours using lower-powered slow charging. To support the 8 lakh buses by 2030, an overall investment of ?1.5 trillion (\$18 billion) is estimated to be required, and this includes the power and upstream infrastructure across cities and on intercity routes. The estimate also includes large spaces for charging stations at every 100 km on each side of highways. The process of land acquisition in India is often lengthy and costly, and installing fast charging brings challenges related to not only space and costs but also power availability and continuous supply on isolated interstate routes in rural areas.Benefits of battery swappingSeparating batteries from buses would enable battery swapping operators (BSOs) to own the batteries instead of the bus owner. This converts the battery



into a variable cost and reduces the upfront capital cost of the bus dramatically, as batteries constitute 40%–50% of this cost. Battery swapping is about as fast as refuelling a combustion engine vehicle and typically takes 1-3 minutes. Sun Mobility’s battery swapping station in Ahmedabad required only 33% of the energy and 60% less area than depot-based charging. The strategic deployment of battery swapping stations could help reduce range anxiety, and the short turnaround time of battery swapping instead of opportunity charging may benefit bus operators by lowering overall travel time and thus making the service more desirable to passengers.

The emergence of a battery-swapping industry in India

The industry has advanced towards battery swapping for electric two- and three-wheelers because of the Ministry of Power’s Battery Swapping Stations policy. Delhi led with purchase incentives for swappable EVs, and last-mile service aggregators are improving efficiency with low-cost, swappable vehicles.In the Union Budget 2022–23, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced plans for a national battery-swapping policy with interoperability standardsNITI Aayog is working to standardise the policy across all vehicle segments, and the Heavy industry ministry is set to implement norms for electric buses.Purchase-subsidy based scheme and usage-linked incentivesThe ICCT’s battery swapping report included a strategy framework for an early policy that highlighted the potential of purchase subsidy and usage-linked incentives for electric two-wheelers.

The framework may be considered for its potential to accelerate the adoption of private electric buses. Under a purchase-subsidy-based scheme, electric buses sold without pre-fitted batteries could qualify for certain financial incentives under national or state-level programs. The incentives could be given to manufacturers, which can then choose to pass them on to registered BSOs that meet safety standards.Additionally, the usage-linked leasing scheme may allow bus operators to lease battery-swappable buses

Why you must consciously take shorter (or longer) steps while walking

It is widely believed that walking is beneficial for health — whether it is brisk, slow, backward, or normal. But have you ever wondered if stride length also plays a role?According to neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, varying stride lengths can indeed help you optimise your walks. “Take shorter or longer steps while walking. For every 1 per cent increase in step length variability, there is a 0.7 per cent increase in the metabolic cost of walking,” Dr Kumar wrote on X.Walking is an effective and easy way to manage weight and overall health. It is a low-impact exercise that can be beneficial in various ways such as in increasing blood flow to the entire body and brain, improving cardiovascular and pulmonary health, and reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. “Walking speed can be categorised into 2 variables — stride rate and stride length,” said Dr Anup Khatri, senior consultant, orthopedics, Gleneagles Hospital, Parel, Mumbai.Stride length refers to the distance covered between consecutive placements of the same foot, while stride rate is the number of steps completed per minute. “Varying stride length can indeed impact your walking efficiency and overall health,” said Dr Udit Kapoor, orthopaedic consultant, Metro Hospital.In simple words, stride length is the distance from the heel strike of one foot to the heel strike of the same foot again.Dr Khatri explained that ineffective walking stride or poor posture can result in chronic lower back pain, knee pain, and ankle pain. “Stride length is a great tool for athletes, fitness enthusiasts, or people who want to lose weight. This can help them monitor their performance and efficiency in physical activities like running or walking,” said Dr Khatri.He added that frequent variation in stride length can boost metabolism, helping you burn more calories.Walking becomes less metabolically taxing and more energy-efficient when one maintains an ideal stride length consistently. “As a result of evenly spreading stress across various muscles and joints and encouraging a well-rounded workout, proper stride variety also helps prevent overuse issues,” elucidated Dr Akhilesh Yadav, associate irector — orthopaedics and joint replacement, Max Hospital, Vaishali.How to vary stride length?



You can vary your stride length by consciously taking either shorter or longer steps while walking. “Shorter steps involve more frequent foot placements, while longer steps cover more ground per stride,” said Dr Kapoor, sharing the benefits of varying stride length:Metabolic efficiency: Research suggests that varying stride length affects the metabolic cost of walking. For instance, shorter steps may be more metabolically costly over time because of increased step frequency.Joint impact: Varying stride lengths can distribute impact differently across joints, potentially reducing strain on specific areas like the knees or hips.Muscle engagement: Different stride lengths engage muscles differently. “Longer strides may engage more of the hamstrings and glutes, while shorter strides may engage calves and shins more,” said Dr Kapoor.

Varying stride length can make walking more effective. How?Calorie burning: Longer strides can increase the intensity of walking and calorie burn, said Dr Kapoor.Endurance: Alternating between longer and shorter strides can improve endurance and stamina.Overall fitness:on factors like height, leg length, fitness level, and any existing health conditions. “It’s essential to find a stride length that feels comfortable and natural to you,” said Dr Kapoor.

To unlock idle gold, government may ask jewellers to take deposits in proposed scheme



To mobilise gold lying idle with people, the government is in talks with jewellers to introduce a monetisation scheme where subscribers will be offered interest income on the value of gold deposited. According to sources in the jewellery industry, the government has been in talks with big players wherein jewellers will assume a key role to mobilise gold. Discussions have been constructive, and a scheme could be announced soon, a top industry source told The Indian Express. The talks come at a time when the exchange rate is under pressure due to many factors: elevated fuel prices following the West Asia crisis, investor concerns about the domestic stock market, and elevated gold imports.

When contacted, Rajesh Rokde, Chairman, All India Gems and Jewellery Domestic Council, the body representing the jewellery industry said, “The government has communicated that they are serious regarding the proposal and have assured to implement it as swiftly as it can be”. He, however, refused to share details of the proposal “because the government is currently working on it.” Queries sent to the Reserve Bank of India and the Ministry of Finance regarding the proposal being discussed remained unanswered at the time of publishing.

Proposal under consideration Depositors can head to their nearest jeweller and deposit physical gold. Market players said the scheme will be implemented via demat accounts, just like stocks. The gold deposit will be reflected in the demat account. In return, the depositor will earn some interest, theoretically making it a win-win proposal for both parties. While there is no official estimate of gold held by Indian households, experts put the figure significantly upwards of 20,000 tonnes. This locked-up gold, when monetised, can make India a trade account surplus nation, according to Nilesh Shah, Kotak Mahindra AMC’s Managing Director.

“Assume if just 10% of the gold held is monetised. That would be around \$400 billion roughly when rounded off. Our gross FDI is about \$80 billion, so this gold would be equivalent to 5 years of FDI flows,” said Shah, who’s also a part-time member on the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM). This would also have a broader impact on the economy, increasing domestic consumption and forcing companies to invest more. “Investments depend

on either domestic or global savings. We have depended on global savings to an extent. Now imagine if our domestic frozen savings are added to the available liquid savings, and foreign capital continues to flow, then suddenly there is so much capital available for investment,” Shah added. The involvement of jewellers as the contact point instead of banks is the key difference between the current proposal and the previous scheme launched in 2015 that had mobilised just 38 tonnes of gold by March 2025, as per government data. “Families are more often comfortable in dealing with their family jewellers in cases regarding gold and silver. That comfort is missing when banks play that role,” explained Rokde. According to Prithviraj Kothari, President of the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), the “big shift” is moving beyond banks. “Under the earlier scheme, you had to walk into a bank or a designated testing centre — that discouraged a lot of people. If executed well, this (new scheme) could be a genuine gamechanger — it removes friction, taps into trust networks Indians already have with their family jeweller, and could meaningfully improve mobilisation.”

Another difference is that in addition to jewellery, gold coins and bars may be eligible to be deposited under the scheme being discussed, people in the know said. This is aimed at widening the net for gold deposits. The industry has also suggested an incentive framework for jewellers to make them more enthusiastic and aggressive in pushing the scheme, Rokde said. While Rokde declined to provide exact figures, reports suggest any incentive could be 0.75-1% received by jewellers from refiners. This makes it attractive for jewellers, while refiners benefit from higher volumes. The government is learnt to have been mulling over a gold monetisation scheme for some time. “Initially, we had expected the scheme to come through by August 15. However, we are confident it will come by this month or latest by the time the festival season starts (in October),” an industry expert said. Kothari of IBJA added that the exact framework for bringing jewellers on board as collection partners and other details — such as assaying standards, the liability if purity disputes arise, and how tax documentation will be handled for depositors — are being worked out. Some sections of the bullion market are also speculating the government may have flagged some issues with the proposal, which may be delaying the scheme’s announcement. For example, the inclusion of gold coins and bars in the scheme could lead to consumers buying more of these in order to then deposit them and earn interest. This would undermine the scheme, whose objective is to curb imports. “In the case of jewellery, people are reluctant to part with them due to sentimental value and maybe potential change in form factor. These worries are not there for investment (bars and coins). If you allow these, then indirectly you may be incentivising investing (in gold) for people. I can buy and then give it to the government, earning a yield,” said a bullion analyst at a domestic trading firm.

The ethanol-in-petrol row: Could E10 make comeback alongside E20?

Amid the row over E20 fuel, comprising 80% petrol and 20% ethanol, being the only standard petrol variant sold across the country, early exploratory discussions within the government and the industry are underway on whether E10 petrol, which has 10% ethanol, can also be retailed for older vehicles alongside the E20 fuel, according to sources aware of the matter. India achieved 20% ethanol blending in petrol last year, five years ahead of the original deadline. There has been opposition to the E20 fuel from various quarters, with claims ranging from notable reduction in mileage and engine component wear in older vehicles whose engines were not designed for higher ethanol blends.

On its part, the government has been trying to allay fears, saying the drop in mileage in older vehicles would be 3-5% at most, and would be outweighed by E20’s benefits as it is a superior fuel. It has also consistently rejected claims that E20 fuel could damage engine components. Questions have also been raised on why motorists aren’t being offered the choice of pure petrol, E10 and E20 fuels. Some Opposition leaders have also raised questions over this lack of choice.

The discussions, described as “preliminary” and “keeping the older vehicles in mind”, are being held on various technical as well as non-technical aspects of the country’s complex fuel retail supply chain, and no concrete conclusions have been arrived at yet, sources indicated. They said the backlash from certain quarters against E20 and the lack of choice for consumers, specifically those with older vehicles, particularly two-wheelers, that were certified for E10 petrol, led to the initiation of these discussions. In July, the government had said that offering multiple grades of base fuel across the country would create an “enormous logistical challenge”, apart from raising costs and reducing operational efficiencies in India’s complex fuel retail network. It also said that the current base fuel E20 is cleaner and superior than pure petrol and lower ethanol-petrol blends, has required massive investments, and that reverting to a lower blend level will not be prudent on various counts. Retailing E10 and E20 petrol simultaneously is a logistical challenge. It will require a complex, parallel supply chain, stretching from refineries to pumps. Due to limited underground storage at petrol pumps, managing dual high-volume fuels will need enormous infrastructure upgrades, making it unfeasible for the current network.

Petrol is the second most consumed petroleum fuel in India — about 43 million tonnes of petrol was consumed in the country in 2025-26. But a rethink now appears to be on the table. An opinion article co-authored by Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran, which appeared in The Indian Express Monday, called for lower ethanol-petrol blend, say E10, to also be available alongside E20 fuel. While the views expressed in the article were personal, this is the first instance of a high-ranking government official publicly calling for more petrol options to be made available. “Restoring a lower blend at the pumps, say, E10, alongside the option to buy E20, would calm most public concern, lower total ethanol use instead of raising it, and protect the existing fleet while the retrofit programme catches up,” Nageswaran and Akash Poojari, a consultant in Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), wrote in their article. A request for comment sent to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) on the matter did not elicit a response. According to auto industry insiders, petrol vehicles manufactured and sold after April 2023 are considered fully E20-compliant as this was mandated under the Bharat Stage 6 (BS6) phase two emission norms. This means that all vehicles currently being sold by manufacturers are fully compliant with E20, but most vehicles that were sold prior to 2023 are not. The permissible life of a petrol vehicle in the National Capital Region (NCR) is 15 years, which means that cars manufactured in 2022 can be in use



until 2037 under the current norms.

According to a senior oil industry official, making two base variants of petrol available simultaneously isn’t “simple and straightforward”, and would involve various complexities. “It will be like introducing a new petrol variant altogether, that too in large volumes. Apart from the base fuel (E20), we do have two-three premium petrol variants, but their consumption is minuscule compared to the base petrol, so it is not too complicated to offer some volumes of such fuels along with E20. But if E10 is to be retailed in large volumes, it will require building an almost parallel supply chain as the existing one has shifted entirely to E20,” the industry official said. Experts pointed out that most retail fuel outlets in India use single or dual underground tanks. Adding E10 alongside E20 would require replacing it with a dual tank system for petrol at thousands of petrol pumps, apart from equipping them with separate dispensers for the base fuel. The oil marketing companies (OMCs) would also have to manage duplicate supply chains, right from the blending stage at their facilities to the point of retail, with separate road tankers transporting two different petrol grades at scale while ensuring there is no cross-contamination. Refineries and terminals would have to run two separate automated blending processes simultaneously — one tracking a 10% ethanol mix and another tracking a 20% mix. In a detailed frequently asked questions (FAQs) note released on July 10, the MoPNG had rejected the idea of offering multiple base petrol variants at fuel stations. The ministry reiterated this view throughout the recently-concluded Monsoon Session of Parliament while responding to questions from MPs. “...if a cleaner, faster and less-polluting fuel is available, why would we deliberately choose an inferior alternative? The suggestion that every petrol pump should stock pure petrol, E10 and E20 simultaneously also ignores the realities of India’s fuel distribution network. India operates over one lakh retail outlets, supported by an extensive network of refineries, terminals, depots and pipelines. Maintaining multiple grades of base petrol across this vast supply chain would create an enormous logistical challenge, increase handling costs, complicate inventory management and reduce operational efficiency,” the MoPNG had said in its FAQ note.

Files on alleged DMK irregularities on my table, says Vijay

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Wednesday said files relating to alleged irregularities in three departments under the previous DMK government were on his table and indicated that the findings would be made public with supporting evidence at an appropriate time. The Chief Minister made the remarks during a heated exchange in the Legislative Assembly, where demands for grants for the Water Resources, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Tourism, and Art and Culture departments were taken up for discussion.

India’s makhana market likely to reach nearly Rs 12,000 crore by 2029-30



New Delhi: India’s makhana (fox nut) sector is projected to grow sharply, with the market expected to reach Rs 11,000–12,000 crore by 2029-30 as production, prices and exports expand, an official factsheet said on Wednesday. Production volumes of makhana rose only four to five per cent between FY22-25 while average prices rose from about Rs 500 per kilogram to nearly Rs 1,250 per kilogram, driven by higher demand for health-focused snacks, premium branding and limited supply response.

Total makhana production stood at 63,910 metric tonnes in 2024-25 with average productivity of 2.03 metric tonnes per hectare, the statement said, adding that the Second Advance Estimates for 2025–26 stood at 80,590 metric tonnes with average productivity of 2.34 metric tonnes per hectare. Bihar is the leading producer of makhana in the

country, with a production of 60,000 MT in 2025–26 and average productivity of 2 MT per hectare. Traditionally grown in ponds, modern techniques like field-system farming and improved varieties such as Swarna Vaidehi and Sabour Makhana-1 have helped increase productivity. “The growth has been driven by an increase in cultivated area, improved productivity, and reduced cultivation risks,” the statement added. India produces more than 0.6 lakh metric tonnes of makhana each year. About 40 percent, or nearly 0.23-0.25 lakh metric tonnes, is exported, while the remaining quantity is consumed domestically.

With growing global demand for clean-label and plant-based superfoods, India’s strong production base places makhana as a premium snack in international markets. The domestic makhana market recorded annual growth of 17-18 percent between 2021-22 and 2024-25. Strong domestic demand has also helped shield the sector from fluctuations in export markets. In line with the sector’s growing importance, the government announced the establishment of the National Makhana Board in the Union Budget 2025-26. The government has also approved a Central Sector Scheme for the Development of Makhana with a total outlay of Rs 476.03 crore for the period from 2025-26 to 2030-31. The scheme focuses on promoting research and innovation, improving the availability of quality seeds, and strengthening farmers’ skills. It also aims to upgrade harvesting and post-harvest practices, promote value addition, branding, and marketing, enhance exports, and reinforce quality control systems.

Why mouth fresheners have hidden health risks



At first glance, an advertisement for cardamom seems harmless. There is no tobacco sachet or cigarette on screen. There may be a celebration, a catchy line and a film star looking remarkably pleased with his elaichi. The product being advertised is legal. So where is the health problem? It is what may be added to, or sold alongside, the cardamom. A coated elaichi mouth freshener can contain sugar, sweeteners, flavourings and colours; some products sold as elaichi mouth fresheners also contain areca nut (supari), which is carcinogenic,” says Dr Saptarshi Bhattacharya, senior consultant, endocrinology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi.

The concern is not that one advertisement. “Health effects accumulate through repeated exposure and repeated behaviour. Advertising can make a product category more familiar, normalise its use and associate it with celebration, friendship, success or sport. When millions of people, including children and adolescents, encounter the same messages repeatedly, they normalise unhealthy eating and drinking behaviour,” he adds. Excerpts:

Pan masala vs areca nut: the health risk is not only tobacco Many mouth fresheners contain areca nut, or supari, which is itself carcinogenic. Regular areca-nut chewing is associated with oral submucous fibrosis, a progressive condition in which tissues inside the mouth become stiff and scarred. People may develop burning of the mouth, reduced movement of the tongue and increasing difficulty opening the mouth. Oral submucous fibrosis is a potentially malignant disorder and can progress to oral cancer. Areca nut has been classified as carcinogenic to humans. A “tobacco-free” or “tobacco substitute” product should, therefore, not automatically be understood by consumers as a risk-free one. Smokeless tobacco increases the risk of cancers, cardiovascular disease, stroke and respiratory illness. Alcohol vs soda drink

Environmental reminders associated with drinking can

Eight strangers, four kidneys, one lifeline: How a four-way kidney swap overcame a legal hurdle

There was a family from Nagaland. Another from Kashmir. Yet another from Punjab. And the last from Bihar. Beyond different communities and faiths, they had a loved one, who needed a kidney transplant and was running out of time. Each of the four patients also had someone willing to donate one. But there was a problem. The kidneys belonged to the wrong people. In each family, the willing donor was a near relative of the patient — the category of donor contemplated under India’s transplant law — but the two were biologically incompatible. In several of the patients, the problem was not simply blood-group compatibility. Three of the four recipients were highly sensitised and had positive cross-match results, meaning their blood contained antibodies capable of attacking the cells of a particular donor. The families had found a possible answer: don’t give the kidney to the person you love. Give it to someone else’s loved one instead. Donor A would give to Recipient B. Donor B would give to Recipient C. Donor C would give to Recipient D. And Donor D would give to Recipient A. This was a circle of strangers, each saving a family they had never met, in the hope that another stranger would do the same for theirs. But there was another obstacle. The law.

Why four pairs were so much harder to approve than two Kidney-swap transplantation is not new in India. The basic idea is relatively simple: when a willing donor cannot donate to their intended recipient because of biological incompatibility, another donor-recipient pair can enter the exchange. The two donors effectively swap recipients. The difficulty grows rapidly as more pairs are added. A transplant team has to establish not merely that each donor is compatible with somebody, but that the entire chain works. A kidney has to move in such a way that the chain closes. Immunological testing is central to that process. Tests such as the single antigen bead, or SAB, test can identify antibodies in a recipient that may react against specific human leukocyte antigens on a prospective donor’s kidney. Previous pregnancies, blood transfusions and transplants can all contribute to sensitisation. In a four-way exchange, there are many more possible combinations — and every link matters. “We have tried three-way swaps manually, but matching donors with unrelated recipients is a very

tedious and complex task,” Dr Anant Kumar, who led the operation, told The Indian Express. For the four families who had already spent years waiting, the question was no longer simply whether a compatible kidney existed. It was whether the law would allow them to use it. The proposal for a four-way kidney swap was rejected by the Authorisation Committee, a legal body established under India’s Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA). The Appellate Authority upheld that decision, taking the view that Section 9(3A) of THOTA only contemplated an exchange between only two incompatible donor-recipient pairs. A larger chain, the authorities held, would require an amendment to the law. On May 26, 2026, the Delhi High Court stepped into that gap. In Shivani Khurana & Ors. v. Union of India & Ors., Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav set aside the orders of the Authorisation Committee and the Appellate Authority. The court held that Section 9(3A) should not be read as restricting swap transplantation to two donor-recipient pairs. The references in the provision to a “first donor” and “second donor”, it held, were illustrative of the mechanism rather than a statutory ceiling on the number of pairs. There was, in other words, a gap between what the technology and medicine could make possible and what officials believed the wording of the law allowed. The case was sent back to the Authorisation Committee for consideration of the four-way transplant in accordance with that interpretation, subject to the safeguards in the Act, including the requirement that there be no commercial dealing in organs. On July 13, 2026, eight people — four donors and four recipients — got admitted at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket. By the end of the day, four kidneys moved from one family to another. The four-way swap had to be executed as one carefully choreographed chain. Eight operations were involved: four donor nephrectomies, in which kidneys were removed from the living donors, and four transplant operations. They were conducted simultaneously across five operating theatres, beginning at around 7 am and continuing until 6 pm. The matching itself had been worked out in advance using Alliance for Paired Kidney Donation software and then cross-checked through detailed immunological testing.

Manav Suthar’s arm ball makes life difficult for batsmen



Left-arm-spinner Manav Suthar's long-time coach Dheeraj Sharma had a simple piece of advice for him ahead of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle. His message was short: "Keep attacking the stumps."The Galle pitch had turn, but patience and consistency were non-negotiable for bowlers. Dheeraj wanted Suthar, playing only his second Test but with 33 First-Class matches under his belt, to force a batsman into making mistakes. "Only if he plays, will the batsman make mistakes," Dheeraj tell The Indian Express from Sri Ganganagar district in Rajasthan.

The 24-year-old returned figures of 10/132, with six of these wickets coming in Sri Lanka's second innings as India won by 165 runs. In two Tests, Suthar has two six-wicket hauls — the first coming against Afghanistan on his debut in June.For someone who is being looked at as Ravindra Jadeja's eventual replacement, Suthar's success bodes well for India. Manav Suthar cleaned up the tail in a flash! ? Three wickets in one over to put the finishing touches on a sensational bowling effort.

"They (team) had put their trust in him. If he didn't get wickets, then questions would be raised. We knew he didn't have many wickets (domestic cricket) to show. But what we did together was to ensure he was ready to play in any condition. Our target was when an opportunity comes, make the most out of it. And for that we had been busy since the off-season," Dheeraj said.For a spinner who predominantly delivered the ball with the seam facing the first slip, there were concerns if batsmen would be able to pick him from the hand easily. Over the course of this Test, Suthar showed

he had a bag of tricks. At times, he delivered with the seam facing the square and more importantly showed he can deliver an arm ball. It is a delivery he has been working a lot. A left-spinner with a straighter one makes life hard for batsmen. "Personally, I was so happy with the three wickets which came off the straighter one. Because, we have been working on it for a while," Dheeraj said.

Since Rahul Dravid's tenure as coach, Suthar has been on the radar of the selectors and the team management. But playing for Rajasthan, a team that hasn't been in the top bracket of Ranji Trophy, Suthar didn't have compelling numbers. However, he repeatedly made Duleep Trophy and India A squads. At different times, different selectors have taken note of his ability to be effective on green tops, slow decks, raging turners and flat pitches. Gautam Gambhir & Co. put their faith in him.There is Harsh Dubey, another left-arm spinner, with a possible big future. Dubey knocked on the doors with a bucketful of wickets for Vidarbha. However, selectors and the team management don't go by numbers alone. So when they picked Suthar, they had a plan of India having a settled spin combo by the time of the next Border-Gavaskar Trophy at home early next year. Against Afghanistan, Suthar showed glimpses of his talent. And at Galle, he outshined not just his teammates Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav, but also the main home spinner Prabath Jayasuriya. Suthar has everything that makes him a classical, old-school spinner, but inexperience couldn't be overlooked."With the wicket being on the slower side, we just discussed about finding that one spot from where you can keep attacking. And given his hip movement and the balance, we knew that if we kept bowling on the full length, he has more chance of succeeding because he was getting more turn than the rest and he extracts bounce with his high-arm release," Dheeraj said.KL Rahul, who got to witness it all from the first slip, had a good idea of what a batsman was up against. "It's the subtle variations. The same actions, the same angles. Without changing his arm speed, he's able to bowl slower, and with the same arm speed, he's able to bowl quicker as well. Sometimes the angles, especially in the air, when the wind was blowing from one side, he used that drift really well here in Galle, and from there the ball straightens or comes in. So that's something that he's always done. And I think he's very consistent. Just using subtle variations, he's able to do that through the day. So the batsmen will also think, if he's not moving, then I'll have to do something."

Badminton World Championships: World No. 92 stuns home favourite Lakshya Sen



After surviving a scare against Collins Valentine Filimon of Austria in the first round, Lakshya Sen was knocked out by world number 92 Garret Tan of USA.Tan, who is a former junior World number 1 and bronze medalist at the All England Junior Championships, won the 73 minute thriller 19-21, 21-19, 21-17.

Playing from the faster side in the first game, Lakshya struggled against the overhead and cross court smashes of Garret. The 18-year-old American generated a lot of power in his smashes whenever Lakshya was lifting

short.The duo was going neck-to-neck before Tan took a 12-10 lead and tried to catch Lakshya on the net. However, Lakshya also dropped it short and forced Tan to make mistakes on the net.Both of them trades blows and were tied at 18-18 when Lakshya took two points lead to have the game point. Tan saved one match point but Lakshya won the first game 21-19.

In the second game, Tan started with a 4-0 lead as Lakshya made multiple mistakes on the net. After 11-8 at the break, Tan maintained his composure and played out the lifts and drops of Lakshya with ease while attacking with his straight and cross court smashes.Tab led 20-15 but buoyed by home crowd, Lakshya made a solid comeback with four points making it 19-20. Tan brought out a smash after exchanges on the net to win 21-19. The deciding game was one of the best games of the tournament with both players bringing out some fine smashes and saves.Tan took an early lead of 8-2 in the decider and took 11-4 lead at the mid-game break.It took all over for Lakshya before the crowd pushed him and the Indian shuttler took six consecutive points to make it 10-12. Tan raced to 17-12 lead but Lakshya made comeback to save one game point.However, the arena fell silent once Tan won the final point knocking out the home favourite.

‘They are a poor side’: Stuart Broad predicts England to whitewash Pakistan



Former England international Stuart Broad labelled Pakistan a poor side and said that England should win the upcoming Test series 3-0 and anything other than that will be a huge failure. England are currently hosting Pakistan in a 3-match Test series with the first game underway at Headingley on Wednesday."They are a poor side, they are not a really good side. You would imagine and you'd think that England should win 3-0. And pretty comfortably. But that isn't guaranteed. But if England don't come out with a Test match series win, it really is a huge failure," Broad

said in the For The Love Of Cricket YouTube channel.On Wednesday, England won the toss and opted to bowl first against Pakistan in the first test under an overcast sky at Headingley. Both teams have been in underwhelming test form, with England winning just two of its last 10 matches and at the start of a post-Bazball era with captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum no longer involved.

Joe Root is back for a second stint as captain, Marcus Trescothick is interim head coach before Stephen Fleming starts full-time in the role in December, and Dan Lawrence — a batter but also a spin option — is in at No. 6 in his first test in two years.Jordan Cox will bat at No. 3 in place of the injured Jacob Bethell, while Ollie Robinson got the nod to join a pace attack also containing Jofra Archer, Josh Tongue and Gus Atkinson.Pakistan has won just one of its last nine test matches and are without captain Babar Azam, who hasn't recovered from a finger injury. Salman Agha is deputizing as skipper and batter Shan Masood is back — at No. 3 — after a broken finger.Pakistan hasn't won a test series in England since 1996. There were some clouds before the toss, and the forecast is for some rain and sunshine later Thursday.

India Junior International Series 2026 underway in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMBL) announced the launch of India Junior International Series 2026, a Badminton World Federation (BWF)-sanctioned junior tournament. This tournament is being hosted at the Kotak Pulella Gopichand Badminton Academy till August 23. The tournament forms part of Kotak Mahindra Bank's long-term commitment to nurturing sporting talent in India.

Through its partnership with the Pulella Gopichand Badminton Foundation, Kotak has supported the establishment of the Kotak Pulella Gopichand Badminton Academy, a world-class institution focused on identifying and developing young badminton talent through expert coaching, high-performance infrastructure and competitive exposure.

Through sustained investments in sports infrastructure, athlete development and competitive opportunities, Kotak aims to support promising athletes, strengthen India's badminton ecosystem and advance its broader CSR vision of fostering inclusive growth and nation-building through sport.

Himanshu Nivsarkar – Head, CSR & ESG, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said, "The Kotak Pulella Gopichand Badminton Academy has played an important role in nurturing young badminton talent over the years. We are proud to support initiatives that help aspiring athletes learn, grow and realise their potential. The India Junior International Series gives young players an opportunity to compete at an international level and gain valuable experience early in their sporting journey."

Pulella Gopichand, chief national coach of the Indian badminton team and Founder, Pulella Gopichand Badminton Foundation, said, "International competition at the junior level plays an important role in an athlete's development. It allows young players to test their skills against different playing styles, build confidence and understand the demands of competing at a higher level. This year's tournament will bring together over 225 junior players from England, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, USA, UAE and India, competing across singles and doubles categories.

KL Rahul on what makes Manav Suthar special: ‘Pace and consistency’



Manav Suthar of India celebrates the wicket of Lahiru Udara of Sri Lanka during Day 4 of the 1st Test match between Sri Lanka and India at the Galle International Stadium, Galle, Sri Lanka, on August 18, 2026.Manav Suthar of India celebrates the wicket of Lahiru Udara of Sri Lanka during Day 4 of the 1st Test match between Sri Lanka and India at the Galle International Stadium, Galle, Sri Lanka, on August 18, 2026. (CREIMAS)India completed a 165-run win in the first Test against Sri Lanka at Galle on Wednesday, with Manav Suthar one of the stars after claiming a match haul of 10/131, including figures of 6/55 in the second innings.KL Rahul, who faces the left-arm spinner in the nets, said Suthar's subtle variations and consistency make him difficult to play.

"I think whatever we play in the nets, it's the subtle variations. The same actions, the same angles. Without changing his arm speed, he's able to bowl slower, and with the same arm speed he's able to bowl quicker as well. Just very subtle variations," Rahul told reporters after India's victory."Sometimes the angles, especially in the air, when the wind was blowing from one side, he used that drift really well here in Galle, and from there the ball straightens or comes in. So that's something that he's always done. And I think he's very consistent. Just using subtle variations, he's able to do that through the day. So the batsmen will also think, if he's not moving, then I'll have to do something."

How Tanisha Crasto – Dhruv Kapila bond despite disagreeing on...Matcha



They might be overshadowed by India's singles stars and the more successful doubles in Sarwik-Chirag. But India's top ranked mixed doubles Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila are trying to find stability even when things get spiky and difficult on court. This includes Dhruv professing his love for the Japanese drink Matcha, while Tanisha crinkles her nose at the beverage. "It tastes like grass!" she declares. They completed a 30-minute 21-11, 21-11 saunter over Macau's Chong-Chi anyway, to get their World Championships campaign underway.

For the fiery pairing that struck consistency around 2024 but had gone off the boil after the last World's, where they made quarters on an impressive debut, off-court prac-

"So I think when you get a batter in that sort of mindset, you're winning the contest. Hopefully he'll just keep getting better and better. But I think his greatest thing is his pace that he bowls at and his consistency to always challenge all modes of dismissal. Because the line he bowls can be LBW as well. If there's a little turn, it can be caught behind as well. So that's a special skill to have. He possesses that, and hopefully he keeps getting better and does well for India," he added.On Day 4, Rahul was given out lbw to Prabath Jayasuriya, but Devdutt Padikkal, at the other end, convinced him to review the decision. Hawk-Eye showed the ball missing the stumps, giving Rahul a reprieve.Speaking about the moment, Rahul first reflected on Padikkal's century, which he described as one of the defining moments of the Test.

"Yeah, firstly, on his innings, I think that innings was, I think for me, the defining part of this Test match. The way he batted, the tempo that he batted with and to go on and get a big 100 in the first innings really set up the game for us. The conditions were really hot and it was challenging physically as well, so for him to get through that and firstly to get his first 100, it's a special moment, but to go on from there and get a big first innings total really set up this Test match, so that was really pleasing and someone who I've played a lot of cricket with and seen him grow up and come from Bangalore and play for Karnataka was really happy to be there and to witness his first 100 and hopefully carries this confidence into the next game and into his Test career as well."He then recalled how Padikkal persuaded him to take the review."The conversation there was, obviously you would have seen the video, I was walking back and I felt like it was out, the only doubt that I had was did I get outside the line and he said no, I don't think it's outside the line, but I think it might be high and then he said might as well, we have three reviews, so just take it, I think it might be a little high, so I reluctantly took it and then when it happened to be missing then obviously, I didn't get too many runs after that, but when you get chances like that as a batter, it's a gift, it's a second chance and I'm a little disappointed that I couldn't convert it, but it was a sweet moment."

tices have forged a stronger bond. Coach Tan Kim Her insists on pairings working on ironing out creases of habit, away from the field of play. "We have been analysing matches together which gives us more clarity," Tanisha says.

The pairing each came from men's and women's doubles respectively. And Tanisha had more of the adjustment to do, even as Dhruv would shoulder the backcourt attack. The mixed doubles explosive movement to the front court needed a bolt start, given it was a massive departure from women's doubles. "The aggressive moving in to the frontcourt was something Coach Tan worked on that was different from my court play with Ashwini Ponappa in women's doubles," Tanisha says of ensuring that she is constantly on the move while Dhruv covers the backcourt."He's made our game more physical," Dhruv adds. The duo stuck to flatter lengths on crosses on Wednesday, but will be suddenly thrown into a speed storm on Thursday when they play Chinese Guo Xin Wa and Chen Fang Hui, seeded sixth, who wrapped up their match I under 25 minutes.The uphill climb will need the consistency in temperament that comes from stabilizing their mindsets. "Basically, to not be too happy when we win. And too down on losses. Just keep the graph steady," Dhruv says. Tanisha in all her exuberance maintains there's more good days than bad now, though they brutally disagree on what they think of Matcha on any given day.

‘I’ll take you to IPL’: How Yashasvi Jaiswal baited Dickwella into dismissal



Dickwella, walking in with his team needing every bit of resistance it could muster on the fifth morning of the Galle Test, was not particularly interested in taking Jaiswal's bait.(CREIMAS)Dickwella, walking in with his team needing every bit of resistance it could muster on the fifth morning of the Galle Test, was not particularly interested in taking the bait. It was an exchange that began as a bit of on-field banter but ended up carrying an almost immediate sting for Sri Lanka. In the same over when the exchange happened, Dickwella fell while trying to go after Prasidh Krishna, attempting to take on a barrage of short deliveries and edging one back to the wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.Ten runs. Gone.India had found another crack in Sri Lanka's resistance, and Jaiswal's little bit of provocation suddenly looked like it had played its part in a crucial wicket. The moment came late in the morning session on the fifth day, when Sri Lanka were desperately trying to stretch the first Test in Galle into an unlikely fight. India had begun the final day as overwhelming favourites. But the Sri Lankan batters had made them work Dhananjaya de Silva and Sonal Dinusha had scored half-centuries, frustrating India's spinners and taking the game deeper into the final day than the visitors would have wanted. For much of the morning, India struggled to find the breakthrough that would open up the lower order.Dhananjaya was caught at short fine leg, ending a stubborn resistance and bringing Dickwella to the middle. Sri Lanka needed him to absorb the pressure, frustrate the bowlers and find a way to keep the innings moving. Instead, Jaiswal immediately went to work. From around the close-in field, the India opener kept talking to Dickwella, urging him to attack towards the leg side. There was a playful edge to the exchange, but also enough needle

to draw a response from the Sri Lankan. Krishna, operating with the older ball, began peppering Dickwella with short deliveries in the following over. The Sri Lankan tried to take the attack to him, but the attempt ended with an edge back to the wicketkeeper.The wicket was significant because Sri Lanka's lower order was now exposed. What had looked like a potentially prolonged resistance suddenly began to look a matter of time for India. With Dickwella dismissed, the tail was within sight. India had entered the fifth morning needing six wickets to take a 1-0 lead in the two-Test series. The hosts had done much to delay the inevitable. But as Dickwella walked back after edging Krishna, Jaiswal's promise to "take" him to the IPL was left hanging in the air – an amusing piece of banter that had been followed almost immediately by a wicket.

India close in on victory after reducing Sri Lanka to 175/6 in Galle Test

Galle: Ravindra Jadeja and Prasidh Krishna took a scalp each as India inched closer to achieving a resounding victory in the first Test after reducing Sri Lanka to 175/6 in 67 overs at lunch on day five's play at the Galle International Stadium In the morning, Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva and Sonal Dinusha, the centurion in the first innings, exhibited huge patience and resisted the Indian bowlers well by putting on a stand of 95 runs off 202 deliveries for the fifth wicket. But once de Silva and Niroshan Dickwella fell, the outcome is now slowly moving in India's favour in what is also their 600th Test match, as they conceded just 91 runs in 33 overs.Resuming on a pitch offering variable bounce, de Silva and Dinusha fought valiantly through the opening 90 minutes. After bringing up the fifty of their partnership, de Silva got his fifty by cutting Ravindra Jadeja through point for four, while Dinusha launched Kuldeep Yadav over deep midwicket for a maximum to reach his half-century in style.However, India broke the frustrating 95-run stand through Jadeja, who extracted sharp turn and bounce on a fuller ball angled at stumps to catch de Silva's top edge on an attempted sweep and gave a comfortable catch to Manav Suthar at short fine leg to fall for 59.One brought two scalps for India as Krishna, operating with sustained heat, removed wicketkeeper-batter Dickwella for 10. Dickwella never looked comfortable at the crease and even had a quirky exchange with Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was stationed at square leg.

‘With Awarapan 2, I wanted to reclaim the box office failure of the first film’: Vishesh Bhatt



Nineteen years after Mohit Suri’s 2007 action romance Awarapan failed to make a dent at the box office, producer Vishesh Bhatt was confident that would change with the sequel, Awarapan 2. While Emraan Hashmi reprises his iconic role of Shivam Pandit, Bilal Siddiqi takes over from Shaguftha Rafique as the screenwriter, and Nitin Kakkar from Mohit Suri as the director. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, Vishesh discusses why he decided to make a sequel despite the first film’s failure, why Suri didn’t return to helm the film, and his terms with uncle and mentor Mahesh Bhatt despite the latter’s fallout with the former’s father, Mukesh Bhatt.

What made you continue the journey of Shivam Pandit although he was presumed dead at the end of the first film?

I felt there was a spiritual and emotional element to it. There was a voice within me, which asked me to tap more into that spiritual element. It’s great that today, because of the internet, people interpret so fast. They were able to see if Shivam is talking to God through “Tera Mera Rishta Purana” in the first part, now God is talking back to him in the sequel. That relationship is very important to someone as broken as Shivam. Emraan and I have experienced the heartache of the journey of Awarapan. We’d discussed that we’d take on this, and prove to ourselves that Awarapan was a good story and a good film to make. I wanted to reclaim the market and business side of Awarapan.

Did it take time for Emraan to slip into the shoes of Shivam?

Emraan told me Shivam’s character is in his silences, which is very true. Yes, he has deeply moving moments, but he doesn’t just come and tote his gun. Obviously in 2026, you see that it’s more externalized. We had a learning from part 1 that it’s different to watch a film on television for 19 years, and you understand what the silences mean. But in cinema hall, the silences come and go. There’s no rewind or pause. We knew that, but the whole character is still layered with those silences.

Awarapan 2 Emraan Hashmi as Shivam Pandit in Awarapan 2.

Bilal Siddiqi was in school when he watched Awarapan. Did his fandom help in correcting the first film with the sequel?

There were a lot of people on this film, including Bilal, who watched Awarapan as kids. They never got to go to the cinemas then, but watched it on TV. They became a part of the film’s crew. For me, it felt like yesterday, which was a good thing. But those crew members heaved a sigh after the first shot of the first day on set when they felt, “Shivam is back!” I said, “Okay, we’re in the correct zone.” The fact that I felt it as well as someone new felt it meant Emraan did it beautifully.

Why did you never offer Mohit Suri to direct Awarapan 2?

It’s about timing. Mohit is my brother. My creative expression has always been with Mohit. Because we’ve grown up together, we have a great sync. But when we were going to start making the film, he was already into Saiyaara. There were also some conversations about Aashiqui 3. He’s a passionate filmmaker, but I felt his universe was in the Aashiqui and Saiyaara space. He gave Saiyaara all his heart, and you could see the results.

Was it important to get a fresh perspective because the first film failed at the box office?

We speak about Awarapan all the time, but Mohit never proposed we should make the sequel. It’s not like he proposed, and I said no. His calling was somewhere else. His heart was in Awarapan, but his heart was also broken. It was good that there were some of us, and there were some new energies, and the family grew bigger. We wanted to do something new because the old is already done. It’s differ-

ent from a Dhurandhar, where part 1 and 2 happened six months apart, so you work with the same team for cost effectiveness.

Shabana Azmi told me she did the special appearance in Awarapan 2 only because she knows you since you were born. How did you make the character of Nafisa worthy of her caliber?

If anything else, she’s more powerful in person than on screen. That’s her personality and depth. Whenever I’d discuss something, she’d listen respectfully, but she’d say, ‘I can still see only the little Vishesh in you.’ I told her, ‘I’m 40 years old!’ After working for so many years, I never had the privilege of working with her. The character has the layers and gravitas that required a legendary space, and would represent what a Shabana Azmi could play. Nitin and Bilal narrated the story to her. I was there, but I wanted to keep the personal out of it. She also asked them to narrate the full story, and not only her character. She’d ask questions about not just her character, but also the whole story. After you came onboard Vishesh Films, Mahesh Bhatt said you challenged him and Mukesh Bhatt’s filmmaking formulas. How did you do that?

They also built a platform that challenged the status quo. That’s been the DNA of this company. My father and uncle were never with the time. They always stood on their own by going against the tide. So, I have that in my DNA, and in the culture of this company. So, when I’d hear them repeating themselves, I would ask them, ‘Why are we doing this? What’s the reason? Is it money? Even if it is, let’s be true to it. Let’s not kid ourselves that it’s for a higher cause.’ We were also going from film to digital. From my experience of going to the top film school in New York University, I learnt that you can be yourself while not being in a bubble. These are two different things. You can challenge everything, but also challenge the bubble you live in.

What kind of inputs did you bring to the table? When I became more active from the time of Gangster (2006), I’d go to the radio and make them listen to the songs. Zeher (2005) was a small film, so we didn’t have budgets. I’d sit the whole day at the MTV office to make them listen to “Woh Lamhe Woh Baatein”. Because I knew they had an editorial space besides the paid space. We believed our songs were our stars, but how do we make them listen to the audience in the internet’s absence? Mohit and I’d remix even the soulful songs, to which Bhatt sahab and my father asked why we’re adding beats to such good lyrics and melody. But we did it so that one can celebrate the emotions at a party. From 2000, I was always trying to keep our identity, yet be relevant with the times. It doesn’t come easy to keep that balance.

Mahesh Bhatt is no longer a part of Vishesh Films after his fallout with your father. Since he was also your mentor, did you take his blessings before Awarapan 2?

He gives me his blessings all the time. A lot of times, people would tell me, “We don’t envy you.” Because I was the buffer between them and the outside world, but also between both the brothers. I’d get hammered from all sides. My relationship with him was that of a mentor. When you share that, it goes beyond family. They’re my sounding boards. In fact, they’d ask me, ‘You’re doing it right. Why are you asking us?’ But when you don’t seek external validation, the voice of the mentor has a different kind of importance. When the teaser came out, he pointed out exactly what I was trying to do with the film. I want to, but I’m such a hands-on producer. People ask me why I’m so invested in films I’m only producing, not directing. Maybe that’s never been me. I don’t seek the limelight. I actually like the journey of making the film. There’s been a warped understanding that only the director makes the film, and the producer cracks deals. But my father said a very good thing, ‘Both the jobs of the producer and the director are a 24-hour job each. Nobody can do 48 hours in one day, right?’ The two halves work together to make the film land.

Now that Awarapan 2 is out, is there a message to the fans of the first film who’ve been pining for a sequel for the past 19 years?

If this film succeeds, all us fans of Awarapan would succeed. Awarapan 2 wasn’t a cash grab. The market was asking why we’re making the sequel of an unsuccessful film. But we put our own money on a film that we’ve already lost money on. If you like films like Awarapan, go, support it, and give it everything. Tell me, and the market, that we should keep making Awarapan. Otherwise I’d be forced to make what the market will ask me to make because Awarapan fans didn’t come out to support me, but were crying somewhere and typing some nonsense on the keyboard. The love for Awarapan was a little too late. This is the second chance to love and support Awarapan.



everyone claimed. The turnaround was dramatic. Maoyan’s figures put the film’s total box office at 17.1 million yuan (\$2.5 million), after it took in 8.2 million yuan in a single day and recorded nearly 300,000 admissions that day. Cinemas began adding screenings as demand grew. Some did not even have official promotional artwork, so staff created their own. The Associated Press reported that cinema posters included a hand-drawn calf alongside the slogans, “Come on over if you’re into the bizarre” and “No refunds.” The story becomes even more unusual when you look at how Niu Lai was made. Red Star News, a local news website, reported that the film was produced over five years by director Xin Yumeng and his mother, Sun Lifang, with Xin handling the animation and his mother working on the screenplay and voices. Xin had previously worked in interior design and had no formal filmmaking training, according to The Independent. He used his experience in spatial design to approach animation, explaining: “It’s all about building things up, only we used to use bricks, now we use polygons”.

Sunny Deol’s force to Emraan Hashmi’s silence: Batwara 1947, Awarapan 2’s divine connect



There can hardly be two films more different from each other than Batwara 1947 and Awarapan 2. If one excavates the past to make sense of the present, the other excavates our feelings about the past to make the present more profitable. One arrives carrying the weight of history; the other, the weight of memory. One is fronted by a yesteryear single-screen hero who became an emblem of a certain kind of Hindi-movie masculinity that was all force and fury; the other by a hero whose multiplex-born masculinity was defined by sensuality, cherished by a generation but never quite elevated into stardom. And yet, when you watch them closely, and back to back, the distance between the two begins to diminish. Beyond their wildly different surfaces, they are speaking, in strangely similar ways, about strangely similar things. Their kinship, then, goes well beyond the curious coincidence of Shabana Azmi appearing in both films.

A sense of time haunts both. With Awarapan 2, the nostalgia was almost inevitable. Its relationship with its 2007 predecessor was always going to be part of its appeal. Awarapan 2 understands that what it is selling is not simply a continuation of a story, but the return of a particular time. The mid-2000s, when a certain kind of Hindi-film melancholy had a home on television, when Emraan Hashmi’s brooding lovers could exist somewhere between the multiplex and the small screen, and when a song could preserve a film long after it had faded. The sequel turns that distance into its own emotional currency, taking a character who has been frozen in the memory of his audience and placing him, at last, in the present tense again.

Batwara 1947, meanwhile, is not simply a film about the past; it is a film that seems to have carried some of the past into its own making. Its historical subject is Partition, but its sense of time is also lodged in its form, in the way it is pitched, staged, shot and edited. Directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, it often resembles a film made in another time and age: theatrical, declamatory, emotionally unrestrained. And yet, the irony is that this datedness does not always diminish its potency. In portions, Batwara 1947 soars with a sincerity that Awarapan 2, for all its carefully cultivated nostalgia, can only manufacture. What makes the two films interesting together, then, is not simply what they remember, but the ways in which they make time visible. One film reaches into the past to retrieve a feeling; the other seems to have arrived from the past carrying one with it.

Faith is another thread that binds these films together, though Batwara 1947 wears it much more openly. Consider the scene in which Sikandar’s (Sunny Deol) factory is denied the land he had already purchased because its owner, at the last moment, refuses to give it to him for sheltering Mai (Shabana Azmi), a Hindu woman in a newly created Pakistan. The loss unsettles him; his wife and daughter are

equally distraught. But when they tell Mai, she responds with the unhurried assurance of an elder at home: “God will show us the way.” The film soon makes good on her faith. Sikandar is granted a piece of land larger than the one he had lost, turning what could have been a simple plot resolution into something closer to an act of providence. It is a pattern the film returns to repeatedly. “May God protect you.” “By the grace of God.” “All thanks to the Almighty.” “He is the most merciful.” These are not simply lines of dialogue but a vocabulary through which its characters understand what happens to them.

At one crucial moment, when Hamida (Preity Zinta) finds herself in grave danger and cries out, “Oh God,” Sikandar arrives almost as an answer to the prayer. The film’s faith, however, is not simply the belief that the higher power will intervene. It is also a way of holding on to something when the world seems to have forfeited its moral compass. When Sikandar and Hamida despair at the cynicism unleashed by Partition and the hatred gathering around them, they wonder whether people have lost their faith in God. Later, when a law officer threatens to invoke the authority of the law, Sikandar draws a distinction of his own: he may do what the law permits, but he will do what his imaan commands. Hamida, too, refuses to imagine survival at the cost of surrendering her faith. And in the moment when Mai breaks into a devotional song, the film’s faith perhaps finds its most elemental form, belief turning into song, and song into prayer.

And needless to say, Awarapan has always been a film about faith. About love as worship, about the surrender that only love can demand, about the ways by which a love story makes you believe in something larger than yourself. Beyond all its gangster paraphernalia and wounded masculinity, it was always, in its strangest sense, a love story between an atheist and God. The film simply kept disguising this romance as something else. In the sequel, directed by Nitin Kakkar and written by Bilal Siddiqi and Vishesh Bhatt, that romance hides into the background, only to surface at the moments when the film most needs to believe in itself. And when it does, it becomes its greatest trump card, and perhaps its most cinematic saving grace. Without giving too much away, one of the year’s most beautiful moments on a big screen arrives when the most beloved song from the prequel finally fills the frame in all its glory, only to reiterate, how Shivam’s (Emraan Hashmi) story has always been incomplete without the divine.

He is, after all, a man whose journey has always been governed by the twin ideas of karma and penance. Of sins that demand reckoning and wounds that demand atonement. So it is fitting that the film opens with the thought that you may be different, you may be distant, but God resides within you. The idea keeps returning in other forms. The taweez once again becomes the film’s emotional axis, his dead beloved yet again tells him that he is the chosen one, that he is meant to be an angel in a world of demons. Much of Awarapan 2, then, becomes a story about the divine returning to Shivam in ways he cannot quite recognise, appearing at the edge of death, pulling him back from it, and preserving his faith in the possibility of his own humanity. So, unlike Sikandar, who believes in the divine and trusts that God will restore what has been wronged, Shivam is a man who must first be made to believe that only the divine can restore him. Yet both are, in their own ways, khuda ke bande, doing God’s work in their own time, in their own language, and according to the demands of their own faith. If Awarapan 2 believes that to free an oppressed soul is to free a little of mankind itself, Batwara 1947 endorses that to protect one oppressed soul is to restore something of mankind that has been lost. One screams; the other broods. One frees; the other shelters. One redeems through release; the other through refuge. But both have their own rishta purana with the divine.

‘Don’t daydream about my bedroom’: Kangana Ranaut slams Baba Ramdev amid ‘Gen Gutter’ row

A day after yoga guru and businessman Baba Ramdev slammed Kangana Ranaut for her controversial “Generation Gutter” comment, the actor-politician has retorted, advising him not to give her character lessons. Claiming that she has a better personality than him, Kangana also pointed out that no “fraud” has been detected under her name, taking a jibe at the many controversies surrounding Ramdev and his Patanjali brand.

What triggered Kangana Ranaut-Baba Ramdev clash?

For those unversed, in response to the widespread support for the Cockroach Janta Party-led student protests in New Delhi, Kangana Ranaut had taken to social media to make purportedly objectionable comments about Indian Gen Z. In one of her posts, she criticised “young Hindu women who want to imitate the lives of independent career women without earning that freedom.” Claiming that they have “nothing to offer to the system,” she called them “ugly and corrupt,” and accused them of “doing drugs, drinking, and having endless body count.” She further labelled them “Generation Gutter,” sparking widespread controversy.

During his recent appearance at the TV9 Satta Sammelan, Ramdev was asked about Kangana Ranaut’s comments, and the yoga guru tore into her, questioning what qualifications she had to ridicule the country’s youth. “What is her qualification? Unka bachpan kaisa raha hai? Unki jawaani kaisi rahi hai? Unke pehle ke kaarname kaise rahe hain? (How was her childhood? How was her youth? What were her past accomplishments like?)” He added, “I don’t want to talk about such people. Calling any of our youngsters or Gen Z ‘gutter’ is a sign of a corrupted mind. It’s wrong. Her party members should take note of this.” “No fraud detected here”: Kangana Ranaut hits back at Baba Ramdev

On Wednesday, August 19, Kangana Ranaut took to her Instagram stories to respond to Baba Ramdev. “Baba ji, don’t daydream about my jawani or bedroom. One can only assume based on rumours and gossip. At least mujhe kabhi Supreme Court se fatkar nahi lagi (I never got scolded by the Supreme Court) for false/fraud efficacy claims based on hard facts, not some gossip or assumptions. So don’t give me character lessons. Tumse toh bahut zyada behtar hai mera character (My character is far better than yours), no fraud detected here,” the actor-politician noted. Kangana Ranaut was most recently seen in director Manoj Tapadia’s



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Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata, which became a box-office bomb, grossing just Rs 8.32 crore worldwide, according to industry tracker Sacnilk. She also serves as a BJP MP representing the Mandi constituency in Himachal Pradesh. A proponent of yoga and Ayurveda, Baba Ramdev is the co-founder of Patanjali Ayurved and Patanjali Yogpeeth.