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KTR, Harish Rao pay tributes to Konda Laxman Bapuji on death anniversary

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao and BRSLP deputy leader T Harish Rao paid tributes to Telangana activist Konda Laxman Bapuji on his death anniversary on Monday. They said he was an inspiration to all.Rama Rao recalled Bapuji's role in the freedom struggle and later, the Telangana statehood movement. He reminded that both the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (now Bharat Rashtra Samithi) was founded and the final phase of the statehood movement took shape at Bapuji's house at Jaladrushyam under K Chandrashekhar Rao's leadership.

Ganesh idol immersion continues as Hyderabad sees heavy crowds and traffic

Hyderabad: Over the weekend, the ongoing Ganesh Chaturthi festivities at Hussain Sagar transformed into a sprawling canvas of colour and devotion as hundreds of idols arrived for immersion.

From small household idols carried carefully on two-wheelers to magnificent pandal deities arriving on heavily decorated trucks, the range of arrivals highlighted a city coming together in celebration.

Ram Temple SIT finds 105 theft instances; chargesheet by Sept 25

New Delhi, Sept 21

The special investigation team (SIT) probing the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ayodhya Ram Temple on Monday informed the Supreme Court that it would file its first chargesheet by September 25. The SIT has reportedly uncovered 105 instances of alleged theft of donations in its probe.

"Within two days, we will be filing (a chargesheet)," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, noting that the statutory 90-day period from the first arrest in the case would lapse soon.

"Ninety days from the date of the first arrest are going to be over on September 25, so we will have to file the chargesheet, otherwise, they (the accused) will get default bail," Mehta told the Bench, which also included Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana.

Under Section 187 of the new Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita that replaced Section 167 (2) of the CrPC, an accused becomes entitled to statutory bail if the probe agency fails to file the chargesheet within the stipulated period of either 60 or 90 days as the case may be.

The Bench also perused a detailed status report submitted by the SIT in a sealed cover.

The SIT has reportedly found 105 instances of alleged theft after analysing CCTV footage, witness statements and donation records. It analysed hundreds of hours of surveillance video footage, transaction logs and bank deposit records to reconstruct the donation theft.

Set up on July 26 on the orders of the top court, the second SIT comprises Lucknow Zone IGP Kiran S, Ayodhya Range DIG Somen Barma, Ayodhya SSP

Gaurav Grover and Barabanki Additional SP Ritesh Kumar Singh.

Earlier, the first SIT set up by the Uttar Pradesh Government on June 13 had recorded over 70 instances of donation theft in its interim report.

The top court had earlier asked the SIT to complete its investigation expeditiously, take it to a logical conclusion and asked it to submit a status report on the progress of the probe in a sealed cover. It had also asked the Uttar Pradesh Government to include a forensic auditor in the probe team.

Emphasising the need for "remedial actions", the Bench had said steps would be taken to "ensure transparency".

The top court is seized of petitions, including those filed by RJD MP Sudhakar Singh, advocate NK Goswami, Ajay Kumar Rai and Hindu Dharma Parishad, seeking a CBI probe and a forensic audit of the finances of the temple trust following allegations of irregularities in the management of donations of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya.

Revanth to take political fight to Sircilla, Siddipet

HYDERABAD, Sept 21

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is set to take the political battle to the strongholds of the opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), beginning with a public meeting in Sircilla, the home constituency of BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao, on September 30. The Chief Minister is also likely to visit Siddipet next month to address a public meeting in the constituency represented by senior BRS leader T. Harish Rao, party sources said.

The back-to-back public meetings are being seen as an early mobilization exercise by the ruling Congress ahead of the Assembly elections scheduled for November-December 2028. While addressing a public meeting in Nalgonda on September 5, Revanth Reddy vowed to defeat Rama Rao in Sircilla and Harish Rao in Siddipet.

Party sources said the Chief Minister had chalked out an action plan to challenge the BRS leadership in its traditional strongholds, nearly two years ahead of the polls. The proposed meetings in Sircilla and Siddipet are expected to set the tone for a direct political contest between the Congress government and the BRS in the opposition party's strongholds.

Rama Rao and Harish Rao have maintained an uninterrupted record of electoral victories in their constituencies since entering electoral politics. Rama Rao has won the Sircilla Assembly seat five times — the 2008 bypoll and elections in 2009, 2014, 2018 and 2023. Harish Rao has represented Siddipet for seven consecutive terms since 2004, including in bypolls in 2004, 2008 and 2010 and general elections in 2009, 2014, 2018 and 2023.

The Congress is planning the Sircilla meeting as a

major show of strength and is mobilising party workers and supporters from across the constituency and neighbouring areas. Local Congress leaders have begun preparations for the meeting, including arrangements for the expected large turnout and security.

The proposed meetings also come amid an intensifying political exchange between Congress and BRS over the performance of the three-year old Revanth Reddy government. The BRS has been campaigning against the Congress on the completion of 1,000 days in office, alleging that several of the six guarantees and election promises remained unfulfilled and accusing the government of irregularities in land and other matters.

Sources said Revanth Reddy wanted to utilise the Sircilla meeting to counter the BRS campaign and highlight the Congress government's welfare and development programmes during its first 1,000 days.

Protest over restrictions on immersion of idols at Tank Bund in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, Sep 21 Bhagyanagar Ganesh Utsav Samithi representatives on Monday staged a protest against restrictions on the immersion of Ganesh idols at Tank Bund in Hyderabad.

In an act of defiance, they removed barricades erected by authorities to prevent immersion of idols into Hussain Sagar Lake from Tank Bund.

Wearing saffron caps and scarves and raising slogans, the protestors sat on the road, disrupting the movement of vehicles on the busy road which connects the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

The protest triggered tension in the area in the heart of the Telangana capital. The protestors removed the barricades in the presence of scores of police personnel. They also threw a few railings into the lake.

Police later detained the protestors and shifted them to police stations.

Like the last few years, the Ganesh Utsav Samithi is protesting against the decision to prohibit Ganesh idol immersion at Tank Bund on the ground that it remains a traditional immersion point.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and police have put up flex boards on Tank Bund saying immersion from the stretch is not permitted.

Devotees have been advised to use only designated points for idol immersion. The authorities have installed cranes at People's Plaza, Necklace Road and NTR Marg to immerse the idols.

Authorities have also announced that only clay and other eco-friendly idols will be permitted to be immersed from the designated points.

Citing the High Court orders, they said Plaster of Paris (PoP) idols should be immersed in artificial 'baby ponds' created at various places in the twin cities.

In 2021, the Telangana High Court prohibited direct immersion of PoP idols in Hussain Sagar and other lakes in and around the city on environmental grounds. It directed authorities to provide artificial ponds as an alternative.

The court also restricted immersion from Tank Bund, a 2.2 km long road that connects the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The stretch is a popular spot for tourists on the banks of the picturesque lake.

However, following the protest by Ganesh Utsav Samithi, authorities permitted immersion at Tank Bund on the final day of festivities by arranging cranes.

The festivities, which began on September 14, will conclude with a massive immersion procession on September 25. Idols from various parts of the twin cities and outskirts are brought to the lake for immersion.

Meanwhile, BJP has extended its support to the Ganesh Utsav Committee, demanding lifting of restrictions on immersion of idols at Tank Bund.

Telangana BJP president N. Ramchander Rao stated that for decades, the immersion of Ganesh idols has been taking place at Tank Bund. This time, the Congress government has prohibited the immersion of idols there, he said and demanded that permission be granted for the immersion of idols. Even from an environmental protection perspective, after the immersion, the idols and their remnants are removed as part of routine cleaning measures. Necessary arrangements should be made to ensure that the immersion takes place peacefully and smoothly, he said.

Hyderabad cop hangs self while on video call with a woman

Hyderabad, Sep 21 A police constable allegedly died by suicide while on a video call with a woman in Hyderabad late on Sunday night, police said.

Muthe Chandrasekhar (35) hanged himself at his residence in Shalivahana Nagar in Moosaram Bagh area during a video call with a woman.

He told the woman that he was going to die by suicide. The woman immediately alerted Chaitanyapuri police, which in turn alerted Malakpet police. Police rushed to the spot but by then the constable hanged himself from the ceiling fan.

Chandrasekhar was working as a writer in Malakpet Police Station. Police have shifted his body to Osmania General Hospital for postmortem examination.

Police are probing the police constable's relationship with the woman and ascertaining the reasons for his extreme step.

This is the latest in series of incidents in which police personnel died by suicide in Telangana.

On the occasion of World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10, Director General of Police C.V. Anand made a special appeal to the 93,000 police personnel.

The DGP asked them not to resort to suicide as a way out of financial or personal problems. He cautioned them against alcohol, drugs and marijuana and urged them to stay away from other social vices.

The police chief appealed to the police personnel to consider the impact of such a decision on their spouses, children, and parents who depended on them. He urged them to face difficulties with courage, share their problems with their families and colleagues and seek timely help instead of taking the extreme step.

Telangana HC serves notices to two BRS MLCs in Speaker abuse case

Hyderabad, Sep 21 The Telangana High Court on Monday issued notices to BRS MLCs Tata Madhu and N. Naveen Kumar Reddy on a petition by the police seeking cancellation of bail granted to them in a case registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act over alleged abusive remarks against Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar.

Issuing notices, the High Court adjourned the hearing on the petition to Wednesday.

The two legislators belonging to the main opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) were arrested on September 8 following an FIR registered against them for their alleged remarks against the Speaker. Police had sought their custody, but the Nampally court rejected the plea and granted them bail on personal sureties.

The MLCs had made the alleged remarks on September 7 when police had stopped BRS MLAs and MLCs at the Assembly entrance for wearing black T-shirts with objectionable slogans against Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

While granting bail to the BRS MLCs, the Nampally court had directed the police not to arrest them again.

Saifabad police had moved the High Court seeking cancellation of bail and challenging the lower court's order.

Public Prosecutor Nageswara Rao submitted to the court that the MLCs used abusive words against a person holding a Constitutional post. The court was also told that they attacked police personnel on duty.

The September 7 incident at the Assembly gate resulted in police registering multiple FIRs against BRS leaders and the suspension of BRS legislators from the Assembly for the entire monsoon session.

MLCs Madhu and Naveen Reddy were booked on a complaint filed by Pollepalli Venkatesham, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the Assembly Speaker.

Saifabad police registered a case under Section 352 r/w 3(5) BNS and Sections 3(1)(r), 3(2)(va), 3(2)(vii) of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Two cases were registered against BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao, BRS Deputy Leader in Telangana Assembly T. Harish Rao and several other party legislators for allegedly obstructing women police personnel from discharging their duties, using abusive language and threatening them.

On the other hand, the BRS alleged that its women MLAs were manhandled by police personnel, but no case was registered on their complaint.

The opposition party lodged complaints with the National Women Commission and the National Human Rights Commission. It also submitted a representation to Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla, seeking his intervention for a fair probe.

Autorickshaw driver beaten to death over Rs 10 change in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, Sep 21 (I An auto-rickshaw driver was to death allegedly by a group of people following an argument over Rs. 10 change in the old city of Hyderabad, police said.

The incident occurred on Sunday evening in Vattepally under limits of Falaknuma Police Station.

The victim was identified as Mohammed Mukarram (42). His brother Mohammed Afroz said he was brutally assaulted and murdered in front of his family members.

According to Afroz, when a passenger who gave Rs.200 note to Mukarram towards the auto fare of Rs.10, Mukarram asked him to pay the change. This led to an argument and the passenger called some others who thrashed Mukarram, resulting in grievous injuries. He succumbed before he could be shifted to a hospital.

Afroz alleged that Azeem, reporter of a local news channel, Shoaib and 6-8 others were involved in the killing.

"My brother was epileptic and weak-hearted. Despite my requests to spare him, they kept raining blows on him and he collapsed," said Afroz as he broke down narrating the incident before media.

Mukarram is survived by wife and four children. Afroz demanded the government to do justice to the family by ensuring harshest punishment to the killers.

Police said they have registered a case and took up investigation.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) MLA Mohammed Mubeen visited the area and consoled the family of the victim.

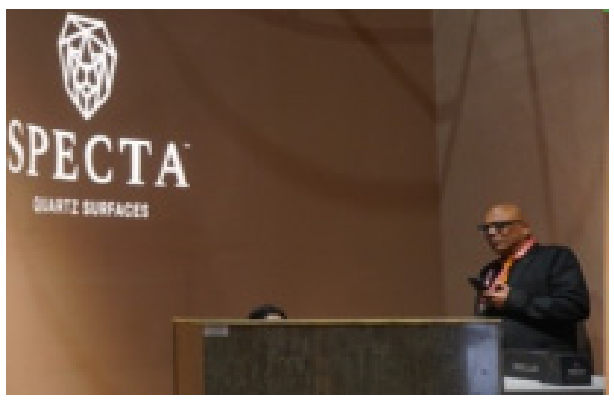
Indian Chronicle
English Daily

Campus suicides: Will we ever wake up?

How many more young students should end their lives on campuses before the nation wakes up to this humongous crisis created by an uncaring and merciless system? The recent suicide of a second-year engineering student at IIT Bombay has stirred up a debate on the loopholes in the existing setup meant to prevent student suicides. This was the third death at the prestigious technology institute in the last seven months. In February, a second-year student died by suicide in his hostel room on the institute's Powai campus. In July, a 20-year-old student similarly took his own life. There are allegations that caste-based harassment had prompted Sahil Wakode, a 20-year-old Dalit from Bihar, to resort to the extreme step. The institute, on the other hand, has claimed that he was caught copying in an examination using an AI tool, but no disciplinary action was initiated against him. Hours later, he was found dead in his hostel room. The incident triggered spontaneous protests by students demanding the resignation of the director of IIT Bombay. Four student suicides across IIT campuses at Bombay, Delhi, Kharagpur and Guwahati in the last three weeks expose the failure of the suicide prevention measures at these institutes. No lessons are learned from past tragedies as there are continued concerns on a range of issues, from mental health problems to academic pressure, institutional practices, discrimination, and an unforgiving campus environment. There is a growing realisation that counselling and wellness measures alone may not adequately address the crisis.Send Money OverseasEvery death on the campus must be seen as a cry in the wilderness; a silent scream that should haunt us collectively as a nation. After acing one of the toughest competitive tests in the world, students step into these hallowed campuses, dreamy-eyed and full of hope and optimism, but what they eventually go through on IIT campuses during this crucial phase is something that society never bothers to find out.

Rising Demand for Premium Quartz in Hyderabad

""Hyderabad, September 21 (Indian Chronicle) : Demand for premium quartz surfaces is rising in



Hyderabad amid the expansion of the luxury housing market, said Ankit Jain, Founder of Specta, in a statement released in the city on Monday. He said transactions worth Rs. 8,562 crore were recorded in Hyderabad in the Rs.10 crore-plus residential segment during 2025-26. Specta showcased its 'Crest Collection' at Design Democracy 2026, described as India's first super-jumbo, ultra-sleek 12 mm quartz collection, featuring nine shades. Jain said four out of every 10 upcoming luxury residential projects in Kokapet are giving preference to quartz surfaces.

Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) Visits Khairatabad Bada Ganesh

""HYDERABAD, SEPTEMBER 21 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Congress senior leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) attended the prestigious Khairatabad Bada Ganesh celebrations as the chief guest. Invited by the Bada Ganesh Utsav Committee, he offered prayers and performed special rituals before Lord Ganesha.""The festival committee members accorded a warm welcome to Irshad Khan on the occasion. He said the Ganesh celebrations were bringing the people of Hyderabad together through devotion, unity and brotherhood.""Later, Irshad Khan visited the media point and interacted with

media representatives. Discussions were held on Hyderabad's development, public issues and matters concerning public welfare. He said the Congress government was giving priority to public welfare, development and the overall progress of Hyderabad.""He appealed to everyone to celebrate the Ganesh festival peacefully and with devotion. He expressed his wish that the unity, brotherhood and Ganga-Jamuna Tehzeeb of Hyderabad would be further strengthened. He also extended Ganesh Navratri greetings to the people of Hyderabad.""TPCC SC Cell General Secretary Tummala Sandeep Bhushan, Pawan, Rajasekhar and others participated in the programme.

SP Nithika Pant Reviews Ganesh Immersion Points and Route Maps

"Kumrambheem, Asifabad,District.Reporter "Indian Chronicle"September.22.""Komuram Bheem Asifabad: District Superintendent of Police Nithika Pant, IPS, reviewed the arrangements being made by the district police department for the peaceful and safe conduct of Ganesh idol immersion programmes across the district.During the inspection, the SP enquired with police officials and staff about the immersion route maps, designated immersion points, and the number of Ganesh idols expected to be brought for immersion from various areas. She also reviewed arrangements such as barricading, lighting, traffic regulation, police deployment, cranes and emergency services at the immersion points."The SP interacted with Ganesh mandap organisers and festival committee members and enquired about the arrangements, requirements, difficulties and suggestions related to the immersion programme. She assured them that the police department would extend all necessary cooperation to ensure smooth conduct of the immersion.She instructed officials to make alternative routes and regulate vehicular movement to prevent traffic congestion during the immersion. Special attention should be paid to the safety of devotees and the public.SP Nithika Pant directed police personnel deployed at the immersion points to remain alert throughout the programme and work in coordination with the public and festival committee members. She specifically instructed officials to take extra precautions regarding electrical wires and high-tension lines and ensure that the immersion programme is conducted peacefully without any untoward incidents.

Routes to reach idols at Khammam Urban Mandal Dhamsalapuram Pond

INDIAN CHRONICLE KHAMMAM K SANJAY """Ganesh idols coming from Rural Mandal, Raparthi Nagar, BC Colony, Vegetable Market, RR School Area, New Bus Stand Area, Saibaba Arch, RTA Office Area, Bank Colony, Disabled Colony, Ballepally, Khanapuram Tekulapally, New Vision College pipe will reach NTR Circle through bypass and from there Illandu X Road, Govt. Hospital ZP Centre, Cheruvu Bazar Bonakal X Road, Church Compound, Mustaf Nagar Sambaninagar, Raghava Medicals, Sriram Hills, Dhamsalapuram Pond Road to reach Nimajjanam point."" Vehicles coming from Pumping Well Road, Gandhinagar, Motinagar, PSR Road, Gandhichowk Saradhinagar, Bokkalagadda will pass through Nayabazaar to Jubilee Club Mayuri Centre, Mamillagudem, Buran Puram, Bus Depot Area, Kaman Bazar, Kasba Bazar via Kinneracentre, ZP Centre, Cheruvu Bazar, Church Compound. Get to the point."" Vehicles coming from Sri Sri Circle, Sri Nagar Colony, Rotary Nagar, Indira Nagar, Old Mamata Medical College, Mamata X Road, Kavi Raju Nagar, Old Collectorate Back Statues, Gattaya Centre, Bank Colony, Videos Colony should reach ZP from Illandu X Road and reach Nimajjanam Point via Church Compound."" Venkatagiri X Road, Srinivasa Nagar, Grain Market Area, Prakash Nagar, Guttala Bazar, Zaheer Pura Thanda, Ayyappa Swamy Temple Area idols should reach the church compound through the main road and reach the immersion point from there."" Idols coming from Gollagudem Maduranagar Raghavaiah Nagar Mamata College, Harvest School Area, Allipuram, Kothagudem, Allipuram X Road should reach Nimajjanam Point via Cheruvu Bazar, Church Compound via Tata Motors."" Idols from Bonakal X Road, Church Compound, Police Headquarters, Mission Hospital Area, Mustafa Nagar, Sambani Nagar, Parikamukkala Colony, Sriram Nagar, Sriram Hills climb the main road and reach the immersion point.to reach""return trip"" After the immersion, people and vehicles reach from the immersion point to Jayashankar statue and go towards Prakash Nagar, Srinivas Nagar, Zaheer Pura Thanda, Ayyappa Temple, Venkatagiri X Road, cross Dhamsalapuram Bridge and from below the bridge, from Dhamsalapuram village via SVM School to Srinivasa Nagar, Ayyappa Temple, Prakash. Go towards Nagar and take main road to their destinations."" Mustafa Nagar, Mamata Road, Illandu X Road, NTR, Ballepalli Mamillagudem, New Bus Stand Raparthi Nagar, Rural pipe commuters from near Jayashankar statue, cross the road near Sriram Hills, Raghava Medicals and cross the road via Parikamukkala Colony to Allipuram X Road and from there to Tatamotors, Lakaram, Mamta X Road and via Indira Nagar, Sri Sri They can reach the bypass and go to destinations."" Only one-way traffic will be allowed on exiting roads after Vinayaka immersion, all people have been asked to observe this and cooperate.

ASEEM, ADALAH seek transparency in Form 7 objections during SIR.

Karimnagar September 21, Khaja Sikandar Mohiuddin (Correspondent): ASEEM (Association for Socio-Economic Empowerment of the Marginalized) and ADALAH (Access to Justice Network) have urged the Karimnagar District Election Officer to ensure strict adherence to the Election Commission of India's prescribed procedure while receiving and processing Form 7 objections during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The representation was submitted by S.Q. Masood, Secretary, ASEEM, and M.A. Mujeeb Ayyub, Founder, ADALAH, to the District Collector and District Election Officer. The organisations said objections seeking deletion of names from electoral rolls should be individually scrutinised and decided in accordance with the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 and the ECI's instructions.

Form 7 is the prescribed form for objecting to the inclusion of a name in the electoral roll or seeking deletion of an existing entry. ASEEM and ADALAH said objections should contain the prescribed particulars, including details of the objector, the elector concerned, the relevant electoral-roll entry and the specific ground for the objection. They also called for verification of the eligibility of the objector.

The organisations said deletion should not be based solely on automated flags, database comparisons, lists or recommendations without verification and a decision by the competent election authority.

They stressed the need for adherence to due process before deletion of an elector's name, including individual notice and an opportunity to respond and be heard in accordance with the prescribed procedure. They also sought disclosure of the specific ground on which an objection was made, instead of relying on broad descriptions such as "shifted", "duplicate" or "dead" without sufficient particulars.

ASEEM and ADALAH have sought greater transparency in the processing of Form 7 objections and requested the district election authorities to make relevant information available in accordance with ECI procedure.

They sought constituency-wise and part-wise information on objections received, those taken up for inquiry, notices issued, hearings conducted, objections allowed or rejected and deletions ordered.

The organisations also requested that electors be able to ascertain the status of objections concerning their names, including the date of filing, ground cited, notice issued, hearing and inquiry status and final decision

On objections alleging that an elector is not an Indian citizen, the organisations said such cases should be dealt with strictly in accordance with the prescribed procedure and that an unsupported allegation should not, by itself, result in deletion of a name.

They urged the District Election Officer to issue necessary instructions to Electoral Registration Officers, Assistant Electoral Registration Officers, Booth Level Officers and other officials involved in the SIR process, and to make the relevant safeguards public so that electors are aware of the procedure governing objections and proposed deletions.

CP congratulated the police officers who got promoted as ASI

INDIAN CHRONICLE KHAMMAM K SANJAY """(11) Police Officers Sd. Jalil, J. Ravi, Sk. Qasim Ali, K. Venkateswara Rao, K. Chenna Rao, S. Sreenivasa Rao, B. Picchaiah, G. Hari, S. Venkata Kotireddy, R. Kalahasti,

B. Peda Rajender who served continuously as Head Constables in various Police Stations and were promoted as ASIs (Assistant Sub Inspectors). Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt decorated the promotion insignia at the Lanu Police Commissioner's office and congratulated him. The promoted will go on transfer to Bhadradri Kothagudem, Mahabubabad District. ""Additional DCP Ramanujam and association president Hemanad participated in the program.

MP Etala Rajender Visits Ganesh Mandaps in Fatenagar

"Fatenagar: Malkajgiri MP Etala Rajender visited Fatenagar and offered prayers at several Ganesh mandaps set up across the area. The visit was organised under the leadership of FBGYA Association and senior BJP leader Kanchi Mahender."Senior BJP leaders Kanchi Mahender and Vaddepally Rajeshwar Rao accompanied MP Etala Rajender to various Ganesh mandaps. He reviewed the arrangements being made for the celebrations and interacted with organisers, local leaders and devotees."Etala Rajender appreciated the devotion with which the Ganesh festivities are being conducted in Fatenagar and conveyed his greetings to the organisers and devotees. He wished that the celebrations would continue peacefully and successfully with religious fervour."Local BJP leaders, FBGYA Association members, party workers, Ganesh festival organisers and devotees participated in the programme.

Police Vigil Should Be Increased in Chilkhanagar Areas Security Measures Should Be Strengthened on Marrichettu–Survey of India Route: MULAKALAPALLI RAJESH MUDIRAJ

"""CHILKANAGAR, SEPTEMBER 21 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Congress Party Chilkhanagar Division former president Mulakalapalli Rajesh Mudiraj has urged the police to intensify surveillance on the road connecting Chilkhanagar to the Survey of India via Marrichettu. He said vehicular and pedestrian movement on the route has increased and that several isolated stretches along the road require special security measures to ensure public safety.Rajesh Mudiraj participated in a police-led Sahachari programme held at a large Ganesh pandal organised by Navayuga Youth at Marrichettu. ACP Venkat Reddy, Women Wing CI Vikram Singh, SHO Ramalinga Reddy, Sector SI Venkat Ram Reddy and Women SI

Samatha Reddy attended the programme."Speaking on the occasion, Rajesh Mudiraj said the road from Marrichettu towards the Survey of India has several isolated areas and urged the police to maintain continuous surveillance to prevent anti-social activities. He particularly suggested increasing night-time patrolling and strengthening security arrangements along the route."Following the programme, members of Navayuga Youth Association felicitated the police officials with shawls and presented them with saplings.Self-Help Group Uppal Division president Amareshwari, Chilkhanagar Division president Nallavelli Mahender Mudiraj, Sahachari members Shobha, Aruna, Swathi, Janabi and Samatha, along with Congress Party leaders, workers and local residents, participated in the programme.

New Drainage Line Inaugurated in Venkata Sai Nagar Colony Committed to the Comprehensive Development of the Colony: MLA BANDARI LAKSHMA REDDY

""""RAMANTHAPUR, SEPTEMBER 21 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): A new drainage line constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 13.75 lakh was inaugurated by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy in Venkata Sai Nagar Colony on Monday."With the new drainage line becoming operational, the drainage system in the colony is expected to improve further. It will also facilitate the connection of the remaining areas to the main drainage network.Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy said that special priority was being given to the comprehensive development of Venkata Sai Nagar Colony. He assured the residents that he would continue to work for the development of the colony during his tenure as MLA.He said steps would be taken to resolve the basic infrastructure problems faced by residents in a phased manner. Special focus would be given to improving drainage, cement concrete roads and other essential infrastructure facilities."The MLA said that as the drainage works in the colony were nearing completion, efforts were also underway to take up the remaining CC road works at the earliest. He stated that completion of the drainage and road works would further improve the basic infrastructure in the colony and provide better facilities to residents."Venkata Sai Nagar Colony Welfare Association President A. Vijayender Reddy appreciated the support extended by MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy towards the development of the colony. He said the commissioning of the new drainage line at a cost of Rs. 13.75 lakh was a major step towards resolving the long-standing drainage problem in the colony."He expressed hope that completion of the remaining CC road works would further improve the infrastructure facilities in the colony."BRS senior leaders Gandham Nageswara Rao, Chari, Pasula Prabhakar, M.D. Jangir, Colony President Vijayender Reddy, honorary members Ramesh Goud, M. Ravikumar, Gopal Yadav, Sarva Sattayya Yadav, Shiva Shankar, Sanjeeva and Balayya, and committee members G. Ashok, Srinivas Goud, Dr. Vidyasagar, Ramakrishna, Shivakumar, B. Chalapathi Rao, Naresh, Ganesh, Narasimha Reddy, P. Maheshwar Reddy, Srinivas Reddy, Keerthi, Harish, Shekhar, Chari, Siddu Goud, Bala Komaraiah and others participated in the programme.

BANNALA GEETHA PRAVEEN MUDIRAJ Couple Win Two Laddus at Dharmapuri Colony Sai Baba Temple

10-Kg Laddu Auctioned for Rs.1.05 Lakh; 5-Kg Laddu Won in Rs.51 Lucky Draw

""CHILKANAGAR, SEPTEMBER 21 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): As part of the Vinayaka Chavithi Navaratri celebrations, the couple of former corporator Bannala Geetha and Bannala Praveen Mudiraj won two sacred laddus at the Sri Shirdi Sai Baba Temple in Dharmapuri Colony under the Beerappagadda Division.A 10-kg laddu, which had received special prayers for nine days at the temple, was auctioned, and Bannala Praveen Mudiraj won it for Rs.1.05 lakh. At the same time, around 600 devotees purchased coupons for the lucky draw at Rs.51 each, through which the 5-kg laddu was won by former corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj."Temple committee members and devotees said it was a special occasion as the same family won one laddu through the auction and another through the lucky draw during the same celebrations."Later, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy handed over the 10-kg laddu to Bannala Praveen Mudiraj and the 5-kg laddu to Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj."Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy said it was considered auspicious that the laddus, which had received sacred prayers for nine days, were won twice by members of the same family. He appreciated Bannala Geetha and Praveen Mudiraj for remaining connected with the people and actively working in public service."He wished that the blessings of Lord Ganesha would always remain with the couple and prayed for the well-being and prosperity of the people of the Uppal constituency.Later, the MLA, state leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj and others enthusiastically participated in the Ganesh immersion procession with music and celebrations.Sri Shirdi Sai Baba Temple committee president Madhukar Reddy, vice-president Manik Prabhu, Bhaskar Reddy, Srinivasa Reddy, other committee members and a large number of devotees participated in the programme.

Minor Girl Allegedly Sexually Assaulted in Uppal

POCSO Case Registered Against Three, Including Mother; Girl Underwent Hospital Treatment After Pregnancy

""UPPAL, SEPTEMBER 21 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): A minor girl aged over 17 years has lodged a complaint with the Uppal police alleging that a man known to her mother sexually assaulted her repeatedly. She further alleged that her mother and another relative assisted the accused. Based on the complaint, police registered a POCSO case against three persons, including the girl's mother, and launched an investigation."According to the complaint, the family had come to Hyderabad in search of employment and had been residing in a colony in Uppal for the past few years. The girl's mother reportedly became acquainted with a man from Medipally and had been maintaining a close relationship with him for some time. The man allegedly used to visit their house frequently when other family members were away.The girl alleged that about eight months ago, the man threatened and sexually assaulted her in the presence of her mother. She further stated that she was subjected to similar abuse on several subsequent occasions, following which she became pregnant.The complaint further alleged that the girl's mother, the man and another relative took her to a private hospital in Medipally for treatment. She reportedly suffered a miscarriage in July and underwent treatment at the hospital for eight days. Subsequently, she was allegedly taken to another house in the Boduppal area."About a week ago, the girl reportedly went to her elder sister's house in Uppal and disclosed the alleged incidents. The matter subsequently came to the attention of her family members, who approached the police and lodged a complaint on her behalf.Based on the complaint, Uppal police registered a POCSO case against three persons, including the girl's mother, and are investigating the incident from all possible angles. An inquiry is also reportedly underway into the hospital where the girl received treatment.

RAJITHA PARAMESWAR REDDY Visits Several Ganesh Idols in Uppal Division

"UPPAL, SEPTEMBER 21 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Former Uppal Division corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy visited several Ganesh pandals set up across the division as part of the Ganesh Navaratri celebrations and offered special prayers."At the invitation of the organisers, she visited the Ganesh pandals at Old Bharat Nagar, New Bharat Nagar Road No. 17, South Swaroop Nagar, where a pandal was organised under the leadership of builder Suresh, as well as the pandal in Bharat Nagar organised under the leadership of Talari Nursing Mudiraj. She also visited the Ganesh idols installed at the Kummari Basti Community Hall and in Vinayak Nagar.Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy prayed to Lord Ganesha for His blessings to be upon everyone and for people to lead happy, peaceful and healthy lives with prosperity and well-being.Later, the organisers of the respective Ganesh pandals honoured Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy with shawls and presented her with holy offerings from Lord Ganesha.Local residents and devotees participated in the programmes in large numbers."[5:37 PM, 9/21/2026] +91 93911 09207: END

Prof.Surya Dhananjay Receives Global Peace Award-26

""Hyderabad, September 21 (Indian Chronicle) : On the occasion of International Day of Peace, the Telangana Intellectuals Forum, State Branch, organised a programme at a university in Koti, Hyderabad, where Prof. Surya Dhananjay, Vice-Chancellor of Chakali Ilamma Women's University, educationist and litterateur, was presented the Global Peace Award-2026. Forum State President Dr.Raj Narayana Mudiraj announced the selection of Prof.Surya Dhananjay for the award. Speaking on the occasion, Prof.Surya Dhananjay highlighted the importance of peace and religious harmony. Registrar Mallesham urged people to study Mahatma Gandhi's struggles and sacrifices. Dr.Vijayalakshmi, Dr.Loka Pavani, Dr.Premalatha, Dr.Shashikala, Prof.Krishnaji Rao, Lion Prem Chand Jain, Surya Bichchukari, G.Venugopal and others participated in the programme and congratulated Prof.Surya Dhananjay on receiving the award.

Struggling with Garbage: Victim Breaks Down in Tears

""Kumrambheem, Asifabad,District.Reporter "Indian Chronicle"September.22.""Wankidi Rantenki Rashika, a resident of Ward No. 1 under Vankidi Gram Panchayat,has expressed anguish over severe sanitation problems allegedly caused by garbage being dumped around her house. She stated that the accumulation of waste has resulted in an unbearable stench and made it difficult for her family to live peacefully.Rashika alleged that she had repeatedly brought the issue to the notice of the Ward No. 1 member, Gram Panchayat Sarpanch, Secretary and concerned staff, requesting them to remove the garbage and prevent further dumping near her house. However, she claimed that no permanent solution had been provided so far.She said the situation becomes worse during the rainy season, as accumulated garbage creates unhygienic conditions around the house. The foul smell and poor sanitation have reportedly caused considerable inconvenience to her family. Explaining her difficulties before the media, Rashika became emotional and broke down in tears.""I Approached Everyone, But There Was No Solution""Rashika said she initially approached the local public representatives and Gram Panchayat authorities several times. She requested that the accumulated garbage be removed and that measures be taken to ensure that waste is not dumped near her house again. As the issue remained unresolved, she said she was compelled to approach the media in the hope that the authorities would finally take notice."She appealed to the Gram Panchayat authorities to inspect the location, remove the garbage and take permanent sanitation measures. She said her family was facing difficulties due to the unhygienic surroundings and requested that they be provided with a clean environment to live in."Authorities Urged to Inspect the Spot"Local residents said the Gram Panchayat should focus on proper garbage collection, sanitation and disposal of waste at designated locations. They urged the concerned officials to conduct a field-level inspection and verify the allegations made by the victim. Residents also appealed to the authorities to remove the accumulated garbage and take preventive measures so that waste is not dumped at the same location again."We have repeatedly brought our problem to the authorities, but it has not been resolved. We request the officials to respond at least now and ensure that garbage is not dumped around our house. We are also human beings and deserve a peaceful and clean environment to live in," Rashika said emotionally.

Praja Vani for Resolution of Public Grievances

District SP Nitika Pant IPS

""Kumrambheem, Asifabad,District.Reporter "Indian Chronicle"September.22.""Asifabad, September 21: With the objective of directly understanding the grievances of the public and providing legal solutions, the Praja Vani programme was conducted on Monday under the leadership of District Superintendent of Police Nitika Pant IPS. People from various parts of the district attended the programme and directly brought their problems and complaints to the notice of the SP.On the occasion, SP Nitika Pant patiently listened to the grievances and interacted with the concerned police officials. She directed them to conduct a thorough inquiry into the complaints and take necessary steps for their resolution. Officials were instructed to give priority to every complaint and ensure that justice is provided to the victims.The SP directed the concerned police officers to take appropriate legal action within the stipulated time without any negligence in dealing with public complaints. She also advised them to discharge their duties responsibly and strengthen public confidence in the police department.District SP Nitika Pant urged the people to make use of the Praja Vani programme being conducted by the Police Department for the resolution of their grievances.

Rajasthan family sends men to kidnap newlywed in Bengaluru, getaway car crashes

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Eight months ago, Pooja, 21, and Om Prakash, 23, fled their native village of Melwas in Rajasthan, defying their families to build a life together in Bengaluru. But on Wednesday night, the long shadow of her family's opposition caught up with them, in a violent fashion and in full public view.At around 8 pm, four men dispatched from Rajasthan allegedly barged into the couple's home at Agrahara Dasarahalli, forcibly seized Pooja, and dragged her to a waiting car. However, what was meant to be a swift kidnapping quickly dissolved into a chaotic, multi-vehicle crash on the city's streets.

As Om Prakash dialled the police helpline, the getaway vehicle sped away rashly through the neighbourhood."We received a call from the woman's husband after the accused allegedly took her away from their residence. The car collided with several other vehicles about 2 km from their house. Locals also tried to stop the car after the accident. The driver initially fled from the spot. Three accused are now in police custody," said Yathish N, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Bengaluru West).Six people, including two children, were injured in the crashes and are undergoing treatment. They have been identified as Prithviraj, 12, Yashika, 9, Amul, 35, Mani, 64, Jayalakshmi, 57, and Santosh, 33. Jayalakshmi suffered a head injury and is being treated in the intensive care unit, the police said.The police identified the accused, all hailing from Rajasthan, as Rakesh, 31, Karan, 25, Ayan, 18, and Saddam, who was allegedly driving the vehicle and is currently missing. They also seized the vehicle bearing a Rajasthan registration number and a machete. They are probing the potential involvement of others in the crime and have registered a case at the Magadi Road police station.

A crime scene reconstruction and a manhunt: Latest in Gurgaon hit-and-run

The Gurgaon Police have secured two days' remand of the two men arrested in connection with Sunday morning's hit-and-run on Golf Course Road to reconstruct the sequence of events and track down the co-accused hiding in Faridabad and Palwal.On Wednesday, Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Nidhi Beniwal remanded Kalyan Bainsla (33) and his cousin Lavneesh Gurjar (34) to two-day police custody till September 18, the order noted.

Moving the remand application, the prosecution, led by Assistant Public Prosecutor Dr Sumitra and assisted by Sector 56 police station Assistant Sub-Inspector Jagbir Singh, submitted that Bainsla and Gurjar's disclosure statements revealed that their accomplices are hiding in Faridabad and Palwal.Police argued that their physical custody was essential to conduct raids and apprehend the absconding individuals.

The prosecution further stated that investigators need to take the accused back to the scene of the crime to reconstruct the sequence of events leading up to the crash, followed by sustained, in-depth questioning.The counsel representing the accused opposed the custody plea. Advocates Bhadresh Harikant, Payal Khatana, and Harish Khatana, appearing for Bainsla, and Advocate Bharat Singh Khatana, representing Gurjar, argued that the men had been falsely implicated, that custodial interrogation was uncalled for, and that they were willing to cooperate with the probe.Kalyan Bainsla was purportedly driving the car that hit Shivani Chauhan Kalyan Bainsla was purportedly driving the car that hit Shivani Chauhan (Sia). (Source: Express Photo)The magistrate, however, noted that the accused face serious charges of rash driving, act endangering life or personal safety, stalking, word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), attempt to murder) and joint criminal liability.

The court held that custodial remand was warranted to facilitate a fair probe, nab the co-accused, and interrogate the duo thoroughly.To safeguard the rights of the accused, the court instructed the investigating officer to conduct medico-legal examinations before and after the remand period, place the roznamcha (daily diary) and route records of all areas visited on record, and ensure immediate production before a Duty Magistrate should the accused retract their disclosure statements.Meanwhile, police sources said a five-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) is being constituted to take over the probe. The SIT will comprise the Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crime Against Women), the Sohna Crime Branch in-charge, the Sector 56 SHO, and two other police personnel.The incident occurred on Sunday when Delhi-based biker Shivani Chauhan (27), who goes by the moniker 'Sia' on social media, was riding her Aprilia RS 457 sports bike with a group along Golf Course Road. Video footage from dashcam and helmet cameras showed a white Maruti Suzuki Ciaz aggressively tailing the group, making sudden lane cuts, and gesturing at Chauhan before colliding with her motorcycle. Chauhan was thrown onto the road as the vehicle sped away.Police later seized the Ciaz, which belongs to an Army personnel posted in Assam from whom Bainsla had borrowed it two days prior to the incident.Bainsla, a resident of Chandhat in Palwal, and Gurjar were tracked down and arrested near Rajgarh in Rajasthan by the Sohna Crime Branch on Tuesday.According to investigators,Bainsla had also made a brief bid to escape custody during transit on the pretext of urinating, sustaining minor injuries before being recaptured.Chauhan in her statements to the police and a magistrate had said there were four persons in the car.

'Really bad experience': Actor Gippy Grewal accuses Air Canada of downgrading seat

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Prominent Punjabi actor, singer and director Gippy Grewal on Thursday alleged that Air Canada downgraded his seat from business to economy class, and that he had a "really bad experience". He also claimed that the Canadian airline threatened to take him off the plane when he demanded an answer.Grewal, who was travelling from Toronto to Newark (in the US) on Air Canada flight AC1504, wrote on X: "Really bad experience with @AirCanada on AC1504. I paid for business class and they put me in economy. When I asked what happened, the answer was basically "it happened, we can't do anything. You can take the flight or leave it. Not even a simple apology. When I kept asking why, instead of trying to help, I was told I could be taken off the plane. I wasn't asking for anything extra. I was only asking for the business class seat I paid for and an explanation."Grewal was travelling to the US to meet his elder son, who studies there. He flew from India to Dubai and onward to Toronto on Emirates. The final leg of his journey, from Toronto to Newark, was on an Air Canada flight.

I paid for business class and they put me in economy. When I asked what happened, the answer was basically "it happened, we can't do anything. You can take the flight or leave it."Speaking to The Indian Express, Grewal's close friend and actor-comedian-producer Binu Dhillon said he spoke to him over the phone. "He said the airline claimed that the aircraft was changed at the last minute and the business class seats were reduced from 12 to eight, so that they had to convert four seats to economy. He had a business class boarding pass, but they said they could not help. They told him that it was his decision to travel in economy or not. So ultimately he had to travel in economy class, and he was seated between two other passengers," he added.In an official reply to Grewal's X post, Air Canada responded: "Hello, We are sorry to hear this and we apologize for any inconvenience caused. Please send us a DM with your booking reference and full name on file for us to look into it."Dhillon claimed he had a similar experience on an Air India flight to Vancouver in July this year. He had gone live on social media to complain that the business-class seats he had booked were not functioning, forcing him to move to economy class. Highlighting the "poor service", Dhillon said Air India failed to provide the premium experience. The airline later offered a 35 per cent refund, he added.

'May again indulge in stunts': Bombay HC refuses to release 17-year-old in Ghatkopar crash

The Bombay High Court last week upheld a Sessions Court order cancelling the bail granted by the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) to a then 17-year-old boy in the Ghatkopar crash case, saying that the 17-year-old may again indulge in stunts if he's released on bail. The boy was allegedly driving an SUV when he rammed into a bike, killing 33-year-old Ghatkopar businessman Dhrumil Patel and injuring his wife earlier this year.

A single-judge bench of Justice Shivkumar G Dige observed that the applicant had attained majority and may again indulge in a "stunt act with his friends, causing danger to others" if released on bail. The HC, on September 9, rejected the criminal revision application filed by the juvenile accused against the Sessions Court order.

The applicant, a Class 12 student who was 17 years and eight months old at the time of the February 5 incident, claimed he had no intention of hitting the couple's bike. Seeking relief on the grounds of his age, completion of the investigation and filing of the chargesheet, and having spent 10 days in an observation home, the plea argued that "no purpose will be served keeping him in observation home."Additional Public Prosecutor Balraj B Kulkarni, appearing for the police, along with advocates Atharva Dandekar, Ruben Mascarenhas and Tejas Gupta, appearing for the victim, opposed the plea. They argued that the applicant habitually performed stunts in vehicles on public roads and uploaded videos on social media, which he later deleted, amounting to destruction of evidence.

Justice Dige found "no infirmity" in the Sessions Court order, which observed that releasing the applicant within a short period, despite his involvement in the "company of spoilt and affluent children" performing stunts on two- and four-wheelers, "would undermine the confidence of society.""It is necessary to curb such activities…Though he is a student, keeping him in a reformative home would make him understand gravity of his act," the HC noted.It observed that the police's inability to find him at the Navi Mumbai residence where he was supposed to reside under his earlier bail conditions showed his "scant respect" for court orders."Applicant would be exposed to moral, physical and psychological danger due to lack of parental control. He may again indulge in stunt act with his friends, causing danger to others. It will defeat the ends of justice," the HC noted, upholding the Sessions Court's "well-reasoned" order.

Bags open, dogs out: Sena UBT leader releases strays on officer's table

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Niphad civic body dogs protestThe dog, clearly frightened by being locked inside the bag, moves away and settles into a corner on another table (Screengrab from viral video)Shiv Sena (UBT) Yuva Sena district chief Vikram Randhave on Tuesday, September 15, released four to five stray dogs inside the office of Niphad Nagar Panchayat chief officer Dheeraj Bhamre to highlight what he described as the administration's failure to tackle the growing menace of stray dogs.

A video of the incident has surfaced on social media and purportedly shows the politician carrying bags inside Niphad civic chief's office. Moments later, he opens the bags and lets the dogs out on his table. Startled by the move, Dheeraj Bhamre, who was sitting in his chair, slides back a little.One of the dogs, clearly frightened by being confined inside the bag, moves away and settles into a corner on another table, while another wanders around. The Sena UBT leader is then seen exchanging words with the Niphad civic chief.

Randhave also placed a garland made of currency notes around the chief officer's table to protest the civic administration's handling of the issue. He claimed that more than 400 stray dogs roam the Nagar Panchayat limits and that over 100 residents suffer dog-bite injuries every month.The Sena UBT chief also alleged that repeated complaints had failed to prompt an effective system to catch and sterilise stray dogs.

The menace has particularly affected children, senior citizens and motorists, he said, adding that victims have to undergo painful treatment after being bitten. At the Niphad sub-district hospital, five to six patients bitten by stray dogs reportedly seek treatment every day."This means there are more than 100 dog-bite cases every month. Anti-rabies vaccine is currently available at the hospital," said Dr Rajiv Tambale of the Niphad sub-district hospital.Randhave warned that if the Nagar Panchayat failed to take concrete measures to control the stray-dog population, the dogs would again be released inside the chief officer's office in the presence of citizens. He said the dogs were released in the office to demonstrate what the residents had been facing for a long time.

427 new posts, day-to-day hearings: Delhi's push to clear backlog in trial courts

With pendency in Delhi's trial courts rising by around one lakh cases every year, Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Tuesday approved the creation of 427 ancillary posts for 53 fast track special courts (FTSCs) across the Capital, as part of efforts to expand judicial capacity and speed up trials.The new posts include 58 readers, 116 stenographers and 116 ahlmads, among others, and are expected to cost the government Rs 37 crore.

With over 20,000 criminal cases listed before Delhi's trial courts each day, the government also said existing vacancies will be filled on priority.Earlier, posts for 53 judges had been created for the FTSCs with the LG's approval. The additional staff is expected to enable the courts to function effectively.There are just over 740 judges in Delhi's trial courts, a number that has remained stagnant since 2015. Each judge handles an average of more than 2,100 cases. Court staff, meanwhile, are operating at around 80% of sanctioned strength, which hasn't been revised in close to two decades. More than 1,700 posts of court staff are lying vacant against a sanctioned strength of 8,575.Bail hearingsWhile the Delhi government is building new courts and creating additional posts, there is some internal change underway as well.

Trial courts are now directing accused persons seeking bail to file affidavits containing relevant details before arguments are heard to expedite proceedings and to maintain "transparency". The affidavit will include case details, status of the trial and criminal antecedents, among others.

A Delhi High Court circular dated March 19, displayed outside multiple trial courtrooms, states: "Every petitioner or applicant seeking bail, at any stage of proceedings, shall disclose all material particulars, including criminal antecedents and the existence of any coercive processes such as issuance of non-bailable warrants, declared as a proclaimed offender, or similar proceedings, duly supported by an affidavit."The circular has been issued in the backdrop of a February 11 HC order that framed directions for filing the affidavits.The affidavit is required to include the FIR number and date, police station, sections invoked, maximum punishment prescribed, date of arrest, period of custody undergone, stage of proceedings, number of witnesses cited in the chargesheet and examined, and details of other FIRs, including whether they are pending, ended in acquittal or resulted in conviction.Judges have increasingly begun directing accused persons to file these affidavits before hearing bail arguments.

A circular issued last year has directed judicial officers to ensure proceedings are held expeditiously. "…When the stage of examination of witnesses starts, such examination shall be continued from day-to-day until all the witnesses in attendance have been examined, except for special reasons to be recorded in writing," it said.The circular had stated that when witnesses are in attendance, "no adjournment or postponement shall be granted without examining them", except for special reasons recorded in writing. Also, courts should not grant adjournments to suit an advocate's convenience, except on very exceptional grounds such as bereavement in the family, it added.The circular, stuck outside multiple courtrooms in Delhi's trial courts, added that in case of non-cooperation by counsel, the court shall "satisfy itself whether the non-cooperation is in active collusion with the accused to delay the trial". If a court finds that this is in active collusion with an accused, it may, after recording reasons in writing, issue notice to the accused out on bail, asking why the bail should not be cancelled.Courts may also impose costs "commensurate with the loss suffered by witnesses", including expenses incurred in attending court.

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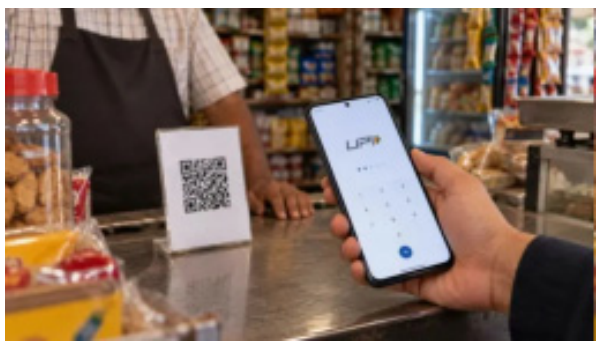
Karnataka ex-Army man, daughter hacked to death over property dispute

A 67-year-old former Army serviceman and his daughter were allegedly hacked to death inside a gram panchayat office in Karnataka's Belagavi district on Wednesday afternoon over a property dispute, the police said.According to the police, Rudrappa Kundargi and his daughter Shashikala, 26, an engineer, were allegedly attacked with an axe and sickle by his brothers — Basappa Kundargi and Sangappa Kundargi — and a nephew when they reached the panchayat office in Kittur taluk in connection with documentation and verification related to the division of a property that belonged to his father, who died three years ago.

The relatives allegedly came to the panchayat office after learning that Rudrappa was there.Shashikala was attacked when she tried to intervene in the scuffle, the police said. The driver who had accompanied Rudrappa sustained serious injuries and has been hospitalised, said an officer.A court had recently ordered that the property be divided equally among his three sons.K Ramarajan, Belagavi Superintendent of Police, has confirmed the double murder was linked to a property dispute.Police sources said they have detained two accused, while efforts are underway to recover the weapons allegedly used in the attack.

A senior police officer said the immediate dispute appeared to have stemmed from differences over Rudrappa's share of the ancestral property."Rudrappa had earlier sold an agricultural property that was registered in his name, but he continued to seek his share in his father's property. His brothers questioned why he was seeking a share after selling the agricultural land, which they believed was part of the family's common property," the officer said.The police are also examining whether differences in the brothers' financial circumstances contributed to the dispute. The officer said Rudrappa was a former Army serviceman and his children were engineers, with one settled in the US, while his brothers depended primarily on agriculture.According to police, the brothers allegedly felt that Rudrappa and his children were financially better off and therefore should not claim a share of the ancestral property.A murder case has been registered at Kittur police station, and further investigation is under way.

‘Don’t be surprised to see ‘cash only’ boards’: Market yard traders on new UPI charge



GNS News Agency, Sept 20Pune Market Yard traders oppose the new 0.4% UPI MDR on eligible payments above Rs 2,000, warning of higher costs and a return to cash.Pune Market Yard traders oppose the new 0.4% UPI MDR on eligible payments above Rs 2,000, warning of higher costs and a return to cash.Traders at Pune’s Market Yard have opposed the Centre’s decision to levy a 0.4 per cent charge on UPI transactions above Rs 2,000, saying the move could increase their costs and push businesses back towards cash payments.

The Centre introduced the charge on Tuesday as part of a new framework for large digital merchant transactions, bringing an end to the zero-Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) regime. Under the new framework, the charge will be capped at Rs 300 for transactions of Rs 75,000 and above. Small merchants generating up to Rs 1 lakh a month through UPI QR-code payments will continue to be exempt.MDR is the fee charged to merchants by banks and payment service providers for processing digital payments. Traders at the Market Yard, however, said the change would particularly affect wholesale businesses where individual UPI payments frequently cross the Rs 2,000 threshold.

“Already, increased labour costs, unseasonal rains and supply disruptions due to geopolitical tensions have affected profits, and this levy will further eat into thin margins. We oppose the levy on UPI payments and urge the government to reconsider the decision,” said trader Suyog Zende.According to Zende, more than 80 per cent of transactions at Pune’s Market Yard are now conducted through UPI. He said the convenience of digital payments had also reduced the need for traders to maintain cash or arrange for change.“There are around 180 fruit traders, and the average daily transactions in the fruit market alone are around Rs 20-25 crore. So this will have a considerable impact on traders and could push them back towards cash transactions. Even if we return to cash, there are deposit charges levied by some banks after a certain number of attempts,” he said.Fruit trader Yuvraj Kachi said the impact would extend across small, medium-sized and wholesale businesses because many traders handle a large volume of transactions above Rs 2,000

“In my case, most transactions are above Rs 2,000. Even a small charge of 0.4 per cent on individual transactions, subject to the applicable exemptions, can become a significant expense over a year,” he said.Kachi said traders would eventually find ways to recover the additional cost if the levy becomes a substantial expense.“If traders have to pay a significant levy, they will adjust the burden either on consumers or farmers. The selling price could increase slightly, or the purchase price from farmers could be adjusted to absorb the MDR charges. Either way, everyone will be affected,” he said.“The government earlier promoted a cashless economy. Now, most people have shifted to digital transactions, and payments have become streamlined. Such a move could encourage cash transactions again, and customers should not be surprised to see ‘only cash allowed’ boards. The government should reconsider the move and explore other avenues to generate revenue,” Kachi said.

‘Never drank alcohol’: Keralam channel MD arrested day after newsroom raid

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

A day after Kerala Police raided the premises of Reporter TV in connection with an alleged cheating case linked to an unsuccessful bid to bring football legend Lionel Messi to the state, the excise department on Thursday arrested the channel’s managing editor and director, Anto Augustine, on charges related to the illegal possession of liquor.While conducting a search at Augustine’s house in Wayanad, the special investigation team (SIT) allegedly found 67 litres of illegal Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) and foreign-made foreign liquor stock. The excise department then stepped in, leading to the registration of a case under the Kerala Abkari Act.In Keralam, a person is permitted to possess a maximum of three litres of IMFL. Excise sources said Augustine is facing non-bailable offences and, if convicted, could face imprisonment of up to 10 years under these sections.

Augustine, who was taken into custody from Reporter TV’s head office in Kochi early Thursday morning, denied the charges. “I had handed over all documents related to Messi. Now, the excise has come up with a case saying they had found a stock of liquor in my house. I have never consumed alcohol in my life. I will cooperate with the probe,” Augustine said. He will be produced before a court in Wayanad.

Raid before the arrestThe police raid on the premises of Reporter TV and its managing director had sparked a political storm in Keralam, with Opposition CPI(M) alleging that the action was “reminiscent of Emergency days”. Chief Minister V D Satheesan defended the action, asserting that the previous Left government under Pinarayi Vijayan had undertaken similar measures against the media.During the previous LDF regime, the state sports department had initiated steps to bring the Argentina football team led by Messi to Keralam for an international match. Reporter TV was the sponsor of the event, with the government serving as a facilitator. The event was scheduled to be held towards the end of 2025. The state government had also handed over the international stadium in Kochi to Reporter TV and Reporter Broadcasting Company, which runs the TV channel, for holding the event, which did not take place.After the Congress came to office in May, the sports department ordered a probe and allegedly found illegal financial transactions running to Rs 126 crore and GST payment defaults. It was allegedly also found that the RBC had forged several documents in this regard.The FIR was registered on information from the SIT under charges of cheating by personation, cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property, and criminal conspiracy. Apart from the channel’s newsroom and RBC’s office in the building, the police raided the houses of Anto and his brothers, Roji and Josekutty, in Kochi and Wayanad.The FIR alleged that Augustine and others entered into a criminal conspiracy before December 2024 and fabricated purported agreements with Argentina’s football association, leading to the state government being cheated. The suspects made unlawful gains from the deal and induced the state government to hand over the international stadium in Kochi to the channel for the event, which did not take place, the FIR alleged.

‘Govt needed to bend’: Jarange Patil calls off 20-day hunger strike, but with an ultimatum

GNS News Agency, Sept 20Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange Patil has ended his 20-day hunger strike and temporarily suspended his decision to proceed to Mumbai, giving the Maharashtra government three months to act on his demands on Maratha reservation. Jarange, who had set out from Antarwali Sarati towards Mumbai as part of his agitation for reservation for the Maratha community, announced the decision around 6 am after a government delegation met him.Announcing his decision to call off the strike, Jarange said that it is sometimes necessary to take two steps back to make a bigger move. “The government needed to bend before the community, and I made that happen through this agitation,” he said.

After the meeting, Jarange said the government had been given 90 days to fulfil the demands. If the demands were not met within this period, he said, the agitation would move towards Mumbai.“Three years have passed since we started fighting for reservation. Now we will give the government another three months. We can say that we have been fighting for three years and three months. Although we are trusting the government, the agitation will continue. Even if we wait for 90 days, it will not make any difference. Let us consider this the last deception. These three months will be the last we give the government,” he said.

Jarange also appealed to protesters who had already reached Mumbai to return. While the hunger strike has been suspended, he said, the agitation itself would continue.Explaining his decision, Jarange claimed the agitation had brought to light around 58 lakh Kunbi records relating to members of the Maratha community and alleged that efforts were being made to reduce the number of such records. He also said the government had agreed to issue a revised Government Resolution concerning the Hyderabad Gazetteer.”The government has said that 5.8 million Kunbi records identified by the Shinde Committee will remain untouched and will not be reduced. The Kunbi certificates of the 4 public representatives from Marathwada that were revoked will be legally re-validated,” he said.Jarange’s health had deteriorated after he began his march from Antarwali Sarati towards Mumbai. He was administered saline at a pilgrim accommodation facility at the Vitthal temple in Patoda.Welcoming activist Jarange Patil’s decision to call off agitation in Mumbai, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, “We are always committed to the welfare of all communities, including Marathas. We have accepted 12 demands.”

The deadly secret behind a Kanpur family’s closed doors

woman ‘plotted’ father-in-law’s murder The accused, Shalu Minocha. (Express Photo)Footage from the complex — Ratan Orbit has more than 50 cameras across its campus — and from cameras installed in the house showed two men entering and leaving the flat.

It was a humid evening in Kanpur on September 5. Subrat Minocha (32) had returned from work; he worked at his father’s pharmacy on Birhana Road, 14 km from his home. Most days, he would be back by 8 pm.He and his wife, Shalu, lived with their five-year-old son and Subrat’s elderly parents – Vineet (63) and Puneeta (61) in a three-bedroom apartment in the upscale Kalyanpur area of the city.Vineet was still at work while Puneeta was away in Ghaziabad. Subrat also has a sister, who lives in Gurgaon.

At 9.35 pm, Subrat and Shalu, all dressed up, locked their flat and left. They were heading to a lounge in Tilak Nagar to attend a “kitty party”. They took their son with them.The couple would organise such parties regularly with a group of more than a dozen other families across the city. These families were among the affluent Kanpur residents and would regularly socialise. This kitty party had been planned almost a week ahead.Subrat’s flat — C104 — was on the first floor inside the gated compound, Ratan Orbit Apartments. A security guard stood at the entrance, keeping watch round the clock.At 10.55 pm, Vineet returned home. He had been at his pharmacy since noon. He knew about the kitty party. He knew his son and his family would be away till late.

Death by 26 stab wounds, Death by stab wounds, Kanpur woman plotted heart attack for father-in-law, midnight murder shook Kanpur, Kanpur midnight murder, Kanpur murder case, Vineet Minocha news, Kanpur pharma businessman killed, Kalyanpur murder, Shalu Minocha arrest, Kanpur police encounter, Ratanpur encounter, murder contract Rs 6 lakh, CCTV surveillance murder plot, UP crime news, duplicate key home murder, Kanpur father-in-law midnight murder, Lucknow news, Uttar pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs Vineet Minocha

He wasn’t in the mood to stay up till they returned. He was exhausted after a long day and wanted to go to bed soon. So, he changed his clothes, took out the food kept in the fridge for him and sat for a quick dinner alone.As he finally headed to his bedroom, he noticed that the door to his son’s room was partially open.Vineet stopped and entered his son’s room. He switched on the light. Two men were standing inside.He recognised one of them immediately, demanding to know how he had got into the house. Before he could raise an alarm, the men struck — they allegedly stabbed him 26 times with two knives.The two assailants left the flat around 11.30 pm.Nearly five hours later, at 4.20 am, the family returned home. They sat in the guest room before Subrat got up to fetch water from the kitchen. That was when he noticed a trail of blood coming from his room.He called out to Shalu and rushed in. Vineet was lying in a pool of blood on the floor. They were shocked, Subrat told the police.It was another 15-20 minutes before Subrat called the police control room to report his father’s murder inside their home.Death by 26 stab wounds, Death by stab wounds, Kanpur woman plotted heart attack for father-in-law, midnight murder shook Kanpur, Kanpur midnight murder, Kanpur murder case, Vineet Minocha news, Kanpur pharma businessman killed, Kalyanpur murder, Shalu Minocha arrest, Kanpur police encounter, Ratanpur encounter, murder contract Rs 6 lakh, CCTV surveillance murder plot, UP crime news, duplicate key home murder, Kanpur father-in-law midnight murder, Lucknow news, Uttar pradesh news, Indian express, Current affairs The family lived in C104, on the first floor, of Ratan Orbit Apartments in Kalyanpur.

No forced entry, then a CCTV clueThe police jumped into action. Everyone knew the family. Vineet was among Kanpur’s five leading pharmaceutical businessmen, with a retail and wholesale medicines trade. It was a high-profile case and senior officers were immediately notified.

When a team from Kalyanpur police station, around 3.5 km away, arrived, they found the body near the door of the room. “There were signs of struggle… a few decorative items were scattered around,” said an officer. “It was clear that he had tried to resist but was overpowered.”Shalu, police said, was distraught, weeping over her father-in-law’s death.Police secured the crime scene and then scanned the house. They found the murder weapon — a blood-stained vegetable knife – without any hassle.Initial evidence, however, did not suggest a burglary.“There was no forced entry and nothing was missing apart from a few items in Subrat’s room. There were no signs that the house had been searched or ransacked,” said the officer.If burglary wasn’t the motive, why was Vineet attacked? This was the question before the investigators.The couple told the police that when they returned, they found the main door wasn’t locked and the lights inside the flat were switched off.The first clue, however, didn’t take too long to arrive. CCTV cameras provided the lead.Upset over CCTVs at home, how Kanpur

Police learnt that the two intruders had entered the apartment building using a duplicate key only 15 minutes after Subrat and Shalu left. They had been inside, waiting for Vineet to return.It was already morning and, by then, residents, relatives and employees from Vineet’s shop too had gathered at the apartment.When CCTV footage was scanned, investigators noticed that the faces of the two intruders were visible. Soon, one of the employees identified a man in the footage as Vishal Gautam, 30.Vishal had been working at the Minochas’ business till 2021 when he was fired following allegations of theft. No case had been filed against him at the time.

A police party was dispatched to pick up the two men. However, Vishal and Raj had already disappeared. For the next 24 hours, police searched for them across the city. On September 6, around 7.30 pm, they finally tracked the duo to Ratanpur.There was an ‘encounter’, the police said, and both of them were shot in the leg as they allegedly fired at the police party.Police said they questioned the duo extensively at the hospital and later at the police station before Vishal finally admitted to the crime. He alleged it was Vineet’s daughter-in-law Shalu, who had hired him to kill Vineet for Rs 6 lakh.Vishal, who police said needed money to settle a Rs 2 lakh debt, readily agreed to take this job. He recruited Raj, who is unemployed, offering him an advance of Rs 30,000. Both men, residents of Mayuri Mohal in Kanpur, took up odd jobs like electrical work and had no previous criminal record.

Vishal’s links to the family, police said, went beyond being a former employee. While Vineet resented him after he fired him, his son and daughter-in-law didn’t snap contact with him. He would visit the Minocha household, police said, but only when Vineet was away.On several occasions, police said Vishal claimed Shalu and Subrat had taken him along while shopping, where he carried their bags.Police then checked the extent of his contact with the family through their call records.They found regular voice calls and WhatsApp messages between Shalu and Vishal dating back three months. They also found that Subrat had been in touch with Vishal during the same period. After the murder, there were no calls or messages between Shalu and Vishal.

Police began piecing the crime together.During questioning, Vishal told the police that the murder plot was allegedly hatched by Shalu around 20 days earlier.The plan, Vishal told police, was to allegedly smother Vineet to death with a pillow while he slept and make it appear like a heart attack.A week ago, police said, Vishal claimed Shalu had given him the original key to the house and asked him to get a duplicate made. He got it done and returned the original key two days later.Then, three days before the murder, police said, Shalu allegedly told Vishal about the kitty party and when the family would be away.It was the perfect alibi for Shalu, an officer said. Twenty-one families, most of them from Kanpur’s business community, were in attendance. Liquor flowed, and a video of the evening’s dance performance later surfaced on social media.Police said Shalu also allegedly gave instructions to the apartment’s security guard that a man named “Shubham” would come to deliver flowers and a polythene bag and he must not enter the visitor’s details in the register.Shubham, police said, was Vishal. Police alleged that Shalu used the fake name so his actual entry into the building would not come to light.Everything was going according to plan until Vineet discovered them while the two men were waiting for him to fall asleep.Shalu, who is from a business family in Lucknow, married Subrat in 2020 in an arranged marriage. Police said she is a graduate.Subrat had joined the family business after graduation and had been fully involved in it for around 15 years.Their investigation, police said, showed Shalu had allegedly been unhappy with Vineet over several issues, especially regarding money.

ED raids call centres in Pune, Patiala running ‘scams’ on US citizens

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday raided call centres in Pune and Patiala which were allegedly executing scams targeting United States citizens inducing them to make payments under false pretexts. ED has also raided another location at Chandigarh linked to the mastermind of the scam, officials said.ED’s Hyderabad Zonal Office, conducted search operations on Tuesday under Section 17 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). According to officials, the searches were conducted on the basis of material gathered during the investigation and subsequent field verification, which indicated that a group of persons was operating and controlling call centres at Patiala and Pune.

During the search operations, three functioning call centres were unearthed, one at Pune and two at Patiala. Around 220 persons were found working at these call centres at the time of the search operations. Their identities, assigned roles and reporting structures are being recorded and verified, the ED has said. “The premises were equipped with multiple workstations, cubicles, computers, headsets, mobile phones and networking equipment. It has been revealed that the call centres were engaged in making calls to US nationals and allegedly inducing them to make payments under false pretexts,” read a press statement from the ED.

“At the time of search operations, the call centres in Patiala were found to be engaged in cheating and extorting US nationals. Mobile phones and a laptop recovered from the persons operating the centres were found to contain data relating to the modus operandi of the syndicate and the distribution of the proceeds generated by defrauding victims. Similarly, the same modus operandi of defrauding was found to be done from the fake call centre being operated from Pune premises,” the release further stated.Officials said that the residential premises searched at Chandigarh were being used by the alleged mastermind for coordinating and controlling the scam call centres operating at Patiala. “Multiple digital devices containing data relating to the functioning of the call centres were found at the premises. A person allegedly involved in processing and converting the proceeds from US Dollars into Indian Rupees was also found operating from these premises, and his role and the related financial transactions are under examination,” the release added.A large number of digital devices including 66 mobile phones, 13 laptops, hard disks and other communication equipment, cash and records were seized, officials said. The investigators are examining the calling campaigns, scripts, dialler and VoIP-based systems, victim-related data, payment channels, the persons managing and controlling the operations, and the flow of funds generated through the alleged activities, ED said.

Telangana declares 13-day Dasara holidays for schools

Hyderabad: School students across the State will get as many as 13 days to celebrate the Dasara festival this year. As announced by the Telangana School Education department, irrespective of the management, all schools will break for Dasara holidays from October 10 to 22. After the short-term holidays, schools will reopen on October 23.

Prior to the Dasara vacation, students will have Summative Assessment-I examinations, which will commence on October 1. The exams for the primary section will be held from October 5 to 9, while students of Classes VI to X will have exams from October 1 to 9.

Meanwhile, all junior colleges will also have a short vacation on the lines of schools. The Telangana Board of Intermediate Education has declared the Dasara vacation from October 10 to 21, with reopening scheduled for October 22. Before the short vacation, students have to appear for the half-yearly examinations that will be conducted from October 3 to 9.

EAM Jaishankar receives warm welcome from Bhutan's Finance Minister in Thimphu

Thimphu: External Affairs Minister (EAM), S Jaishankar, on Thursday received a warm welcome from Bhutanese Finance Minister Lyonpo Lekey Dorji, as he arrived in Thimphu.Upon arrival in Thimphu, EAM Jaishankar, in a post on X, wrote, "Thank Finance Minister Bhutan Lyonpo Lekey Dorji for the warm welcome in Thimphu." Currently, EAM Jaishankar is on a two-day official visit to Bhutan aimed at further deepening longstanding bilateral cooperation.

On Wednesday, EAM Jaishankar offered prayers at one of the most holy and sacred sites in Bhutan Kurjey Lhakhang. In a post on X, he wrote, "Paid my respects at the sacred Kurjey Lhakhang. Prayed for the well-being of our people and India-Bhutan ties." EAM Jaishankar along with his Bhutanese counterpart Lyonpo D.N. Dhungyel visited the National Cattle Breeding Centre in Bumthang.

During his visit, EAM Jaishankar handed over 43 pureline Jersey cows from India for dairy cattle breeding programme in Bhutan to increase milk productivity and support local farmers. "Visited the National Cattle Breeding Centre in Bumthang. Handed over 43 pureline Jersey cows from India for dairy cattle breeding programme in Bhutan to enhance milk productivity and support local farmers. Glad to learn that the Centre's breeding program will benefit forty thousand farmers," EAM Jaishankar posted on X.EAM Jaishankar and Lyonpo DN Dhungyel visited the historic Wangduechhoeling Palace and Museum in Bumthang on Wednesday.Following his visit, EAM Jaishankar wrote on his X handle, "Delighted to visit the historic Wangduechhoeling Palace and Museum in Bumthang today. The former royal residence and court showcases Bhutan's history, art, craft and architecture. It is a testimony to the role of Bhutanese monarchy in building a modern Bhutan."

EAM Jaishankar joined Lyonpo D.N. Dhungyel in laying the foundation stone for the 500 KW Lunana Hydropower Project in Bhutan's Gasa and termed it a "proud milestone" for longstanding energy collaboration between both nations which began from Bhutan's first hydroelectric plant 'Jungshina' in Thimphu in 1967, to now connecting Bhutan's last unelectrified settlements.The two ministers also inaugurated the 65-bedded Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Mongar. EAM Jaishankar noted that the health facility will strengthen access to quality, specialised maternal and child care in eastern Bhutan.EAM Jaishankar and Lyonpo D.N. Dhungyel also inaugurated the 80-metre-long Jaganathan Bridge in Samdrup Jongkhar. EAM Jaishankar said that the bridge, being built by Project Dantak, the Bhutan-India friendship project, will improve connectivity between Trashigang and Samdrup Jongkhar in eastern Bhutan.They also held a meeting in Bumthang and reviewed the wide-ranging cooperation between both neighbouring countries. The two ministers discussed advancing engagement between the two nations in development partnership, energy, trade, connectivity, culture and people-to-people ties."Delighted to meet FM Bhutan Lyonpo D.N. Dhungyel and jointly review our wide-ranging cooperation. Thank him for hosting me in the spiritual and historical centre of Bumthang. Our conversation focussed on advancing our multifaceted engagement in development partnership, energy, trade, connectivity, culture and people-to-people ties. Today's discussions reflected the trust, goodwill and warmth of our ties," EAM Jaishankar posted on X after the meeting.

Mumbai civic body awards Rs 14-crore trash barrier deal to firm disqualified earlier over desilting case

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has awarded a Rs 14-crore contract for managing the city's trash booms to a private firm it had disqualified twice earlier following an FIR against its then part-owner in the Mithi river de-silting case linked to alleged collusion with contractors and "wrongful loss" of over Rs 65 crore to the civic body.Records reviewed by The Indian Express show the latest contract was awarded after the company, Virgo Specialities Pvt Ltd, asserted the Mithi FIR was not against the company but against its then director Jay Joshi, who has since stepped down. The BMC, after seeking legal opinion, cleared Virgo as technically eligible for the trash boom tender.

The last available Registrar of Companies (RoC) records, dated March 31, 2025, show that Joshi held 60 per cent of Virgo's shares, with the remaining 40 per cent held by his wife, Krupa Jay Joshi — making him the company's majority shareholder at the time.When contacted, Virgo said Joshi "has had no role, involvement, or participation in the activities or operations of the Company, either physically or in relation to its shareholding" since he stepped down. BMC records show Joshi ceased to be a director at Virgo in August 2025.Trash booms are floating waste barriers made of durable materials like plastic or metal that float on water and are anchored in place to catch debris flowing through drains and canals.

The BMC tender, issued on March 10, sought an agency to operate and maintain these systems at six locations in the western suburbs, with four firms submitting bids. Records show that Virgo quoted about Rs 14 crore, around Rs 40 lakh lower than the second-lowest bidder, and was approved for the two-year contract on July 30

The tender carried a specific eligibility condition: contractors "who are blacklisted or against whom FIR has been filed" would not be eligible to participate. The BMC had invoked this clause to disqualify Virgo at least twice in earlier tenders, taking into account the FIR registered by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in the Mithi case, according to a senior civic official. The two earlier tenders were related to work for the civic body's hydraulic engineering department.When it came to the trash-boom contract, Virgo submitted a representation to the BMC contending that the Mithi FIR had no connection with the company, since it named Joshi personally — and asserting that its current directors, Krupa Jay Joshi and Ketan Dave, had no litigation against them.

The wording of the tender condition proved to be a key factor: it barred contractors against whom an FIR had been filed but did not explicitly say whether the restriction would apply when the FIR was against a director in his personal capacity.The same condition was present in the earlier tenders, too, where Virgo had been disqualified. This time, however, taking into account Virgo's submission, the BMC sought an opinion from its legal team. The advice was an FIR against a director for acts allegedly committed in his personal capacity, without liability being established against the company, could not by itself be used to disqualify the firm, the senior official said."On that legal position, we could not technically continue with the disqualification," the official said.

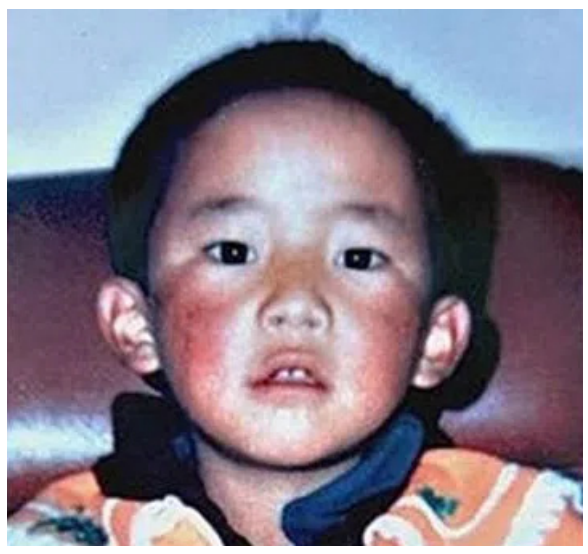
Responding to queries from The Indian Express, Virgo said in a statement: "The FIR was filed against Jay Joshi in his personal capacity, along with certain other BMC officers and firms that are directly involved in contracts with BMC for desilting work. The FIR was not filed against M/s Virgo Specialties Private Limited."It said the company "had not executed any contract with BMC for desilting work in relation to the Mithi River project till date". "Accordingly, the EOW registered the FIR against Jay Joshi in his individual capacity and not against the Company. Joshi and M/s Virgo Specialties Private Limited are separate and distinct legal entities in the eyes of law. Therefore, any proceedings initiated against Jay Joshi in his personal capacity should not be construed as proceedings against the Company," it said.The Mithi FIR names "Virgo Specialities Pvt Ltd's Jay Joshi" among the accused. The FIR, registered by Maharashtra's EOW on May 6, 2025, relates to work undertaken in 2021-22 and 2022-23 and alleges a wrongful loss of Rs 65.54 crore to the civic body. It alleges that Joshi, BMC officials, contractors and machinery suppliers colluded to manipulate civic tenders for Mithi desilting work.A June 5, 2025, Sessions Court bail order notes that Virgo had entered into a tripartite agreement on January 9, 2021, for the supply of specialised machines. It says Ketan Kadam, identified as Virgo's CEO, signed the agreement on behalf of the company.The court order also states that Virgo subsequently entered into machine-hiring agreements with contractors. The prosecution alleged that the arrangements formed part of a conspiracy to compel contractors to hire specialised machinery at inflated rates.Joshi was arrested on May 7, 2025. The EOW subsequently filed a chargesheet running into more than 7,000 pages, and he was granted bail in June 2025.The latest BMC contract covers 5,400 shifts for operating and maintaining the trash booms and another 5,400 shifts for transporting waste collected from them. Virgo has handled this work before: in 2021, the BMC selected the company for a project worth around Rs 48 crore to supply, install and maintain trash boom barges at several locations, commissioned in July 2022.The Indian Express reached out to BMC Commissioner Ashwini Bhide with queries on Virgo's eligibility, its earlier disqualification and the legal opinion behind the latest tender. She was unavailable for comment. The Indian Express also reached out to Jay Joshi's lawyer by phone and text seeking a response. The lawyer was unavailable for comment.

Tibet group urges ?Trump to press Xi on Panchen Lama's release

Washington: The International Campaign for Tibet has urged US President Donald Trump to press Chinese President Xi Jinping publicly on Tibet and seek the Panchen Lama's release, as it raised concerns over reported AI-assisted surveillance of Tibetan groups. The advocacy organisation issued the appeal on Wednesday (local time) ahead of Xi's planned Washington visit.It called for talks without preconditions with the Dalai Lama's representatives and elected Tibetan leaders, and an end to policies it described as forced assimilation.

ICT President Tencho Gyatso said Trump should use the meeting to advance dialogue. "President Trump must therefore uphold this policy and use his meeting with Xi to press for the resumption of Sino-Tibetan dialogue — especially at this critical juncture, when China's new, so-called 'Ethnic Unity and Progress Law' threatens the very foundations of Tibetan identity," she said.ICT sought the release of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, and other political prisoners. Failing his release, it urged Beijing to allow US officials to meet him independently. The organisation said Chinese authorities had disappeared him more than 31 years ago.In a separate statement, ICT cited an Anthropic threat intelligence report covering misuse of its Claude AI models between December 2025 and August 2026. It also demanded repeal of the Ethnic Unity and Progress Law.

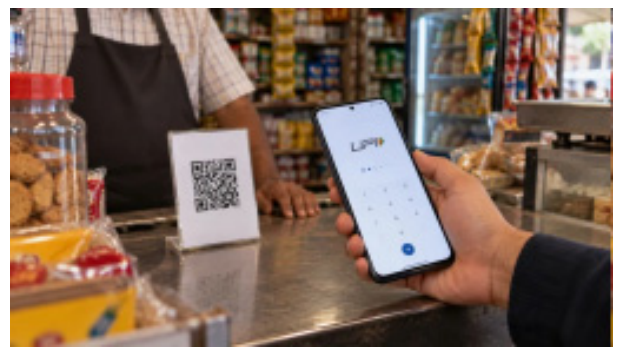
ICT alleged political interference in Buddhist institutions, demolition of monastic residences and separation of Tibetan children from their families through state-run boarding schools. The organisation joined 28 other rights groups in a letter urging Xi to release prisoners of conscience and end transnational repression. The groups also sought changes to laws used to criminalise peaceful expression, religious practice and dissent.According to ICT's account, China-based, government-aligned actors targeted the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibetan Buddhist civil society, ICT and Students for a Free Tibet. The operators used Claude to turn multilingual material into Chinese-language intelligence dossiers, organisational datasets and daily reports. They also collected personal information, monitored social media and gathered floor plans and structural details of religious venues, the statement said.



ICT said Anthropic found operators instructing Claude to adopt "China's standpoint" and describe the Tibetan administration in exile as an "illegal separatist administration." A separate operation used AI to recast foreign reporting critical of China for government intelligence briefings, according to the statement."Governments and AI companies must ensure that technologies built to expand human knowledge do not become instruments for authoritarian governments to monitor people, intimidate communities and impose their version of history on the digital world," Gyatso said.ICT urged AI providers to block political, religious and ethnic profiling, close abusive accounts and share information about threats. It also called for targeted individuals and organisations to be notified wherever safely possible. The organisation asked governments, including the US, to investigate the operations and protect affected communities. Neither ICT statement included a Chinese government response to the allegations.

UPI fee sparks worry in Delhi market: 'Shopkeeper may hike price, pass it on to customer'

UPI charges, UPI MDR, UPI charges 2026, UPI transaction charges, UPI MDR charges, UPI charges above Rs 2000, UPI merchant charges, UPI 0.4 per cent MDR, UPI Rs 2000 limit, UPI payment charges, UPI merchant discount rate, UPI zero MDR, small merchant UPI charges, UPI P2M transactions, UPI new rules, Indian ExpressNew Delhi Traders Association president Atul Bhargava said that while smaller shopkeepers operating on thin margins could be affected, the impact would be limited for bigger traders.At a shop in Sadar Bazaar, the next time a customer flashes a phone to pay a bill of more than Rs 2,000, the trader may have to do a quick calculation: absorb the newly-imposed UPI fee or try to recover the cost from the customer.



The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on Tuesday announced that UPI transactions over Rs 2,000 will attract a fee of 0.4% from October 15. Under the new system, it is the merchant who pays the 0.4% fee, not the customer directly. On a Rs 10,000 payment, the merchant would pay Rs 40.This has left Delhi's traders divided. While some said the charge is too small to make much difference to their business, those operating on thin margins worry that even a small deduction could add up.An e-commerce website, grocery shop or a shopkeeper, receiving more than Rs 1 lakh per month from customers paying through UPI are categorised as merchants.

Mukesh Jain, general secretary of the Main Sadar Bazaar Traders Association, said the impact could be felt by both customers and shopkeepers. "Shopkeepers are already operating on such tight margins nowadays, this will eat into that also. As a result, they might increase prices and pass it on to the customer," said Jain, who owns a shop selling festive goods."When making a UPI payment above Rs 2,000, the shopkeeper will either automatically increase the price by 0.4% or even more or tell the customer to pay the amount above the bill," Jain added.The Finance Ministry, however, has said banks have been "advised" to ensure that merchants do not pass on the cost to customers.Further, he pointed out that due to UPI, more transactions were being recorded and kept on the books. "This might change that," he said.But not every trader expects the fee to make much difference.New Delhi Traders Association president Atul Bhargava said that while smaller shopkeepers operating on thin margins could be affected, the impact would be limited for bigger traders."For bigger traders and shopkeepers who are operating at say, a 20% margin, this is a very minimal cost and they won't be impacted much," he said, adding that credit cards, which carry higher charges, are already used by traders.Bhargava said payment infrastructure would have to be paid for at some point and that this was a relatively small cost. He, however, added, "Everything is so costly today that very few things are available under Rs 2,000. The government should increase the threshold for applying the fee to around Rs 7,000-10,000."Sanjay Bhargava, president of the Chandni Chowk Sarv Vyapar Mandal, also does not expect a major impact on sales. "This will not have a big impact on sales, but the government should have given some warning or informed traders in advance," he said.As for customers trying to avoid the charge, Bhargava said, "People are also very smart, they will find their way around this, like splitting the bill in two."

Amit Shah sets 2029 deadline for BJP-ruled states, Maharashtra yet to begin consultations

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Maharashtra's seven-member committee, tasked with preparing the state's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) draft, has met only once even as Union Home Minister Amit Shah set a 2029 deadline to implement the proposal in all 21 BJP NDA-ruled states.Addressing a gathering on Sunday, Amit Shah announced that UCC would be implemented in all NDA-ruled states before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.A day later, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the Maharashtra committee was preparing the draft, and UCC implementation would begin soon after. In fact, Fadnavis also said the state government aims to table the UCC Bill in the Assembly during the winter session in December.

In July, the committee was granted six months' time to submit its report. Headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Desai, it has met only once.The committee also includes former Bombay High Court (HC) judges RC Chavan and SG Mehare, former Maharashtra Chief Secretary D K Jain, former Advocate General Birendra Saraf, social activist and Padma Shri awardee Ramesh Patange, and education expert Suvarna Rawal.Officials said the committee met once last month and is expected to meet again soon to decide on the process for preparing the draft and recommendations. The panel is also likely to seek public views before finalising its draft.A questionnaire on UCC-related issues such as marriage, divorce, live-in relationships, inheritance and adoption will also be prepared to seek and gather views from stakeholders and the public, including youngsters, officials said.The consultation could be carried out through a website, similar to the process followed in Uttarakhand, and may also involve legal and paralegal volunteers, officials said.Uttarakhand became the first state to implement the UCC in January 2025. Gujarat, Assam, and Madhya Pradesh have since passed UCC Bills

UPI payments above Rs 2,000 may attract 18pc GST on MDR

New Delhi: Merchants would have to pay 18 per cent GST on the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) charges for UPI payments above Rs 2,000, but can claim input tax credit (ITC), thereby easing the overall tax burden, tax experts said on Wednesday.Effective October 15, UPI payments to merchants (P2M) above Rs 2,000 will attract a 0.4 per cent merchant discount rate, with an overall cap of Rs 300. Besides, a flat concessional MDR of Rs 5 would be applicable to specific merchant categories such as railways, telecom services, insurance and fuel for transactions above Rs 2,000.The share of P2M UPI transactions above Rs 2,000 has steadily increased from 15.1 per cent in FY23 to 20.1 per cent in the June quarter of FY27, reflecting a sustained shift towards higher-value merchant payments on UPI.Under the proposed framework, the MDR would be borne by merchants as a charge for payment settlement services. Since the charge is to be borne by merchants for processing and settling digital payment transactions through the payment network, 18 per cent GST on the service will be applicable to the merchants.AMRG Global Managing Partner Rajat Mohan said the introduction of MDR on UPI transactions exceeding Rs 2,000 brings significant GST implications for India's digital payment ecosystem.Stream History Documentaries

Under the statutory framework, these payment settlement services will now attract 18 per cent GST on the MDR billed to merchants. The proposed MDR charges could generate an estimated Rs 3,500-Rs 4,000 crore in annual GST collections, thus unlocking substantial revenue for the exchequer."However, the regulatory structure provides crucial relief: registered merchants absorbing these fees can claim Input Tax Credit (ITC) on the GST paid, heavily softening their overall tax burden," Mohan said.Nangia Global Executive Director – Indirect Tax Sivakumar Ramjee said under this framework, GST will not touch the core transaction value; instead, 18 per cent GST will apply strictly to the 0.4 per cent merchant fee."For large, GST-registered enterprises, this tax creates minimal friction as it qualifies fully for Input Tax Credit, effectively neutralising the tax hit. Concurrently, strict exemptions for small vendors and transactions under Rs 2,000 completely insulate the grass-roots retail economy," Ramjee said.Ramjee said merchants with output tax liability in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system will be able to claim ITC. But for merchants dealing in exempt goods and services under GST, the GST burden on MDR charges will have to be borne by them.According to Ramjee, at the current transaction volumes, where high-value P2M payments comprise a significant share of UPI's financial value, this tax-on-MDR model is projected to generate over Rs 5,000 crore annually in fresh GST revenue for the exchequer."This structural update strikes a calculated balance: it builds a lucrative revenue stream for the government and funds payment infrastructure, all while preserving the zero-fee experience that drives India's retail digital adoption," Ramjee added.EY India Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said 18 per cent GST will be leviable on MDR charges, which will be recovered by banks from merchants.

"However, where the bank provides the statement indicating such charges separately or a GST invoice, the same would be available as an input tax credit to the merchant, which can be used to set off the output GST liability of the merchant.

Eco-sensitive zone around Himachal Pradesh national park quashed: What the high court said and why it matters

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

On April 16, the Himachal Pradesh High Court quashed a 2022 notification that had declared areas around Col Sher Jung National Park, also known as Simbalwara National Park, in Sirmour district as eco-sensitive zones (ESZs). The court held that both the state and central governments had "miserably failed to follow the procedure" required for issuing such a notification.The notification had been issued in January 2022 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC), on recommendations of the Himachal Pradesh government.Here's a look at what the notification said, the activities it prohibited, regulated and promoted, the issues raised against it, the high court ruling, and what it means going forward.Col Sher Jung National Park and its history

Col Sher Jung National Park is located in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour district, next to the Kala Amb-Paonta Sahib-Dehradun National Highway-7. It is spread over an area of 27.88 sq km. Initially a protected forest and later a wildlife sanctuary, it was notified as a national park on June 7, 2013. The park holds ecological significance due to its strategic location at the confluence of three major biogeographic zones—the Himalayan region, the Gangetic plains, and semi-arid areas.As per a 10-year management plan for this national park, its unique positioning results in a rich mix of flora and fauna, reflecting characteristics of the Western Himalayas, the Punjab plains, and the Upper Gangetic plains.Geographically, the park is defined by the Shivalik Hill ranges, forming a bowl-shaped valley intersected by seasonal streams locally known as "khala" or "rau". The main stream system is the Nimbuwala khala and its tributaries. Vegetation in the park is dominated by species such as sal, sain, mahua, jamun, amla, and amaltas. The park supports diverse wildlife, including leopard, sambar, barking deer, nilgai, wild boar, jackal, and langur. It also hosts rich birdlife typical of the Shivalik and Himalayan regions, along with around 70 species of butterflies.Historically, the area was part of elephant migratory routes, though such movement has now reduced due to habitat fragmentation caused by infrastructure projects such as the Yamuna barrage.

In January 2022, the MoEFCC issued a notification declaring an area around Col Sher Jung National Park as an ESZ. The ESZ covered an area of 31.24 sq km, encompassing 19 villages across three Gram Panchayats, Bhatanwali, Patalia, and Behral. The objective was to create a buffer zone to protect the park's fragile ecosystem by regulating human activities.The notification imposed a ban on several environmentally harmful activities, including commercial mining, stone quarrying, and crushing units; establishment of polluting industries (red category); hydroelectric projects; brick kilns and saw mills; use or handling of hazardous substances; discharge of untreated waste into natural water bodies, etc. However, limited extraction of resources for local domestic needs was permitted.Certain activities were allowed but subject to strict regulation: Construction activities, especially near the park boundary; establishment of hotels and resorts; tree felling (with prior permission); and small-scale industries. No new commercial construction or hotels were allowed within 1 km of the park boundary, except for limited eco-tourism structures.The demand for exclusion from the ESZ came primarily from residents and elected representatives of areas falling within the notified zone. Representatives of Bhatanwali, Patalia, and Behral approached the Himachal Pradesh High Court, seeking exclusion from the ESZ. They argued that it adversely affected residential, agricultural, and livelihood activities, and no proper procedure was followed for declaring the area as an ESZ.

The demand was also supported by local Congress MLA Ajay Solanki from Nahan and BJP MLA Sukhram Chaudhary from Paonta Sahib. In their representations to the state government, they sought implementation of a reduced ESZ boundary of 1 km in line with the Supreme Court's 2022 directions, along with the application of the 2023 provision allowing site-specific relaxation.A key concern highlighted was the industrial importance of the Paonta Sahib sub-division, which hosts several industries providing employment and contributing significantly to state revenue. Some industrial units, including stone crushers, also sought relaxation or extension, citing a lack of clarity regarding ESZ boundaries at the time of their establishment.In November, 2025, Mohkam Singh, proprietor of Mohkam Singh Stone Crusher at Surajpur village, submitted a representation to the state government demanding a three-year extension, stating that at the time of granting permission, neither the unit nor the officials concerned appeared to be aware of the precise ESZ boundary and its overlap with the unit's location.In its April 16 order, a division bench of the Himachal Pradesh High Court highlighted serious procedural lapses, possibly including inadequate stakeholder consultation, improper demarcation, or non-compliance with statutory requirements.

Many villages were included in the ESZ when the recommendations were prepared in 2012, but many were later excluded when a draft notification was issued in 2015—without any reasons cited for the exclusion and inclusion of villages.The court also took cognisance of the record placed by MoEFCC that the draft ESZ notification was considered in the 18th meeting of the Expert Committee for Eco-Sensitive Zones, where the committee requested the state government to provide a detailed justification for the proposed zero ESZ extent and to submit a revised proposal.The state government, however, did not submit the information sought or a revised proposal. The notification could not be finalised within the stipulated 725 days and lapsed. Thereafter, the state government submitted a fresh proposal and a new draft notification was issued on December 24, 2020.The court said no committee, comprising the wildlife warden, an ecologist, an official from local self-government, and the revenue department of the concerned area, was ever formed to reinitiate the process after the previous notification lapsed in 2015. There was a complete disregard of the procedure prescribed for declaring the Eco-Sensitive Zone, the court noted.The immediate impact of the judgment is that the ESZ notification ceases to operate, effectively removing the regulatory restrictions imposed around the park.A senior wildlife officer attached to the national park said, requesting anonymity, "Industries will not come out within a day or two. Our main concern is the mining-related activity and the possibility of rampant construction around the national park. Many rivulets, etc., pass through the national park. Mining cannot take place inside the park, but if mining takes place outside and near the park, that too will have an adverse impact."The withdrawal of the notification has also increased the risk of unregulated development around the park, potential threats to wildlife habitat and ecological balance, and possible disruption of wildlife corridors connecting nearby protected areas.

What next?

"We are studying the judgment. We will definitely take a decision on it shortly," Sanjay Sood, Himachal Principal Chief Conservator of Forests-cum-Head of Forest Force, said.Senior Advocate Deepak Kaushal, who represented the Gram Panchayats, said, "At present, the notification declaring the area as ESZ has been quashed and set aside. The government will need to follow the entire process laid down for declaring an area as an ESZ. It is the responsibility of the state government to follow the procedure.""The MoEFCC only constitutes an Eco-Sensitive Zone Committee. Consultation with local representatives, field inspections, etc., is the work of the state government. The state and central governments are at liberty to challenge the decision before the appropriate forum," he added.

As poor-quality wheat piles up, procurement agencies seek waiver of storage gain norms

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The committee pointed out that the Centre, through the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, has already relaxed procurement norms for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) wheat.The committee pointed out that the Centre, through the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, has already relaxed procurement norms for Fair Average Quality Flagging serious concerns over the quality of wheat, the Joint Coordination Committee of State Procurement Agencies, Punjab, has written to the state Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs urging it to take up the matter with the Centre for a complete waiver of 'storage gain' norms for the 2026-27 procurement season.

In its letter, a copy of which is with The Indian Express, addressed to the Secretary of the department, the committee said that extreme weather conditions—including heatwaves during February-March and unseasonal rains and hailstorms during harvesting—have severely damaged wheat crop. As a result, the state is witnessing a sharp rise in shrivelled and broken grains, damaged kernels, and loss of lustre, along with higher moisture content.The committee pointed out that the Centre, through the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, has already relaxed procurement norms for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) wheat. The permissible limits have been increased to 15% for shrivelled and broken grains and up to 70% for lustre loss, while damaged grains have been allowed up to 6%.

However, it added that even with these relaxations, the wheat being procured falls under Uniform Relaxed Specifications (URS) and is of significantly inferior quality compared to normal FAQ wheat. "Applying the existing storage gain formula, which is based on ideal FAQ conditions, to such substandard wheat is neither scientific nor practical," the letter mentioned.Citing a study by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the committee said that storage gain norms are derived from wheat stored under ideal conditions, which is not the case this year. Instead of gaining weight during storage, the current crop is likely to lose weight due to moisture evaporation, grain damage, and structural deterioration.

The letter also highlighted that the situation is worse than the 2015-16 crop, when the Centre had reduced storage gain norms by 50%. This year, however, the extent of damage is higher, warranting a complete waiver rather than partial relief.Another major concern flagged was the acute shortage of scientific storage space in Punjab. With state godowns already filled with previous stocks of wheat and rice, agencies may be forced to store the new crop in open and substandard conditions, increasing the risk of infestation, spoilage, and further quality loss.The committee warned that enforcing current norms could lead to financial losses and operational difficulties for procurement agencies, as they would be held accountable for weight variations that are beyond their control.Calling the situation unprecedented, the committee urged the government to act swiftly. "The current wheat crop is neither comparable to standard FAQ wheat nor suitable for application of conventional storage norms. A complete waiver of storage gain is essential to ensure fair handling of this year's crop," the letter stated.The issue comes at a time when Punjab is expecting over 120 lakh tonnes of wheat procurement, making it critical to address storage and handling challenges in a timely manner.It has been signed by the officials of state procurement agencies, including Markfed, PUNSUP Pungrain, and Warehouse.

NRI woman says IDFC First Bank scam 'mastermind' Ribhav Rishi defrauded her of Rs 2.5 cr

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

In January–February 2025, when the complainant requested the transfer of Rs 1 crore to the UK, the accused allegedly kept delaying the process and continued to mislead her until May 2025In January–February 2025, when the complainant requested the transfer of Rs 1 crore to the UK, the accused allegedly kept delaying the process and continued to mislead her until May 2025One of the main accused in the IDFC First Bank scam, Ribhav Rishi, has found himself in another case after a 77-year-old NRI woman alleged that he duped her of around Rs 2.5 crore.According to the police, an FIR has been registered at the Sector 17 police station in Chandigarh, under Sections 316(5), 318(4), 338, 336(3), 340(2), and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on the complaint of a woman residing in the UK.The accused include Ribhav, former manager at IDFC First Bank, Sector-22/B, Chandigarh, along with other bank officials. The investigation is currently in progress.

The complainant, Taranjit Kaur Bains, said that she and her husband reside in Greater London. She came in contact with retired Punjab National Bank officer R K Rishi in 2020 during the sale of her house, who later introduced her to his son, Ribhav. At the time, Ribhav was working as a manager at IDFC First Bank. He allegedly persuaded her to open an NRI account by promising attractive returns and subsequently convinced her to deposit large sums of money.

The complainant returned to the UK in June 2020 during the Covid-19 period and visited India only once in 2023. During this period, Rishi and other bank officials remained in regular contact and allegedly induced her to invest in various bank schemes and IPOs.However, she later discovered that the funds were not invested in official bank products but were instead transferred to private companies and third-party accounts, without her consent.In January–February 2025, when the complainant requested the transfer of Rs 1 crore to the UK, the accused allegedly kept delaying the process and continued to mislead her until May 2025.The fraud came to light after media reports in February highlighted a large-scale banking scam involving approximately Rs 2,590 crore. Upon verification of her accounts, the complainant found that her funds had reportedly been diverted to entities such as Capco Fintech Services.On February 22, she also received an email from the bank informing her about a lien of Rs 2.5 crore on her account.In the Rs 590-crore IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank scam, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) secured two-day custody of alleged mastermind Ribhav till April 22, after seeking his three-day remand to examine digital evidence and financial links.The development came as the agency informed the court of Special CBI Judge Rajeev Goyal that its probe has uncovered over 200 suspected illegal transactions and pointed to alleged procedural lapses in certain Haryana government departments.The CBI submitted that due process was allegedly not followed in opening some bank accounts and routing funds, while verification of documents was inadequate. It also flagged alleged violations of Haryana Finance Department norms regarding the empanelment of banks for conducting government business.The court also sent five accused — Abhay Kumar, Swati Singla, Abhishek Singla, Naresh Kumar and Manish Jindal — to judicial custody, citing concerns that they could influence witnesses or tamper with evidence.The agency said the role of public servants, bank officials and other persons is still under investigation, and the trail of alleged misappropriation of government funds is yet to be fully established.

Crowds swell for pind clinic vacancies in state, spotlight on Punjab's job crisis

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Many candidates turned up at the Civil Surgeon office in Punjab's Sangrur Monday for just 117 'pind clinic incharge' vacancies underlining the prevailing unemployment and highlighting the stark gap between demand and supply of jobs in the state. The rush was particularly striking because the job is temporary and the candidates will only be paid Rs 620 per day.The candidates at the venue, meanwhile, alleged lack of basic arrangements such as drinking water despite the scorching heat.Looking at the heavy turnout, Civil Surgeon (Sangrur) Dr Amarjeet Kaur said, "Hundreds have turned up for the vacancies of pind clinic incharge and we are busy attending to them… we will continue tomorrow… (as we could not attend all the candidates today)."As per the eligibility criteria, candidates must have one of these: a B.Sc in Nursing, a diploma in General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), Auxiliary Nursing and Midwifery (ANM), be a pharmacist with a diploma or degree in pharmacy. Preference will be given to GNM/B.Sc Nursing candidates, followed by ANM candidates and then pharmacists.Similar scenes also took place on April 17 reported from other districts.

In Mansa, around 500 candidates turned up for just 11 posts of pind clinic in-charge and nearly 450 appeared for interviews. Sources said many also left due to the heavy rush. In Ludhiana, nearly 1,500 candidates reportedly appeared for around 200 temporary posts.Reacting to the situation, Union Minister of State Ravneet Singh Bittu posted on X, "The Real face of 'Badlav' — Punjab's youth forced onto the streets… The massive flood of unemployed youth is a stinging reality check for the Punjab government's hollow claims of providing jobs. When thousands of qualified candidates are forced to scramble for a mere 117 posts, it exposes the dire state of unemployment in the state. Where are the tall promises of 'Har Ghar Naukri'? Is this the 'Rangla Punjab' you envisioned — where our youth are left to despair?"

The 'pind clinic' initiative is an extension of the state government's Aam Aadmi Clinics aimed at expanding primary healthcare coverage in rural areas.On January 23, the Chief Minister's Office had made the formal announcement of pind clinics. The post on social media said: "Punjab Government, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann,

The 'pind clinic' initiative is an extension of the state government's Aam Aadmi Clinics aimed at expanding primary healthcare coverage in rural areas.

has announced the launch of 2,500 'pind clinics' to ensure that no villager has to travel to the city for primary healthcare. These clinics will be opened across every corner of rural Punjab within the next 4 to 5 months."

In the first phase, the government plans to open 1,100 pind clinics, which will later be expanded to 2,500. At present, the state has already operationalised 881 Aam Aadmi Clinics, where doctors, nurses and pharmacists are engaged on a per-day wage basis depending on patient footfall.Under the model, one pind clinic in-charge will cater to two clinics — operating from 8 am to 11 am at one location and from 12 noon to 3 pm at another nearby clinic. Rs 120 per day will be the travel allowance as well to commute between two clinics on working days.Officials said the Punjab health department advertises these posts online district-wise, following which candidates report directly to the respective Civil Surgeon offices for interviews. The selection process is still underway, with the health department expected to prepare a merit list after interviews to declare results, they said.

Climate change reshaping carbon storage in India's forests: IITM-Pune study

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India's forests are an important arbon sink, helping remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in living vegetation such as trunks, branches, leaves, and roots. But how this carbon storage will change in a warming world has remained unclear. A new study at Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM),Pune shows how climate change is reshaping carbon storage across India's forests.The study led by Fitha Fathima, Mareena Mathew, and Roxy Mathew Koll from IITM-Pune has been published in Environmental Research: Climate and explores how forest carbon may change across the recent past, near future, mid-century, and late century under low, medium, and high fossil fuel emissions pathways.

The study finds that the carbon stored in India's living forest vegetation is projected to increase across all major forest regions of the country, but not evenly. The largest gains are projected in the Desert and Semi-Arid zones followed by the Trans-Himalaya , Indo-Gangetic forest belt and the Deccan Peninsula, while the Western Ghats, Northeast, and Himalayan forests also increase, but more modestly.Across India's forested regions, the study projects that average living forest carbon rises from 7.74 kilograms of carbon per square metre in the historical period to 10.24 under low emissions, 11.76 under medium emissions, and 13.67 under high emissions by the late 21st century. That corresponds to increases of about 35%, 62%, and 97% by 2100. The three futures remain broadly similar until around 2030, then begin to separate, with the divergence becoming clear by about 2050. It also shows that rainfall variability plays a stronger national-scale role than temperature in shaping changes in forest carbon, with rainfall effects often unfolding over several years rather than instantly.

Fitha Fathima, lead author of the study said that climate change is not just about rising temperatures – it is silently rewriting every sector, including our forests. "Even where gains appear, they may mask deeper stresses, raising concerns about the stability of today's dense forests and the risk of releasing large stores of carbon, thereby accelerating emissions. If we undermine our forests today, we risk amplifying emissions tomorrow and weakening long-term environmental resilience," the researcher said.According to IITM Pune's climate scientist Prof Koll, India's forests are not responding to climate change in a uniform way. "Some regions may store more carbon in living biomass, but that does not mean climate change is helping forests. A warmer world is also bringing greater risks from drought, fire, and other disturbances and the study according to researchers shows most clearly that rainfall matters deeply, and that future forest planning must be regional, climate-aware, and rooted in risk prevention," he said."Rainfall has the strongest overall influence on changes in forest carbon across India, while temperature has a stronger influence within many individual regions, especially under higher emissions. Rainfall effects appear with a lag of about two years under low and medium emissions, and about four years under high emissions. Temperature shows a more consistent lag of about two years. The paper detects this lag statistically. A likely explanation is that forests do not respond instantly to a single wet or dry year. Water availability can build or weaken across seasons, and woody biomass changes slowly over time," Pramit Deb Burman from IITM added.According to Rajiv Chaturvedi, BITS Pilani, this is one of the first forest dynamics modelling efforts from India, utilising a second generation Dynamic Global Vegetation Model (DGVMs). "The study generally projects increases in vegetation carbon under different climate change scenarios. However we need to remember that the models in its present form do not include limitations for nutrient availability. Hence this modelling effort needs to be followed up with further modelling

Lost in the glow: navigating the crisis of light and wildlife

For most of human history, sunset was the hard boundary after a day of activity. The night was not at all a void; it was a velvet curtain that signalled the body to rest and the nocturnal world to wake up. Today, that boundary has blurred. From glaring intense white streetlights and headlights to the persistent blue glow of handheld devices, people are living in a permanent artificial noon. So the quest to banish the shadows have inadvertently led to an environmental crisis — light pollution.Light pollution is an ecological pollutant caused by the inappropriate use of artificial light outdoors. In the past 20 years, the use of LEDs exploded, as it became so cheap and energy-efficient. Since 2010, earth's lit surface has been increasing in both intensity and extent by approximately 2-6% per year. Dark skies over the forests of the Western Ghats are rapidly disappearing as unnecessary high-intensity lighting spreads near forests.

Physiological tollLife on Earth evolved over millions of years under stable day-night and seasonal cycles. So any sudden disruptions to this rhythms is catastrophic. Human eyes regulate sleep through cells that are highly sensitive to blue light. Many common white lights (4,000-6,500 kelvin), emit strong blue wavelengths, mimicking daylight, leading to reduced night vision acuity, suppressed melatonin and disrupted sleep. Similar negative effects are observed in animals as well.The eyes of many animals, especially nocturnal animals, are most sensitive to blue and ultraviolet light, which at high energy can damage photoreceptor cells. Slightest levels of illumination can alter behaviours, affecting waking cycle, foraging and food intake, and disrupts reproduction.Impact on wildlife

The night time is a critical ecological niche necessary for the survival of a majority of living organisms. Artificial light at night (ALAN) disrupts wildlife across taxa by altering behaviour, physiology, movement, and reproduction. Migrating birds become disoriented by city lights, leading to fatal collisions and exhaustion in photic trap events. Sea turtle hatchlings, guided by the brightest horizon, are misled by ALAN and move away from the ocean, while adult females avoid nesting on illuminated beaches. Insects are drawn to lights in large numbers, causing mass mortality, disrupting pollination and collapsing ecological balance, with cascading effects on predators; fireflies fail to communicate and reproduce; and moth-mediated pollination declines. Light also alters circadian rhythms, extending activity in diurnal species and even affecting neural physiology. Amphibians reduce or stop calling and mating under slightest artificial illumination, impairing their behaviour and reproduction.Light-adapted predators, like leopards or bats or spotted owlets, gain an advantage, while dark-dependent species decline. Even very low light levels can delay activity and reduce foraging in nocturnal mammals and forest-floor species. Artificial light disrupts aquatic life by altering vertical migration of zooplankton, triggering trophic cascades, causing algal blooms, reduced oxygen, and degraded water quality. It also affects soil, altering microbial communities, reducing nutrient cycling, and destabilising food webs.

Glow trapIlluminated linear infrastructure such as roads acts as a psychological barriers for many mammals. While some species such as elephants become light-habituated, others such as leopards avoid brightly lit areas and shift to darker routes through villages or agricultural lands, increasing the risk of human-wildlife conflict.Repeated exposure to light can reduce an animal's natural aversion to light, causing them to associate light with high-energy food sources. Habituated elephants, for instance, may be attracted to night glows/halos originating from distant towns and cultivated fields, increasing the likelihood of negative interactions with people. High-beam headlights from vehicles can also startle animals, escalating stress and conflict. Such incidents are routinely observed on roads that pass through our forests. Growing light pollution is likely contributing to human-wildlife negative interactions in landscapes such as Wayanad.

Light pollution policyFor a sustainable transition to a "low glow" Kerala, a comprehensive state policy on light pollution is essential, as no regulations currently mandates correlated colour temperature (CCT) limits based on ecological sensitivity.Regulations supported by a mix of mandates and incentives, can bring about systematic reduction in CCTs, and promote the use of full-cut-off, shielded, and low-intensity lighting for outdoor applications, including streetlights and public illumination. Establishing ecological lighting standards (ELS) by zone-based limits and prescribing appropriate spectral quality standards (in CCTs) based on ecological sensitivity offer a practical way to address this issue, from protected areas to urban centres.In general, regulations requiring downward-facing, low-kelvin LED lights, and light curfews, particularly on commercial advertisements, can significantly reduce sky glow and glare. Additionally, innovations such as adaptive dimming, midnight intensity reduction, and motion-triggered lighting systems using passive infrared or advanced microwave sensors, while reducing power consumption, also improve the quality of ecosystems around them.Regular monitoring using light meters and Sky Quality Meters, remote sensing, ecological surveys, and citizen science initiatives is essential to track progress and compliance.Critical ecological zones, from protected areas to high-value biodiversity areas, must shift to deep amber (1,800 K), amber (2,200 K) lights and reduce unnecessary illuminations. In surrounding interface zones, warm lighting (up to 2,700 K) is recommended. Across the rest of the state, wherever possible, lighting should be limited up to 3,000 K or warmer, favouring dim, low-intensity white light to reduce ecological impact.Establishing dark corridors can help reconnect fragmented forests by reducing lighting durations, dimming or switching them off after midnight, thereby facilitating the movement of wildlife, from elephants to tiny moths. A single brightly lit road cutting through a traditional migratory path can cause fragmentation. Without the corridors, these patches become biological prisons, leading to inbreeding and local extinction.Creating dark zones around high-value biodiversity areas can prevent sky glow that otherwise spills into the night and acts like welcome sign for habituated wildlife. By doing so, they can preserve true darkness as an asset, supporting conservation while attracting niche, high-value tourism. At the same time, targeted incentives for individuals, LSGDs and government agencies that comply with these standards can accelerate its adoption and acceptance. Introducing these measures also reduce the likelihood of light-induced behavioural changes in wildlife that contribute to human-wildlife conflict.

It is time to recognise ALAN as a legally defined form of disturbance in the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, and mandate light impact assessment for all development activities in and around key ecological zones as well as high value biodiversity areas.Individual habits, culture and preferences are driving this problem. People celebrate with light, often turning night into day and illuminating the surroundings with artificial brightness, from buildings to towering trees. In doing so, they are reshaping the natural world, without realising the cost. The solution to this crisis is simple, and does not require a massive budget or decades of efforts. It takes only the humility to admit that not everything needs to be seen all the time.The night is not a void to be filled; it is a heritage to be protected. Preserving its sanctity safeguards human health, while allowing wilderness and wildlife to remain truly wild.Nafin K.S. is a conservation biologist at the Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation, Kerala Forest Department; and Pramod G. Krishnan is the Chief Wildlife Warden of the Kerala Forest Department. The views expressed are personal.

The courage to ask

Of all the memories from my schooldays, one regret stands out sharply: I did not ask enough questions. Like most of my classmates, I listened quietly, scribbled notes, and accepted whatever was taught as settled truth. We were obedient learners, not curious ones. At the time, silence felt like discipline. With hindsight, it was a missed opportunity.This realisation returned to me recently at a seminar on the India-Pakistan war of 1947-48 — the first major military operation fought by the Indian Army after Independence. I had prepared thoroughly, revisiting books and archival accounts. Yet, despite extensive reading, several doubts lingered in my mind. I was looking forward to the interactive session mentioned in the programme — a rare opportunity to engage eminent panellists and seek clarity.

The schedule clearly allotted 30 minutes for questions and answers. On the day of the event, I listened intently, waiting for that session. To my surprise, it was quietly dropped. During the tea break, when I asked the organiser about it, he casually replied that it was not really required; it had merely been included in the printed programme as a formality.That moment was disappointing, but it was also revealing. It underlined a deeper issue in our culture — we often undervalue inquiry. We speak, we lecture, we deliver presentations. But we rarely encourage dialogue.I have noticed a curious pattern in many gatherings. After a lecture, when someone gathers the courage to ask a question, the entire audience shifts in their seats, craning their necks to see who is speaking. The attention shifts from the substance of the question to the identity of the questioner. It betrays a subtle discomfort with curiosity.Yet questions are the lifeblood of progress. Without them, knowledge becomes static. With them, it evolves.In every profession — be it education, the armed forces, medicine, or administration — learning does not end with instruction. It deepens through discussion. Particularly in the military, lessons from past operations must be examined threadbare within the system. While operational secrecy must always be preserved, critical analysis and candid questioning strengthen institutions. They prevent complacency.Open discussion

I witnessed this culture first-hand during my tenure in Lebanon in 2007 while commanding 15 Punjab. I attended a military seminar in Israel, and what struck me most was not the sophistication of the presentations, but the openness of the discussion. Junior officers — men and women — confidently questioned senior Generals. Their queries were sharp, thoughtful, and sometimes challenging. No one looked around to identify who was speaking. All ears were tuned to the merit of the idea. Rank did not silence curiosity, but welcomed it.That experience left a lasting impression. It showed me that professional excellence thrives in an environment where questioning is not seen as defiance but as engagement.We, too, must cultivate that spirit — beginning at home and in schools. Curiosity should not be mistaken for indiscipline. Children who ask questions are not being difficult; they are learning to think. Parents must resist the temptation to silence persistent queries with impatience. Teachers must tolerate even the so-called "irritating" questions. Often, those are the ones that push boundaries.The habit of questioning should extend beyond classrooms. In daily life, we must ask why things are done a certain way, whether there is a better alternative, whether established practices still serve their purpose. Progress comes not from blind agreement but from thoughtful examination.There is a simple metaphor that captures this idea. We can choose to be like a pond — still, contained, and eventually stagnant. Or we can be like the ocean — constantly moving, renewing itself with fresh currents. Questions are those currents. They keep institutions vibrant and individuals intellectually alive.The courage to ask is as important as the ability to answer. It begins in childhood but must be nurtured throughout life. When we encourage enquiry, we cultivate independent thinkers rather than passive recipients of information.In the end, societies that question grow stronger. Those that remain silent risk stagnation. The choice, like the question, is ours.

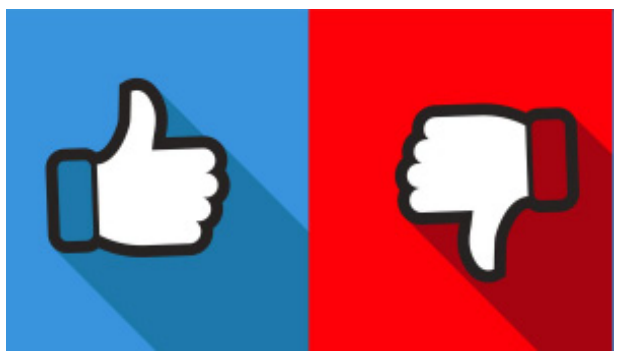
Groaning under information overload

A significant yet rarely acknowledged downside of social media is the overconsumption of information. We are not an information starved society any more, and in ideal terms, this should have been a great victory for humanity, but social media has somehow managed to spoon-feed opinions. Our ideas, standards, opinions and taste are dictated by reels. Short-form content is ruling our lives, and we are slaves to endless scrolling. Our time holds less value than it has ever held before, and instead of remedying it, we are rather happily sinking ourselves.For the longest duration, society has struggled with scarcity of knowledge, information and opportunity. Today this anxiety has shifted, replaced by an excess of information, its instantaneousness, and aggressive and infinite availability.

We as a society have become gluttons for content. We have trained ourselves to reach for our phones and scroll in hopes of filling a void, we are stuck in this endless loop where even the slightest form of inconvenience pushes us to chase this dopamine high. More often than not, this content stays with us long after we have already consumed it. Our lives are full of opinions, rants, preaches and commentaries, we are rarely uninformed, yet one has to ask if we are truly informed or just inundated?

This short-form content feels rewarding to watch; one does not have to put in any form of mental labour to reach the point. Our ideas are formed for us, our opinions dictated, we are merely told what to think. This content also governs a huge part of our social life, it decides what is chic and what is cringe, what one should have, to fit in and what makes one odd. We react before we understand. Here the distinction between what nourishes our mind and what merely stimulates it, becomes blurred.Social media pumps us up with dopamine while failing to add any value in our lives. Much of the digital space revolves around four main spheres: gossip, memes, politics, and influencing. Gossip offers fleeting amusement, memes generally reduce complex issues into instantly digestible fragments, political content instead of cultivating civic understanding rewards outrage, and influencing packages consumption as aspiration. None of this content is inherently harmful, yet when these forms dominate our intellectual intake our mind starts to mirror it making us restless, reactive, and fragmented. It shifts our thoughts and opinions of self; we simply need to have an aesthetic picture-ready house, we have to buy this expensive Korean skincare, we need to try this new drink, and we simply need to post about it and communicate to the world that finally we are a part of the cool club. Yet after all this overconsumption and overexertion, we are left with a void, we fall in this consumption and comparison cycle that rarely keeps up with us — by the time we complete one trend, five others pop up and we are left with the feeling of inadequacy.Hence in a world that is obsessed with counting calories, count your thoughts and ideas and when you do, remember to hold on to them. So put yourself in an information diet, and be intentional about your content consumption. Just like a balanced diet that includes variety, moderation and quality, your information diet should prioritise depth over immediacy, substance over stimulation.I started my information diet in the beginning of this year and I can attest that I have been calmer. In addition to being mindful about content consumption, I have also managed to reduce my screen time. Something that has worked for me is always asking myself why I am opening a certain app and just sticking to that one task. In the end, I can vouch for the fact that this diet will not disappoint.

Thumbing through emojis



I did not realise when my thumb acquired a mind of its own, even a philosophy. Perhaps it followed a simple rule of thumb and moved ahead without consulting me. The revelation struck me one morning. I had sent a long, carefully worded message. It contained context, sincerity, perhaps even literary ambition. I pressed send and waited with reasonable optimism. The reply arrived in seconds — a solitary "thumbs-up emoji".

Calm and confidentYes, no words, no explanation, no sentence. Just a yellow thumb standing upright, calm and confident, and as if by some universal thumb rule, the matter stood concluded.A psychological marvel of our age, and perhaps its most misunderstood gesture, the emoji offers validation without the onus of involvement. The brain accepts it the way a ticket checker nods after a brief glance. Message sent. Response received. Job done. Dopamine released. For the sender, it says, "I acknowledge you." For the receiver, it quietly adds, "Please do not ask me to elaborate."

Emotionally, the thumb works like a multi-signal junction. It can mean agreement, support, approval, dismissal, or silent judgment. Context does the heavy lifting. When my boss sends it, my shoulders relax. When a close friend sends it after I pour my heart out, my pulse quickens. Same thumb. Entirely different blood pressure.Our ancestors read omens in the skies. We read meaning in a pixel.Escape hatchSocially, the thumbs-up has become a polite escape hatch. In family WhatsApp groups, it dodges arguments without sounding rude. In office groups, it avoids commitment while looking professional. In school parent groups, it replaces attendance. "Tomorrow is fancy dress day." Twenty thumbs appear, five wake up at midnight wondering what on earth their child is supposed to dress as.There is a generational comedy at play. For many elders, the thumb is warm and respectful. For younger users, it can feel cold, sarcastic, or faintly hostile. One thumb can trigger an overthinking marathon. Did they mean okay-okay, okay-noted, or okay-stop-texting-me… Emoji study truly merits a Ph.D. and a research grant.The thumb itself has a longer story. In the Mahabharata, Ekalavya gave up his thumb as an offering to his unseen guru. Today, we give ours away freely, multiple times a day, to unseen audiences, as if devotion has been replaced by convenience.I once tried an experiment. For one full day, I replied to every message with just the thumb. By evening, one friend asked if I was upset, another if my phone had failed, and my brother if I was unwell. The thumb had spoken. Loudly.The thumbs-up is efficient, not lazy. It saves time and emotional exposure. Yet, by simple thumb rule, it should supplement, not supplant, words. Still, I tap it often. On certain days, my thumb seems wiser than my vocabulary, quietly handling life one gesture at a time.

Lessons from the Mahabharata

"What is found in the Mahabharata can be found elsewhere, but what is not found in the epic can seldom be found in the universe."This line perhaps had me hooked to the epic for a lifetime. I have read it several times and listened to many great scholars speak on the subject. I have marvelled at the plethora of situations in the epic which have served as reference points to various aspects of life across time and space. My involvement with the epic grew to a point where I started sensitising young and not so young audience to the relevance of the classic. It began with a series of talks and later on I started conducting sessions where people would call out a random word and I would connect it to one of the episodes of the epic.With each passing session, the words got quirkier and were mostly sourced from contemporary lingo. To keep it short, I would like to recollect the ones that captured my imagination the most.For instance, once a young man came up with addiction and I narrated the instances from Yudhishtira's life where his love for gambling led to crisis every single time he succumbed to his addiction.Then there was this time when someone gave the word "Face Time" and I drew the attention of the seeker to the famous scene in a famous South Indian movie called Maya Bazaar where Abhimanyu and his lady love would have a rendezvous by talking to each other on a mirror which would transform into a screen.

Never stop asking why

Over time, children learn something dangerous. Knowledge is something others decide, not something they can explore themselves. Asking questions becomes hesitation. Curiosity feels inconvenient.I noticed the aftermath in university.

From the very first day of school, we are taught certainties. Cars have four wheels. Chairs have four legs. The sun rises in the east. Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. Facts go into notebooks in neat lines. But somewhere in this long parade of correct answers, one thing quietly disappears: the habit of asking why.Why four wheels? Why not three or five? Why is a chair shaped this way? If a child dares to ask, the answer is often: It is like that. And just like that, curiosity is shut down.

Over time, children learn something dangerous. Knowledge is something others decide, not something they can explore themselves. Asking questions becomes hesitation. Curiosity feels inconvenient.I noticed the aftermath in university. In school, memorising earned marks and praise. In college, the same approach often fails. Textbooks are full of abstract concepts. Students are expected to understand, analyse, and apply them, but we were never trained to question or explore on our own. Most of the time, we follow instructions in books. Any attempt to think beyond them is ignored or unrewarded. The system rewards what is written, not what is understood.The world hides questions everywhere. Why do we still use QWERTY keyboards when ABCDEF might make more sense? It was designed for typewriters, but we keep using it today simply because no one stopped to ask. Most of us never notice. Curiosity allows us to see the hidden logic behind ordinary things.Even technical concepts can seem frightening. A textbook might say: Encryption ensures confidentiality by transforming plaintext into ciphertext using cryptographic algorithms and keys. In simple terms, it just means you lock a message with a secret password so only the right person can read it. The idea is simple. The language makes it intimidating.

This gap between simplicity and understanding is no accident. It is cultivated over years of education that prioritises memorisation over comprehension. Should practical learning not come first? If students see how things work in real life, theory follows naturally. When you watch electricity flow through a circuit, Ohm's law is no longer a formula to memorise. It becomes a story you already know.Even beyond science and technology, the pattern persists. History is taught as dates and events. India gained independence in 1947. But how often are students encouraged to ask why not earlier? What conditions made it possible then? What if certain movements had failed? History becomes dates instead of dilemmas.Education should not just give facts. It should make children curious, restless, and eager to understand the world. A child who asks why is not being difficult. That child is rehearsing for innovation. Every discovery, every breakthrough, every reform began with someone refusing to accept it is like that.The day children stop asking questions is the day learning quietly turns into obedience. The world has never changed because people accepted things as they were. It changes because somewhere, someone refused to accept them.

Known for their high pungency and flavour, Chettikulam small onions reach a milestone

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

The small onions in your 'sambar', the famous South Indian lentil-based stew, probably had its roots in the sulphur-rich soils of Chettikulam and villages around it in Perambalur district in central Tamil Nadu. It is from here that the seeds of the shallots grown in most parts of Tamil Nadu and neighbouring States are largely procured. Known for their pinkish hue, uniform size, and pungency, the Chettikulam small onions recently got their unique identity recognised with the grant of the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. A combination of favourable soil and climatic conditions, distinct drying process, and traditional storage methods contributes to the uniqueness of the Chettikulam small onions.Most preferred for seeds

"Small onions grown in Chettikulam and at a dozen surrounding villages are known for their high pungency and flavour. They are not only used to make 'sambar', but also 'kaara kuzhambu', 'vadagam', and even Siddha medicines. Our onions are also the most preferred variety among farmers for being used as seeds. Farmers in most parts of the State and even Kerala and Mysore procure our onions for propagation as they can be assured of 100% germination and a high yield. Our onions have a longer shelf-life; if properly stored, they can last even up to 10 months," says R. Gunasekaran, president, Chettikulam Small Onion Farmers' Producer Association, Perambalur.

Chettikulam and over a dozen surrounding villages in the Alathur block of Perambalur district is the key hub for shallot cultivation. The crop was raised on 7,075 hectares in Perambalur district during 2023-24, with production of nearly 78,000 metric tonnes. Of this, the Alathur block alone accounted for 3,625 hectares and production of nearly 40,000 tonnes.Small onions are generally considered a good source of antioxidants and nutrients. They have been a staple item in the South Indian kitchens. Given their superior quality and shelf-life, the Chettikulam small onions are in high demand in the domestic market as well as for exports to countries with significant population of South Indian migrants, say officials. More significantly, about 70% of the harvest is used as "propagating material" in other onion-growing regions.Recognising the uniqueness of the small onions grown here, the Tamil Nadu State Agricultural Marketing Board and the Chettikulam Small Onion Farmers' Producer Association, with the support of NABARD-Madurai Agri Business Incubation Forum, had filed the application for the GI tag for the Chettikulam small onions in 2022.

The soil in Chettikulam is rich in sulphur, which contributes to the onions' unique pungency, and the onions were notable for having 15-18 layers of dried outer scales that enhance their shelf-life, the application said, listing the salient features of the variety. The region's red, loamy, and black soils, with their moderately alkaline nature, provide the ideal conditions for cultivating high-quality onions. Farmers here adopt a unique post-harvest drying process, called 'Muttu Kattuthal'. Under it, the onions are arranged in piles for an open drying process. The process is aided by the dry and hot climatic condition of the region. Most farmers also adopt a traditional and eco-friendly storage method, called 'Pattarai'. The onions are stored in an elevated structure, usually covered with coconut fronds, thatches, or bamboo, which protects them from sun and rain. The well-ventilated structure allows the onions to be stored for a few months.The crop is usually grown in two of three seasons by most farmers in the district, the third season largely dependent on the rain. The farmers are dependent on the traders and wholesale market in Tiruchi to sell their produce. Price fluctuations is a key issue. "Normally, when bought for seeds, we get a good price. But if there is a glut in the market during other seasons, the farm gate price of the small onions could fluctuate badly and drop to as low as ?10 a kg. We hope that the GI tag would help us to get a better price," says Mr. Gunasekaran, who has been growing small onions and vegetables for decades.Most small onion farmers feel they are often exploited by middlemen and traders. A. Prabakaran, a 31-year-old farmer who holds an MBA degree, feels that the GI tag would bring in more goodwill for the onions grown in Chettikulam and help farmers get better returns. "Price fluctuation is the biggest issue here; for long, we have been seeking a minimum support price. We need a minimum of ?30 a kg to break even," he says.A few years ago, auction of small onions was introduced at the Small Onion Market Complex at Chettikulam so as to attract more traders and get better prices for farmers. The initiative was short-lived and a section of farmers blame the traders' syndicate for its failure. "Reviving and sustaining regular auction at the complex would help us get competitive prices," says Mr. Prabakaran. The recent initiative to supply small onions to the Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Horticorp), through an MoU signed under the auspices of the district administration, should also be sustained, he says.In 2017, a Common Food Processing Incubation Centre was established at Chettikulam by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries and the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business, with the technical support of The National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management, Thanjavur. The centre, equipped with machineries for value addition in onion, has remained largely under-utilised. Officials say there has been a decline in its operations since the COVID 19 pandemic. An entrepreneur, who plans to produce onion and garlic paste at the facility, is set to take it over with a fresh lease, they say.

Reading Ovid and his ideas of empire from the subcontinent

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Nothing intimates the slow unravelling of the Roman empire quite like Jean-Paul Laurens' portrait of Honorius Flavius — the boy emperor consumed by a world too big for him. Titled 'The Late Empire: Honorius' (1880), the painting captures the throne's fragility and the boy who barely fills it. His face is young, untouched by experience, but his eyes already hold the heavy certainty of impending ruin. The feet swaying above the marble are as unsteady as his hold on power. The sword in his hand is more a prop than a weapon, and no amount of silk or gold can camouflage the looming collapse. Laurens wasn't just painting the past. He was warning his own time. No empire, he seemed to say, is too big to fall.

The rise and fall of empireA century before Laurens, across the Channel, Edward Gibbon had already chronicled the fall of Rome in The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776–1788), attributing its demise to moral decay and barbarian invasions. He mourned the slow unravelling of an empire that had deemed itself eternal. Laurens merely painted what was already written. Both artist and historian engaged with Greco-Roman antiquity not merely as a subject of study but as a legacy crucial to Europe's preoccupation with its racial genealogy. However, even as they traced their lineage to its grandeur, they cast its decline as a warning to their own time. They aimed not merely to inherit Rome's legacy but also to reshape history itself, declaring in the process, the tenacity of their empire.The Rome they evoke is one of poets and emperors, a city that witnessed the genius of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid — a Rome shaped by Augustus Caesar. If Honorius marked the empire's decline, Augustus announced its ascent. As Rome's first emperor, he forged an empire from the remnants of a republic. It is a rule invoked in Virgil's Aeneid and consecrated by it. Virgil's grand epic attested that even the most formidable sovereigns required literature to secure their power. In contrast, Ovid's Metamorphoses emerged as the anti-epic, dismantling, as it did, the logic of empire. What Virgil built, Ovid 'unbuilt'.Years ago, Ovid entered the early English Honours syllabus at Delhi University. His was an ancient voice among young undergraduate minds, and despite all odds, it left them quietly transformed. He spoke to them in a language of power and authority, and of the uneasy ties both held with the act of writing.Born on March 20, 43 BC into an aristocratic family, Ovid came of age during Rome's political upheavals but found his footing in the stability of Augustus' reign. Shunning a public career, he devoted himself to writing poetry that undermined with the empire's moral imperatives. His Amores disregarded the call for patriotic verse. At the same time, the irreverent Ars Amatoria diluted the Augustan vision of marriage as a civic duty. By 8 CE, Augustus, dismayed by his granddaughter Julia Minor's sexual misadventures, denounced Ovid's work as a subversive influence. Condemned for immorality and a second, more elusive charge, possibly political, he was banished by the Emperor to Tomis. The term tyrant is frequently invoked, but in Augustus' case, it may not have been entirely unwarranted.In this light, Ovid's Metamorphoses is more than a narrative of myths; it is a reckoning with power, a meditation on change. Of the proud and the meek. Of the rise of the reviled and the fall of the mighty. The gods, indifferent and cruel, play with human fate. Jupiter, the king of the gods, is both incredible and deplorable. Moral order gives way, not to chaos, but into a world unsettled by enduring transformation. The revolutionary morality of Metamorphoses underscored the futility of rulers — Augustus chief among them — pursuing absolute power. To read Ovid is to engage with volatility. He demonstrated how empires validated themselves and how they inevitably faltered. Ovid, we realise, was a victim of censorship, but he wasn't a perfect victim. He spent his days in Tomis pleading for imperial favour. His pleas went unanswered. Nevertheless, Ovid's work offers an enduring lesson.

Ovid in a classroom in Delhiln 2018, Andrew Anglin, founder of the neo-Nazi (anti-immigration, and Islamophobic) website The Daily Stormer, invoked Augustus to laud Trump's immigration policies, arguing that ICE should be refashioned into the American President's Praetorian Guard. The last few weeks have taught us that this is less improbable than it sounds. Morality, sexuality, and immigration haunt the minds of leaders who dread being questioned. The alt-right and neo-Nazi movements have resurrected the classical past and distorted it, shaping it into a myth that upholds illusions of Western supremacy. To read Ovid from the Global South is to summon a counter-narrative; one that pries Greco-Roman antiquity from the hold of Western exceptionalism and restores it to a shared, contested part of human history.Not long ago, before the introduction of the National Education Policy and the systematic reshaping of the syllabus, we used to read the Metamorphoses at the University of Delhi. Through him, our classrooms examined the empire of Augustus, a realm conjured by myth and sustained through its telling. To first-year undergraduate students, Ovid was the primer to literature's paradox. Writing, they learnt, did not merely uphold authority; it exposed its fragility. Writers, we realised, were not necessarily heroes. And for this reason, reading was never just reading. It became a relentless force, wearing down institutions that once seemed unshakable. It was a tribute to the written word and the restless spirit of inquiry that had shaped our progress. It eroded the foundations of inherited truths and fixed morality, turning classrooms into sites of contestation, where old certainties were unmade and new ideas slowly and deliberately took form.

What is the current political situation in South Korea? | Explained

The story so far: On April 4, South Korea's constitutional court upheld the impeachment of former President Yoon Suk Yeol. The Court unanimously (8-0) agreed in favour of the impeachment. Mr. Yoon is the second president to be removed from office in the last eight years. According to the constitution, South Korea will have to elect a new President within 60 days.

What led to his impeachment?

On December 3, 2024, President Yoon announced an emergency and declared martial law to protect South Korea from "anti-state forces" and to eliminate "despicable pro-North Koreans." This was the 17th martial law in the history of independent South Korea. Six hours later, the National Assembly convened and 190 members voted in favour of lifting the martial law under Article 77. On December 14, 2024, in its second motion, the Assembly succeeded in voting President Yoon out of office with 204 votes in favour. Of the 300 seats in the National Assembly, the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) holds 170, while the People's Power Party (PPP), to which Mr. Yoon belongs, has 108 seats.

What happened after impeachment?

The declaration of martial law and the impeachment motion ignited public protests across South Korea. It polarised society; thousands protested against the impeachment, supporting Mr. Yoon, while 2,00,000 people gathered outside the parliament, supporting his removal. On January 17, the Corruption Investigation Office requested an arrest warrant against Mr. Yoon, which was approved, leading to Yoon supporters attacking the courthouse. The 11th and final hearing on the martial decree took place on February 25. In his last hearing, he stated that his intention was only to warn the public of anti-state forces.

What does the verdict say?The constitutional court upheld the impeachment of Mr. Yoon and expressed disillusionment with his reasoning. It held that Mr. Yoon did not follow the constitutional mandate, rules, and procedure. While Mr. Yoon argued that he imposed martial law due to the presence of anti-state forces, the verdict contradicted the same and stated that he declared martial law to overcome the National Assembly, which composed mostly of the opposition. The verdict ruled that his actions threatened the military's political neutrality and placed the soldiers serving the nation in direct confrontation with its people.Furthermore, the verdict argued that the political and economic cost of impeachment is more acceptable than the negative repercussions of a violated constitutional and democratic process. Mr. Yoon's claims of alleged election fraud were also dismissed. Based on all the above, the court upheld the removal of Mr. Yoon and said he "abandoned his duty to uphold the Constitution and gravely betrayed the trust of the sovereign citizens of Korea." Mr. Yoon will now face a series of criminal charges that he was shielded from during his tenure.

What is next for South Korea?

The Presidential elections will be held on June 3. As crowds of supporters and protestors clear off the streets, the interim heads and security forces are on high alert to maintain peace and order.The PPP is now in disarray, with Mr. Yoon being seen as a wronged leader by many of his supporters. Lee Jae-Myung of the DPK is the most favoured contender for the elections. He had led his party to victory in last year's parliamentary elections. South Korea also faces an external challenge with the U.S. imposing 25% "reciprocal tariffs". Thus, the next President will have to address both political and economic challenges.

Is red carpet fashion becoming mundane, or is the Internet making us feel that way?

My eyes, of their own accord, opened at 7 AM on the dot this Monday morning — a feat rarer than Halley's comet, but an Oscar-night ritual for those of us who celebrate. As I browsed through the red carpet looks, hoping for the extravagance to propel me from bed to action, the opposite happened. I wanted to burrow deeper in my kambal at the sheer mundanity of fashion.This disappointment, however, is not new, and unsurprisingly, one I share with other fashion commentators. On a phone call with celebrity stylist Rishi Raj, both of us were left lamenting "how the looks just did not look" (Gen Z speak for falling flat on their face) at the Oscars red carpet this season."The red carpet had some strong moments, but nothing groundbreaking. Classic silhouettes, luxurious fabrics, refined styling—everything was elegant and polished but predictable. Even so-called 'experimental' looks felt safe, tied to actors' on-screen personas. We're missing spontaneity and real risk-taking," Raj told me.Sure, the Met Gala is where avant-garde thrives, but shouldn't the Oscars still have moments that take our breath away—like Nicole Kidman in her yellow John Galliano for Christian Dior gown in 1997 or Julia Roberts in her Armani suit at the 1990 Golden GlobesThis obsession with nostalgia could perhaps be the reason we're seeing a resurgence of old-world Hollywood glamour. From Selena Gomez's Ralph Lauren dress inspired by yesteryear actor Sophia Loren to Elle Fanning in Sarah Burton's Givenchy, the Oscars were replete with vintage silhouettes."This revival isn't just about aesthetics—it taps into a broader cultural moment," said Henna Parimoo, department lead, fashion styling, Pearl Academy. When I asked her why she thinks classic glamour is back in the game, she said, "Well, besides being the golden era of storytelling, in uncertain times (socially, politically, and economically) people often look back to times that feel safe, elegant and idealised. Old Hollywood, with its polished elegance and larger-than-life stars, represents a sense of order, beauty, and aspiration that feels reassuring.""Classic glamour photographs beautifully. Whether it's a plunging satin gown, dramatic opera gloves, or timeless curls. These visuals thrive on platforms like Instagram, YouTube shorts, and Pinterest, which are driving fashion cycles faster than ever," Parimoo said.Raj echoed this sentiment, adding social media has sped up trend cycles, leaving people craving something timeless, something that isn't just a fleeting TikTok moment. "In fashion, this translates to structured silhouettes…opera gloves…draped gowns…and classic beauty looks…things that feel polished, considered, and cinematic," he said.This shift towards calculated, carefully curated red carpet moments contrasts sharply with past eras when a single look—Cher's extravagant Bob Mackie ensembles or Björk's infamous swan dress—could define an entire awards season.

Survey finds occupational health issues among food handlers in Kerala's Kozhikode

A survey conducted among 2,000 food handlers in Kozhikode district of Kerala has found prevalence of occupational health problems such as typhoid, skin infections, jaundice, cut injuries and burns among them.It was conducted as part of Sanitation and Fitness Evaluation (SAFE) project undertaken by the Department of Community Medicine at KMCT Medical College, Mukkom, in collaboration with the district committee of the Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association. The project was conceived as a surveillance program for food handlers to strengthen food safety and public health. The food handlers were later issued health cards of one-year validity.Among the participants, 15.6% were female, with an average age of 39.86, and 20.1% were from outside Kerala. The majority worked as cooks (49.4%) or food servers (28.4%).The occupational health issues found among them include paronychia, a finger infection that occurs around the fingernail or toenail (6.1%), contact dermatitis (3%), cut injuries (3.3%), burns (2.0%) and onychomycosis, a fungal infection on the nail (1.1%). Communicable diseases such as fever, vomiting and diarrhoea were reported in 2.5%, 0.3% and 0.2% of the respondents, respectively. Of the total food handlers examined, 7.4% and 1.4% had a history of jaundice and typhoid, respectively, ever in life.Among them, 35.7% had received the tetanus toxoid (TT) vaccine, while typhoid and Hepatitis A vaccination rates stood at a mere 9.1% and 2.1%, respectively.

Laboratory screenings further revealed that 7.6% of the participants tested reactive for Salmonella typhi 'O' that causes typhoid fever and 0.2% tested positive for Hepatitis B surface antigen that causes Hepatitis B infection affecting the liver. The study suggested that in the wake of the recent increase in Hepatitis A infections, and the possibility that food handlers may be a source of transmission, it is mandatory to monitor their health parameters to implement vaccination policies.Sources told The Hindu that the incidence of food-borne illnesses in Kozhikode surged from 5.3% in 2022 to 10.1% in 2023, according to the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health department.

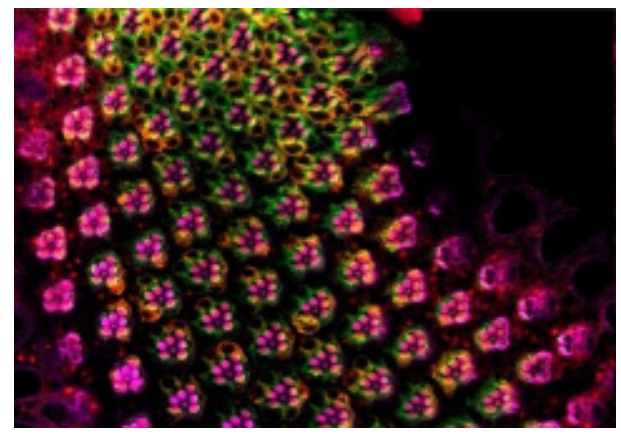
NCBS study identifies key protein whose dysfunction could trigger neurodegenerative diseases

GNS News Agency, Sept 20

Confocal microscopy image depicting the localisation of the calcium-binding mutant of Esyt in Drosophila photoreceptors, along side the contact site marker RDGB and phalloidin labeling F-actinNeurobiologists from the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR) have identified a key protein whose dysfunction could potentially trigger neurodegenerative diseases.

Using the Drosophila model, the group led by Professor Raghu Padinjat has identified a protein named Extended synaptotagmin (Esyt) that sits close to the cell membrane. The study was published in the Journal of Cell Biology.According to NCBS, a cell's exterior region comprises plasma membrane(PM) and endoplasmic reticulum (ER).PM forms the cell's outer boundary, gatekeeping entry of material into the cell and communicating between the outside of the cell and its interior, whereas the ER is a network of membranes inside the cell. The region where PM and ER meet is known as the membrane contact site (MCS). This site permits intra-cellular signalling, transporting essentials like lipids and calcium between organelles.

"Over the past decade or so, modern genomics and technological advancements have helped scientists establish that more than 20 proteins are located at the MCS between the ER and PM. However, there is still limited scientific evidence to answer why certain proteins are prevalent at these sites or what role they play in cell health," NCBS said.The present study has tracked how some of these proteins tune the operations at the cell MCS, whose health is directly linked to cell health.NCBS said for photoreceptors, a special type of neuron in the retina, calcium is a message encoder. It encodes and delivers information (about light intensity) from the surroundings to the cell, which in this case is the amount of light. When light is absorbed, the lipid transfer activity of RDGB at MCS is triggered.



Why India's exports jumped 26% in August

India's goods exports in August jumped 26%, driven by a sharp jump in shipments to the US which rose by over 20% amid lower tariffs on Indian goods compared to last year, when heightened tensions with Washington led to 50% tariffs by August 27, 2025, according to data released Tuesday by the Ministry of Commerce.In August, exports to the US jumped over 21% to $8.3 billion compared to $6.8 billion. This was the sharpest export jump to Washington this calendar year.

Depreciation in the domestic currency by over 10% also helped India's goods exports jump 26% to $43.81 billion in August this year compared to $34.74 billion during August 2025. Lower gold imports also helped goods imports last month grow at a slower pace of 14.05% to $70.67 billion compared to $61.96 billion in August 2025.This is the first time during the ongoing financial year that gold imports declined sharply to $2.30 billion in August this year compared to $5.44 billion in August last year."Goods import growth is lower than export growth. This has helped the goods trade deficit decline from $26.86 billion in August this year compared to $27.20 billion in August 2025," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal told the press.The sharp jump in exports this August comes on a lower base, as US tariffs last year had begun impacting India. The first set of 25% reciprocal tariffs came into effect on August 7, 2025. And by August 27, additional tariffs of another 25% over Russian oil imports also came into effect, raising the overall tariffs to 50%.Compared to August last year, India's exports are only facing 10% tariffs.Meanwhile, economists said that the sharp rupee depreciation is also helping exports, but the benefits may be more visible in high-margin products.

An HSBC report last month said that high-tech exports (around half of core exports) show relatively higher uplift after rupee depreciation. "Within this bucket, machinery, electronics, and transport show the most positive response over the two- to three-quarter horizon," the report said.This is followed by low-tech exports, which respond modestly to the depreciating currency. Marine goods and food products show the most positive response in this category, and then have mid-tech exports (about one-third of the core exports), which show negligible response, and the results hold across categories like textiles, footwear, plastics, and stones, the report said.During the April to June quarter, high-end products such as engineering goods, electronics and pharmaceuticals grew 18.1%, 22.6% and 6.8%, respectively, and several labour-intensive sectors registered a sharp decline.

Textile exports slipped 12.4%, while leather products declined 4.7%. Exports of low-margin products such as fruits and vegetables, ceramics and glassware, and jute products fell 10.3%, 25%, and 13.4%, respectively. Tea exports were under particular pressure, falling 17.5%. Of the 31 export sectors, 11 posted a year-on-year decline in April-June.S C Ralhan, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), said the 26.12 per cent growth in merchandise exports in August is encouraging and reflects the resilience, competitiveness and adaptability of Indian exporters.

He said that encouraging export growth across markets such as China, Singapore, Germany, South Africa, Malaysia, Tanzania, Hong Kong, Australia, Spain and Sri Lanka points towards greater diversification of India's export basket."Automobile exports also recorded a strong 22.2% year-on-year increase, led by two- and three-wheelers, while gems and jewellery exports remained positive, rising 3.14% to $2.30 billion. The continued expansion of electronics and engineering exports, along with the resilience of chemicals, pharmaceuticals and other manufacturing-intensive sectors, indicates a strengthening of India's diversified export basket," he said.On the import side, petroleum and energy products, electronic goods and other industrial inputs continued to account for significant import demand, reflecting domestic production and consumption requirements, while gold imports declined sharply to around $ 2.3 billion, helping moderate the merchandise trade deficit, Ralhan said.

US Sanctions Act puts India at risk of tariffs of up to 100 pc: GTRI

New Delhi: A bill passed by the US House of Representatives authorising President Donald Trump to impose sanctions on Russia and steep tariffs on countries buying Russian oil and gas, including India, could expose New Delhi to tariffs of up to 100 per cent, think tank GTRI said on Thursday.However, the actual impact of new tariffs on Indian exports can be assessed only after the US announces the tariff rates, product coverage and implementation timetable, it said.

The Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, passed by the US Senate last month, was approved by the House in a 262-159 vote on Wednesday, and will now go to Trump to be signed into law.The law authorises Trump to impose stiff tariffs on China, India and other countries to cut their dependence on Russian oil and gas.The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that the Act also allows the US president to impose additional tariffs of up to 100 per cent on goods from the five largest buyers of Russian crude oil and natural gas.India and China, both major buyers of Russian crude, are likely targets, it said, adding that the Act puts India at risk of tariffs of up to 100 per cent.

"The new US Act turns sanctions into a trade weapon against India. Washington will now threaten tariffs of up to 100 per cent and then offer a lower rate if New Delhi cuts Russian oil purchases and accepts concessions under a deeply unequal bilateral trade agreement," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.He cautioned that India should not trade away its energy security for temporary tariff relief."Neither signing a trade agreement nor stopping Russian oil purchases can protect it from future US action under Section 301, sectoral measures or other trade laws," he said.He added that Washington has imposed new tariffs even after signing trade agreements with major partners such as the EU, Japan and South Korea, using Section 301 investigations, sectoral measures and other trade laws."India should not allow US tariff threats to determine its energy policy. Discounted Russian crude has lowered India's import bill, strengthened energy security and helped contain inflation," Srivastava said, adding that India should continue buying Russian oil as long as it remains commercially competitive and negotiate firmly with Washington without granting unilateral trade concessions.INDIA'S OIL DEPENDNECE:The GTRI said that the threat is serious because India imports more than 88 per cent of its crude-oil requirements.Download Interactive MapsIn July 2026, Russia supplied India with crude worth USD 7.27 billion — 51.1 per cent of its total crude imports of USD 14.21 billion.

The UAE accounted for 10.8 per cent of India's July imports, Saudi Arabia 9.6 per cent, Venezuela 6.3 per cent, Brazil 5.5 per cent, Oman 5.3 per cent and the US 2.9 per cent."Russia alone supplied more crude than these six countries combined.India's sources of oil have changed sharply. Until 2022, Gulf countries supplied more than 55 per cent of India's crude, while Russia's share was below 15 per cent," Srivastava said.US-led disruptions to Gulf oil supplies have since reduced the Gulf countries' share to below 30 per cent, pushing India to buy much larger quantities from Russia, he said.Further, he said that China buys more Russian crude than India, but Washington will put greater pressure on New Delhi as it may fear retaliation by China."The US has discriminated against India before. In July 2025, the US imposed an additional 25 per cent Russia-related tariff on Indian goods while sparing China. The tariff on India was withdrawn only in February 2026," he added.India's exports to the US increased by 21.83 per cent year-on-year to USD 8.4 billion and imports jumped 65.78 per cent to USD 5.97 billion in August.During April-August 2026-27, the country's merchandise exports to the US grew 6.17 per cent to USD 42.8 billion, while imports increased 29.6 per cent to USD 28 billion. The US was the largest trading partner of India in 2025-26.The US is a key export destination for India's labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather and footwear, handicrafts, besides smartphones, chemical, electrical machinery, and pharmaceuticals.

Inflation rates rise in August, eyes turn to RBI's October meeting

A range of indicators measuring prices rose in August, with the main gauge of household inflation rising to 4.82% from 4.45% in July – the highest in at least eight months – government data showed on Monday, bringing the focus on the October 5-7 meeting of the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which could see the first interest rate hike in three-and-a-half years.

While food inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 5.95% in August from 5.52% in July, upward pressure in prices were clearly visible for several items, such as sugar and certain vegetables like onion.The price index of sugar in the CPI surged by a massive 19% in August from July, with the price 24% higher compared to August 2025. Prices have jumped due to lower-than-expected sugar production and inventory falling to multi-year lows. In light of the soaring price of sugar – a key ingredient during the festival season for sweets – the government last month allowed duty-free imports of up to 10 lakh tonnes of raw sugar until October 31.The price of onion, on the other hand, was up 22% in August compared to July, with the late rains delaying planting."The inflation outlook remains vulnerable to both external and weather-related risks," said Rajani Sinha, Chief Economist at CareEdge Ratings. According to Sinha, while the RBI is likely to remain data-dependent, a sustained uptick in inflation "could strengthen the case for a rate hike in the coming months". This makes the October meeting of the MPC "crucial to watch, especially as some major central banks have already embarked on a rate-hiking cycle".The latest CPI inflation print comes three weeks before the next meeting of the MPC. Minutes of last month's meeting had shown that Governor Sanjay Malhotra and Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta were both hinting towards an increase in interest rates. The MPC last increased the repo rate in February 2023.The RBI is legally mandated to keep CPI inflation at 4% in a band of 2-6%. However, this is the third month in a row that headline retail inflation has come in above 4%. The central bank, which last month left the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, expects CPI inflation to average 4.7% in July-September, 5.9% in October-December, 5.5% in January-March 2027, and 5.3% in April-June 2027.

With inflation ticking up and the economy far more robust than anyone had expected – GDP growth was a surprisingly strong 7.8% in the first quarter of 2026-27 – more and more economists have been warning that the MPC must soon increase interest rates. Although CPI inflation has and is expected to remain within the 2-6% band of the RBI, there are fears of price pressures spreading from food and fuel to other categories.

In a sign that price pressures may be broadening, as many as 314 of the 358 items in the CPI saw higher prices in August compared to July. The number was 310 in July and 236 in February, before the war in West Asia had begun.Meanwhile, the number of items whose inflation was more than 4% rose to 110 in August from 101 in July.Signs of higher prices becoming "structural" was also visible in wholesale inflation numbers, according to Devendra Pant, Chief Economist at India Ratings & Research. This, Pant said, could be seen in the fact that wholesale inflation of seven sub-categories of the manufacturing sector – tobacco products, textiles products, chemical products, rubber and plastic products, base metals, electrical equipment and other manufacturing – has remained above 10%. These seven categories make up more than a quarter of the manufacturing group, which in turn accounts for almost two-thirds of the entire WPI.Policy action is also seemingly expected from the US Federal Reserve, which will announce its own interest rate decision on Wednesday.Markets are expecting the US central bank to hike the federal funds rate target range by 25 bps to 3.75–4% after inflation data released on Friday showed American consumer prices rose 0.4% month-on-month in August as against a 0.1% increase in July, with the year-on-year headline inflation rate steady at 3.4%."We recently changed our fed funds (rate) view to forecast a mini 75 bps tightening cycle," ANZ economists led by Brian Martin said on Monday. "We had pencilled in December for the start of that but acknowledged that poor September inflation data could see the cycle start earlier. This is now the case." Martin now expects the US Fed to raise interest rates by 25 bps this week, followed by further hikes in October and December to take the key rate to 4.25–4.50%.

Hours before the household inflation numbers, the commerce ministry released Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data for August, which showed that wholesale inflation rose

to 9.92% from 9.78% in July. This increase was driven by food and fuel prices, with Rahul Agrawal, Principal Economist at ICRA, noting that wholesale food inflation hitting a 20-month high of 7.05% in August was largely due to higher prices of fruits, vegetables, milk, spices, and sugar."We expect food inflation to harden further in September-October on the back of an unfavourable base, as well as the stronger-than-usual sequential hardening in prices of some food items such as sugar, which could sour sentiment during the festive season," Agrawal said.'Sequential hardening' refers to a rise in price from one month to the next.According to Rajeev Sharan, Head of Research at Brickwork Ratings, the "main risk" to household inflation, in addition to any rise in crude oil prices and fresh volatility in vegetable prices, is high wholesale food and input costs eventually being passed on to consumers.In addition to the WPI, the commerce ministry also released producer price data for August on Monday, with inflation based on the output Producer Price Index (PPI) edging up to 9.81% from 9.57% in July.

The output PPI is a new measure of inflation at the factory-gate level and is not very dissimilar from the WPI. However, the output PPI excludes indirect taxes and trade and transport margins. It is expected that the WPI will be phased out by 2031, by when the output PPI will become the default measure of inflation for producers. MoSPI is already using the output PPI to 'deflate' nominal GDP to arrive at real estimates.Meanwhile, the input PPI – which is currently being released on a trial basis for the manufacturing sector – fell 1.6% month-on-month in August from July. This decline was almost entirely driven by 'other manufacturing' and 'manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products', whose price indices slumped 14% and 13%, respectively, in August from July. These two groups together make up 16.1% of the entire input PPI and therefore exert strong influence over the headline number.

Government bars fees on UPI payments up to Rs 2,000, RuPay debit card payments

The government had earlier sought to allay concerns over UPI fees.The government had earlier sought to allay concerns over UPI fees.The Ministry of Finance on Monday notified that banks and system providers cannot levy charges on UPI transactions of up to Rs 2,000 and RuPay debit card payments."No bank or system provider shall impose, whether directly or indirectly, any charge upon a person making or receiving a payment by using the electronic modes of payment specified in paragraph above," the government notification said in which it specified RuPay debit cards and UPI transactions of up to Rs 2,000.Only 4% of person-to-merchant (P2M) UPI payments in 2025-26 were for more than Rs 2,000. And these 4% of transactions made up around two-thirds of UPI payments by value.In 2025-26, more than 24,000 crore UPI transactions worth Rs 314 lakh crore were made.

The notification comes after the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 – passed by Parliament last month – amended Section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 such that the exemption from any bank charges to electronic payments under section 269SU of the Income-tax Act, 1961 was removed. Section 269SU applied to every person having a business turnover of over Rs 50 crore.Section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 said no bank or system provider can impose any charge on payments made through electronic modes prescribed under Section 269SU. These modes were RuPay debit cards, BHIM-UPI, and UPI-QR code. As such, the amendment had paved the way for a Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) fee to be imposed on UPI and RuPay debit card payments to large merchants such as Amazon and Flipkart.However, the government has repeatedly said that small value transactions and money paid by one individual to another will not face any charges. This is what has been notified on Monday.

"The recent amendment to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act (PSS Act) has generated debate, with some misinterpreting it as a move to impose charges on ordinary users. In reality, the amendment is an enabling provision designed to ensure UPI's long-term sustainability, technological advancement, and resilience against emerging risks," the finance ministry had said on August 8 amid

speculation that charges would apply on all UPI payments.Banks and payment service providers have for years been saying that the cost of maintaining digital payments infrastructure is rising, with the Standing Committee on Finance noting in a report in March that the "absence of MDR makes the UPI ecosystem financially unsustainable".

Usually in the range of 1-3%, an MDR is levied on merchants by banks that process debit and credit card payments to help meet transaction processing, settlement, and infrastructure costs. Since January 2020, there has been no MDR on RuPay debit cards and UPI transactions to promote the adoption of digital payments across the country.In lieu of the lack of MDR, the government has been subsidising payments of up to Rs 2,000 made to small merchants through its 'Incentive scheme for promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions (P2M)'. The incentive offered is capped at 0.15% of the transaction value. Large merchants are not covered under this scheme.The Budget for 2026-27 estimated the subsidy payout under this scheme to be Rs 2,000 crore in the current fiscal. In 2025-26, Rs 2,196.21 crore was paid as subsidy, up from Rs 1,922.77 crore in 2024-25.However, the Ministry of Finance's Department of Financial Services told the Standing Committee on Finance earlier this year that the payments industry was incurring an annual cost of Rs 20,700 crore for person-to-merchant transactions.According to reports, an MDR of around 0.4% may be levied on high-value person-to-merchant UPI payments.

NSE's Rs 22,569-cr IPO begins; subscribed 9 pc so far on Day 1

New Delhi: The mega Rs 22,569-crore initial public offering of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) opened for subscription on Thursday, with the issue getting subscribed 9 per cent so far on the first day of bidding.The IPO received bids for 81,99,336 shares against 8,86,42,911 shares on offer, as per BSE data till 10:16 am.The category for non-institutional investors was subscribed 15 per cent, and the portion for retail investors received 12 per cent subscription.The NSE on Wednesday garnered Rs 6,746 crore from anchor investors, including state-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Goldman Sachs and Fidelity.Additionally, sovereign wealth funds GIC Singapore, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and Norges Bank, as well as Eastspring and HSBC Global Asset Management also participated in the anchor round.The offering, which comprises an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 12.64 crore equity shares by existing shareholders, is India's second-largest public issue after Hyundai Motor India's Rs 27,870-crore IPO in 2024.The exchange has fixed a price band of Rs 1,700-1,785 per equity share for the IPO. It will command a valuation of Rs 4.2 lakh crore to Rs 4.42 lakh crore at the upper end of the price band.The reduction in the OFS size from the earlier planned 14.9 crore shares has brought down the overall issue size from the initial estimate of around Rs 30,000 crore. At the lower end of the price band, the issue is estimated at around Rs 21,494 crore, while at the upper end it would amount to around Rs 22,569 crore.The IPO surpassed the Rs 21,000-crore offering of LIC in 2022, but remains below Hyundai Motor India's record issue.

After 3 foreigners flew out of Delhi without immigration check, Air India gets notice

Three Italian nationals travelled from Delhi to Munich without going through immigration at the Delhi airport on September 4. The incident prompted the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to issue a show-cause notice to Air India, said sources.The three passengers had taken an Air India "hub-and-spoke" flight on the night of September 3 from Amritsar to Delhi, after which they boarded a Lufthansa flight to Munich early on September 4 without going through immigration.Given the serious nature of the lapse, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan is likely to soon hold a meeting with stakeholders, including top officials at MoCA, Bureau of Immigration, Air India and airport operator Delhi International Airport.Under the hub-and-spoke arrangement, also known as 'Easy Connect', Air India passengers flying overseas via Delhi from select domestic airports can clear immigration at the origin airport, and then take the Air India international flight from the Delhi airport without having to go through immigration.For such passengers, the boarding pass for the first flight has a special designator code I, which means they can head directly to the departure gate for the international flight after landing at the Delhi airport. For others, the boarding pass for the domestic flight has a designator D, requiring them to technically exit the arrivals at Delhi. The designator codes allow the airline and other authorities to differentiate the Easy Connect passengers from others.According to sources, in this instance, the three Italian nationals were not eligible for the Easy Connect service and were supposed to exit at Delhi and go through immigration again for their Lufthansa flight to Munich. Prima facie, it appears to be a case of oversight and confusion, with these passengers directly heading to the boarding gate for the next flight, along with the Easy Connect passengers,

as per a source. Their boarding cards for the Delhi-Munich flight were issued at the Amritsar airport. Lufthansa and Air India have a codeshare partnership.After the incident came to light, following manual reconciliation of passenger data, MoCA on Saturday (September 12) issued a show-cause notice to Air India, giving the airline seven days to respond, it is learnt. The Tata group carrier has not responded yet, sources said. Air India didn't comment on the incident and the show-cause notice.The Civil Aviation Ministry has sought the airline's response on various counts, including how passengers with the D designator on their boarding passes were able to move freely in the international transit area of the Delhi airport instead of being directed towards the arrivals area, it is learnt. It has also asked Air India about the role of its ground handling agency AISATS in handling transfer passengers at the Delhi airport, and about the reconciliation of domestic and international passenger data for the incoming flight from Amritsar, which was evidently not done promptly.

Asian Games: Satwik, Treesa at the net, Chirag and Gayatri smashing from the back

Asian Games 2026: India's best doubles pairs are abandoning fixed roles for something harder to scout against.Asian Games 2026: India's best doubles pairs are abandoning fixed roles for something harder to scout against.Where badminton forks away from volleyball and develops a personality of its own is when Treesa Jolly starts dribbling at the net, and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy uses strategic high lifts, imparting visible deceleration on the shuttle with the slightest of backswings, unlike the expansive one behind his 500kph smash.Treesa can poke and prod at the net with the tiniest tilts of the thumb metacarpal and first phalanx, a skill she learned beyond her core capability as a smash hitter herself.

With just two people on the court, badminton's ace doubles practitioners don't have the luxury of role-assigned blockers, setters, spikers or a super-specific libero. Chirag Shetty is expected to dive full-stretch in defence for a block, run the offence like a setter for Satwik, and soar high for a tracked-back smash two returns later, all in the same rally. Gayatri Gopichand was always underestimated for her smashing, until the Delhi World Championships, when her forehand cross-court smash left China's Jia Yifan unable to guard her back court.

The Indian doubles style has evolved in 2026 with deceptive personalities at its core, and a healthy disregard for being hemmed in by restrictive definitions. The last two World Championship medals have come from doubles, Satwik-Chirag first, Treesa-Gayatri most recently, and both pairs are redrawing what an Indian doubles player plays like: everything, everywhere, all at once, coherent to each other even when the world watches, puzzled.Satwik and Chirag don't feel extra pressure to defend the Asian Games crown. Satwik and Chirag don't feel extra pressure to defend the Asian Games crown. he unmaking of the label, "Satwik, Treesa smash" or "Chirag, Gayatri set it up", was at the core of this evolution. Satwik's shoulder gave way. Treesa was forced to sit out, nursing a foot injury, and used the time to train meditatively on the hundred ways to dribble. PV Sindhu had done something similar in late 2015 with a hurt foot of her own. Treesa, a sponge for new skills, decided to shape-shift her game entirely to master the net, before the pair won bronze in Delhi.Chirag and Gayatri, meanwhile, remain quietly in awe of their respective partners' big smashes, and tend to hide their own sharp-sniping abilities, which aren't shabby at all. It helps that they're underestimated. It's worth a chuckle that Chirag's fastest recorded lab smash still reads 552kph, even if it falls short of Satwik's 565kph.

Like Sindhu in singles, both Treesa and Satwik were smash machines once. But that isn't sustainable on the back and shoulder. So both learned the meditative art of slowing their breathing, using the racquet as a scalpel rather than a scythe, and discovering the "feel" on the shuttle in badminton's unspoken battle zone: the net.Gayatri's smashes work on placement more than power, an important distinction, since Japanese and Chinese women's doubles pairs are trained specifically to pick apart the hardest hits. Her vision in finding gaps is an innate skill, and she plays close-range confrontations with a ticking brain and locked wrists. This isn't just a rotation in her game. It's closer to a full flip in her repertoire.Satwik-Chirag won the "first three shots" battle at China Masters, where trick serves were on show. Gayatri is being tutored in spinny serves by the least-known member of her family, her brother Vishnu, a former shuttler now graduating from Loughborough.Leaping high and unleashing a gigantic smash had been second nature to Treesa. But when your game is that aligned to one shot, you're one video-analysis session away from being countered. That's why Treesa summoned something closer to sorcery at the net: canny strokes, serve variations, and the audacity to dribble rather than shy away from close combat, which is what most net scenarios demand.These weren't make-do parries at the net. Proper keeps, precise taps, choosy pushes, subtly varying serves, none of the escape-lifts. Gayatri's interceptions look effortless; Treesa's take real daring to catch fast drives at the net. While the world stayed stuck on Gayatri's surname and Treesa's smash, the duo were quietly outrunning the predictability of how they were seen. If they can hold this chameleon act through back-to-back matches going deep into a tournament, they're too cerebral not to wed savage attack to subtle sniping.There's a Nicolas Cage-John Travolta film from before any of these four were born. But Satwik-Chirag and Treesa-Gayatri are, right now, in the Face/Off stage of their rotational play. That vice-versa trick, the devilish duality, is what Indian doubles play can be defined as.

India squad announced for West Indies ODI and T20I series

Hyderabad: The BCCI Men's Selection Committee has announced India's squads for the upcoming white-ball home series against the West Indies and the Rest of India squad for the Irani Cup clash against Ranji Trophy champions Jammu & Kashmir.The West Indies series will commence with the first ODI in Thiruvananthapuram on September 27 and conclude with the fifth T20I in Bengaluru on October 17.Hyderabad will host the fourth T20I on October 14.

India's ODI team: Shubman Gill (C), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Ruturaj Gaikwad, KL Rahul (VC, WK), Dhruv Jurel (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar, Mohammed Siraj, Auqib Nabi, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Naman Dhir.India's T20I team: Shreyas Iyer (C), Abhishek Sharma, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ishan Kishan (WK), Sanju Samson (WK), Tilak Varma (VC), Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Arshdeep Singh, Prince Yadav, Mayank Yadav.Rest of India squad: Rishabh Pant (C, WK), Sanat Sangwan, Shikhar Mohan, Sudip Gharami, Sarfaraz Khan (VC), Smaran Ravichandran, Manav Suthar, Saransh Jain, Akash Deep*, Mukesh Kumar, Mukesh Choudhary, Aryan Juyal (WK), Aryan Pandey, Anukul Roy, Ayush Doseja.Note: Akash Deep's selection is subject to fitness clearance.Varun Chakaravarthy has been ruled out of the

upcoming Japan T20I and the Asian Games due to a side strain. The Men's Selection Committee has named Vipraj Nigam as his replacement. Nitish Kumar Reddy, who was originally included in the Asian Games squad, has been withdrawn and will feature in the ODI series against the West Indies.India's updated squad for the Japan T20I and Asian Games: Shreyas Iyer (C), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (WK), Ishan Kishan (WK), Shivam Dube, Tilak Varma (VC), Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Yash Thakur, Vipraj Nigam.

China, Japan among four teams through to Asian Games basketball semifinals

Nagoya (Japan): China, Japan, South Korea and Iran advanced to the men's basketball semifinals at the 2026 Asian Games after winning their respective quarterfinals on Wednesday.China held off Saudi Arabia 87-78 despite forwards Zhu Junlong, Zhao Jiayi and Li Hongquan being sidelined by injuries. China took a 48-39 lead into halftime, but Saudi Arabia fought back to tie the game at 62 at the end of the third quarter.

The fourth quarter remained tight before two free throws from Hu Jinqiu gave China an 83-75 lead with 2:04 remaining. Mohammad Alsuwailem then made a free throw and a layup to cut the deficit to 83-78 with 1:29 left, but consecutive baskets from Cui Yongxi and Liao sealed China's victory.Liao, who poured in a game-high 30 points, led four Chinese players in double digits, while Yu Jiahao added 16 points and nine rebounds. Muhammad Abdurrahkman led Saudi Arabia with 25 points.

Iran narrowly defeated Bahrain 79-74 to advance to the semifinals. With 10.4 seconds remaining and holding a three-point lead, Iran missed three consecutive free throws, giving Bahrain a final chance to turn the game around.On Bahrain's last possession, guard Mustafa Rashed missed a three-pointer from the corner. He was then ejected after receiving his second technical foul of the game for disputing the call, ending Bahrain's hopes of a comeback.In the other two quarterfinals, Lee Hyun-jung scored 28 points and grabbed nine rebounds, while veteran Choi Jun-yong added six points on his return as South Korea routed Jordan 114-

80. Host Japan defeated Chinese Taipei 85-78, with Kotetsu Kurokawa scoring 23 points.The men's basketball semifinals will be played on Friday, with China facing Japan and South Korea taking on Iran. The official tournament schedule also confirms the semifinal matchups for September 18.Earlier, China completed a perfect group-stage campaign in the 2026 Asian Games men's basketball tournament with a 105-61 rout of defending champions the Philippines on Monday, as the quarterfinal lineup was confirmed.China seized control from the opening tip, using quick ball movement and fast breaks to build a 36-16 lead after the first quarter.Bahrain defeated Kazakhstan 101-78 to finish second in Group C with a 2-1 record and make it to the last eight.

Dean Jones-Chennai connect, government initiative behind BBL opener in Chepauk

Phil Rigby, the Head of League Operations & Club Growth for Big Bash League (BBL), has revealed the bilateral initiative between Indian and Australian government is what enabled Cricket Australia to take their prized T20 event to India. The BBL, one of the oldest T20 leagues behind the Indian Premier League, will host the opening game of the 16th season at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium with Perth Scorchers taking on Melbourne Renegades on December 12.While the talk of BBL exploring the option of playing a game in India came up earlier this year, the BCCI initially didn't seem receptive. But within months all of it changed with a formal announcement made by PM Narendra Modi during his visit to Australia in July. "This isn't just about a Big Bash game; this whole conversation started around a broader bilateral government initiative around how we can grow and strengthen the relationship between Australia and India. What's the best way to do that? Through cricket. Cricket is India's game, and it's Australia's game, so that's the logical starting point for that conversation," Rigby said in Chennai during an official event on Thursday.

With regards to zeroing in on Chennai as a venue, it is understood that the T20 World Cup fixtures in the city happened to be a great pull. Though it hosted only one India fixture and most of the other fixtures were day games, there was a considerable turnout, and this BBL again being a 2.30 PM start local time, it fitted into BBL's requirement."With discussions we had with the BCCI, it was an easy decision to play this game in Chennai. I think what was really shared with us is how great the cricket fans are in Chennai and how they embrace all formats of cricket. And Chennai and Chepauk Stadium are actually special places for Australians. It has a deep history with Australian cricket. I'm old enough to remember Dean Jones playing on this ground during the tied Test. As we know, it's home to some of the most passionate cricket fans in the world here in Chennai. So we are excited to be here," he said.

With IPL being its prized asset, the BCCI has gone to all extents to protect it. None of the Indian players are allowed to feature in other leagues, while even the franchise's have been barred to play even any friendly matches away from India. But the BCCI was open to a one-off BBL match. "I can only talk positively about the support we've received from the BCCI. We're not coming here to compete with the IPL. My observations and the engagement I've had show that both Indians and Australians have a very special relationship with each other. That was how the conversation started—we're here to share that Big Bash experience, which is very different from the IPL or other T20 leagues," Rigby added.For the match in Chennai, it is understood that Cricket Australia wants to replicate the BBL match experience to the fans over here as well with special arrangements being made. The ticket sales – which will start in first week of October – will be managed by BBL directly which wants to build a lively atmosphere at Chepauk for the game.

"We want to bring our authentic Big Bash experience that our fans enjoy at the MCG or SCG or anywhere else. The core elements of a Big Bash match — remember there are certain rules in a BBL that are different from the IPL. No one has ever seen the Power Surge, as an example, in India before. We're bringing a brand new rule this year: our designated hitter/designated fielder rule (like Impact Player). So there are some things in our game that are different from

what you've seen in an IPL game. The other part of it is the show and the fan experience. If you have watched on television, things like the bucket heads, colour, and all the different moments in a game, we'll be bringing those. From my perspective, another part is also how we can really find those Chennai flavours that we can bring into the game day as well, almost paying homage to the community," he said.Playing the BBL in India also comes at a time when CA has opened the doors for private investment into the tournament starting with the Melbourne Renegades. "They're a high-profile team. Melbourne is a large market in Australia, and they play games at the MCG. If you look at the Melbourne Renegades this year, tell me another team that's playing a match at the MCG and Chepauk Stadium in their season. We expect there's a large amount of interest from all over the world, from all sorts of types of investors who woud want to be part of the Big Bash," Rigby added.

India men need to raise their game at Asian Games: Rasquinha

New Delhi: Former India captain Viren Rasquinha on Thursday said the men's hockey team did not look like it was giving everything at the World Cup and warned that the side will carry the pressure and weight of expectation into the 2026 Asian Games, beginning next week in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.India finished eighth in the recent men's World Cup in the Netherlands and Belgium, a result that has left little room for comfort ahead of the continental event in Japan, where winning a gold medal will also seal a direct berth for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics."Obviously, there will be pressure, given the fact that we definitely played below par in terms of men's hockey. I thought that the women's team actually overachieved and played above expectations."So they need to continue with the positive momentum. But in men's hockey, there will definitely be pressure. But as I said, we are favourites, and we have to really be strong in what we do," Rasquinha told IANS in a select virtual interaction organised by Sony Sports Network.Rasquinha also felt the men's team's problems were not confined to one department."I think there are many areas where we can improve. I thought — I don't want to take individual names — but in all aspects, whether it was goalkeeping, whether it was overall defending as a team, midfield, supporting the attack, falling back into defence, and also the sharpness of the forwards.

Babar Azam set to make domestic first-class comeback after England tour

Lahore: The Pakistan Cricket Board's stunning decision to send back seven members from the Test tour of England appears to have rattled the top players, with current Test captain Babar Azam set to make an appearance in a domestic first-class match for the first time since 2019.Babar is lined up to represent Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) against Kingsmen Academy in the ongoing President's Trophy Grade-I competition from September 18.

Babar is not the only centrally contracted player appearing in domestic red-ball cricket following the disastrous tour of England.Others such as fast bowlers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf, who hardly play any first-class matches at home, have already appeared for different teams in the President's Cup.Haris, in fact, after taking a five-wicket haul for PTV, expressed his desire to play red-ball cricket for Pakistan in the current season.The fast bowler has appeared in only one Test, against England in 2022, in which he was injured after bowling 13 overs."If I can be useful for Pakistan because of my pace, I would gladly play Test cricket," he said.Haris, ironically, had refused to play the Test series in Australia in December 2023, insisting he wanted to manage his heavy workload.Haris, known more for his T20 appearances, even had his central contract suspended for a while before it was restored.

Shaheen has appeared for the KRL side, taking four wickets in an innings.Babar, who has not played any first-class domestic games since 2019, when he last appeared for Central Punjab in the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy, has returned home from England ready for the coming

challenge.OGDCL sports head Farah Batool said the Pakistan Cricket Board had sent Babar's name to be included as a guest player.Babar, who was reappointed Pakistan's Test captain in July, led the national side to a 1-1 draw against the West Indies and a 0-3 whitewash against England in his first two series in charge.More notably, the PCB decided to make seven changes to the squad and sack head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed and bowling coach Umar Gul without consulting or informing Babar after Pakistan lost the second Test at Lord's inside three days."Babar's kit has been ordered and he will decide whether to play in the match from September 18 or from September 24 in the third-round game," Batool said.But a source said the PCB had conveyed that it wanted Babar in action in domestic first-class cricket as soon as possible.

Why China were knocked out of Asian Games cricket even before a ball was bowled

Asian Games cricket: China were knocked out without a ball being bowled in the quarter-final on Wednesday. (X)Asian Games cricket: China were knocked out without a ball being bowled in the quarter-final on Wednesday. (X)Two days before the official opening of the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, the Chinese women's cricket team faced an agonising exit without even taking the field.The opening quarter-final fixture of the women's T20I cricket event between China and Bangladesh was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to inclement weather around the Korogi Sports Park in Nisshin.Heavy weather had plagued Korogi Sports Park on the outskirts of Nagoya all week, culminating in a total cancellation of play on Thursday morning, proving costly for the Chinese side, making their third Asiad appearance since 2010.How did Bangladesh qualify over China?

Nigar Sultana's Bangladesh, therefore, advanced to the semi-final stage over China despite an abandoned game. According to the Asian Games cricket Playing Conditions, rule 16.10.2 (b) states that the higher-ranked side will advance in the event of a washout.The rule also came into effect in the 2023 edition, with three of the four quarter-finals involving India, Pakistan and Bangladesh being washed out.Pakistan are scheduled to play Thailand at the same venue in Thursday's second quarter-final fixture.The defeat ends China's campaign in cricket, with the men's team not being a part of the eight-nation line-up for the tournament.All

cricket matches at the Games will be played at the same venue. Bangladesh will now likely face India in the women's semi-finals. Harmanpreet Kaur's side will clash with hosts Japan in their quarter-final in Nisshin on Friday.Both semi-finals will be played on Sunday, with the gold medal match scheduled to be held on September 22.The Indian men's team are also scheduled to play Japan in their first bilateral match at the Sano International Cricket Ground, about 100 kilometres from Tokyo, on September 22. Team India led by Shreyas Iyer will face the Japan team captained by Kendel Kadowaki-Fleming in the T20 International.The match is part of the celebrations to mark 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi .

‘Used my pauses as weapons’: Manu Rishi on playing Pervez Musharraf in Operation Safed Sagar

Those who’ve observed Manu Rishi Chadha’s onscreen journey for the past 24 years would be pleasantly surprised to see him play Pervez Musharraf, former Pakistan president and the mastermind behind the 1999 Kargil War against India, in Netflix India’s period war drama Operation Safed Sagar. But those who’ve traced his onscreen arc too closely wouldn’t be shocked to see how he portrays the antagonistic character with consummate ease. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, the actor talks about how he got into Musharraf’s skin, doing the confrontational scenes with Vinay Pathak’s Nawaz Sharif, and finally breaking his age-old stereotype.

Do you think playing Musharraf would help you break the stereotype of a comic actor that you’ve been boxed into all these years?

Yes, of course. That’s very beautiful and soothing to hear. In the industry, it’s a crime if you do a good role. That fetches you an award, and then everybody starts calling you. My savings dried up before doing Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye! (2008), and I didn’t get any money for that film. So, whoever approached me after that, I kept saying yes. Han bolte bolte laga ki acting se zyada boring koi cheez hi nahi hai. Everybody’s giving me Manu Rishi to play. Manu Rishi is very good at improvisation. I haven’t even done a proper comedy yet, if you leave out Subhash Kapoor’s film Phas Gaye Re Obama (2010).

You don’t consider Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye! a comedy?

For me, Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye! isn’t a comedy. It was a very serious role. That also wasn’t that great, but every producer, director, and screenwriter began calling me to improvise. Everyone had tasted blood. So, I kept working for money without enjoying. I developed the habit of making good of weirdly written lines. So, I’d be doing two jobs within one — of a writer and an actor, but got paid only for one craft. When I was asked at an event whether I enjoy writing or acting, I said I don’t enjoy acting anymore.

How did you land the role of Pervez Musharraf then?

Even in those odd jobs, maybe my honesty would shine through. Which is probably why everyone’s receiving my performance of Musharraf well. So, even if you want me to play Manu Rishi, let me tap into another side of Manu Rishi. I want to cry, make people laugh, get scared, and scare someone too. There are so many faces in abhinay. Just yesterday, someone told me, “We were going to approach you for a role, but we saw you as Musharraf. Now, we won’t be able to offer you the role. It was a great role, but we got scared.” I said, “Good that you got scared” (laughs).

You co-wrote another Indo-Pak war drama, Vijay Raaz’s Kya Dilli Kya Lahore (2014), where you also played a soldier, but an Indian one originally from Lahore. Given that the film didn’t find many takers, does it feel validating to now play the 180-degree opposite of that character?

That’s a bitter truth which we should face and accept. Do you know how much I charged for that film? It’s been a few years, so let me disclose it now — only Rs 1100! I was so emotionally convinced. The producer (Karan Arora) and director were new. The director couldn’t do the film, so Vijay Raaz had to step up. Gulzar sahab also gave four of his songs to the film for only Rs 1100. So, I thought if he’s done that, I should do that too. Everything was done so well in that film, but the producer thought who’d come and watch Vijay Raaz and Manu Rishi Chadha? So, the producer didn’t market it well. He lost interest only because he was hopeful Vinay Pathak and Ranvir Shorey would agree to do the film. Because I’d co-written the film, and they were my friends. But they didn’t find the producer right. They’re much more experienced. So, the producer tried for Amitabh Bachchan and Mithun Chakraborty. He came from an equity firm, so he had the small-town dream of making it big in Mumbai one day. So, the film fell prey to that. It’s sad.

How did you get into the skin of Pervez Musharraf?

My first instinct as an actor was to open YouTube and watch his videos. But I’d gone to Nawazuddin Siddiqui to narrate something, so I just asked him casually how he did Manto (2018). He said he didn’t have any visual reference of Manto. He just had a photo and text for reference. He also said he wanted to place his faith on Nandita (Sen, director). So, I also began discussing it with Abhijeet Parmar (co-creator) and Oni (Sen, director) sir, and I realised they know more about Musharraf than me. A long time ago, I’d watched a conclave of Musharraf in India. I observed that he always thought he’s saying the truth. We know that he’s lying. It was very important to locate that human in him. All humans have the ability to carry lies for over 20-25 years.

But for such an animated actor like you, was it difficult to play Musharraf without overdoing it?

I think it was very important to play him with stillness. I should always keep my volume correct. I’m not like that. I’m a Chadha from Delhi, boss! Punjab’s Punjabis are still subtle. Punjabis from Delhi are a bit overboard. I also realised while reading the script that I need to take a little pause before each dialogue. I’ve used all my pauses as weapons, actually. I didn’t watch the monitor during the scenes. When I thought I’d made a mistake, I’d say sorry, but the director would reassure me that I was doing it very well. So, I was nervous, and had doubts about my performance. But the day I’m not nervous, I make big f*ck-ups.

Since you mentioned Vinay Pathak is a friend, and he’s also great at improvisation, how was it doing those scenes of friction between Musharraf and then-Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif?

Vinay is also from the same school because we’ve all grown with Rajat Kapoor. But we were not allowed to improvise at all. We were yearning for it a lot, but we were at the mercy of our director. We weren’t even allowed to joke on set. I have this habit of storytelling and drifting, but Abhijeet would bring me back (laughs). We had the permission of adding a few changes, but before the shoot, not while performing.Vinay Pathak as Nawaz Sharif, Aanjjan Srivastav as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Manu Rishi Chadha as Pervez Musharraf in Operay Vinay Pathak as Nawaz Sharif, Aanjjan Srivastav as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Manu Rishi Chadha as Pervez Musharraf in Operation Safed Sagar.Musharraf had such a long and eventful life, marked by his military coup that ousted Sharif and his subsequent rise to the presidency of Pakistan. If you get a chance to tap into another aspect of his life, what would that be?I’d take it in an entirely different direction. I feel Musharraf should be alive and realising his mistakes. As per our Hindu beliefs, Musharraf’s restless soul keeps wandering till he gets Dawood Ibrahim back to India. And then Dawood tells him, “Thank you for bringing me back to India. Now, I can at least be laid to rest in Azamgarh.” And then the film ends (laughs). I don’t believe in picking historical chapters, but in using fiction to show realism. Isn’t it a good idea? We should borrow the intellects and sensibilities of all the great directors I’ve worked with to write this one — Oni sir, Rajat Kapoor, Sudhir Mishra, and Dibakar Banerjee. When we do theatre, we do bring Shakespeare to the contemporary world. So, we can bring Musharraf back too.

‘Was repeatedly slapped by monk during guerrilla shoot in Haridwar’: Vinay Forrt

With director Girish AD’s Bethlehem Kudumba Unit, starring Nivin Pauly and Mamitha Baiju in the lead roles, all set for release on August 21, paving the way for a direct clash with director Vysakh’s Prithviraj Sukumaran-led Khalifa, Malayalam movie audiences are all pumped as the Onam box-office showdown has finally begun. Recently, during the promotion of Bethlehem Kudumba Unit, actor Vinay Forrt, who plays a key role in the romantic comedy, shared an anecdote from his early acting days when he was slapped multiple times by a monk during the making of a film.Guerrilla shooting in Haridwar gone wrongThe incident apparently occurred while Vinay was shooting for director Sajeevan Anthikad’s Prabhuvinte Makkal (2012) in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, in a guerrilla-filmmaking style. For those unfamiliar, guerrilla filmmaking, according to Studio Binder, is defined as “a shooting style that is done clandestinely with no film permits, limited props, and usually a bare-minimum crew.”Don’t Miss | Khalifa review: Prithviraj’s actioner is a hollow spectacle that even Mohanlal can’t save

As he bowed down in front of a monk at an ashram, as per the script, Vinay Forrt recounted that the monk dealt a massive blow to his back with an open palm. Shocked, he tried to get up, but the monk held him down and slapped him again. “Prabhuvinte Makkal is a movie I still like a lot. In Haridwar, we had to film a few scenes in guerrilla style,” he recalled during an Onam-themed promotional event organised by Bhavana Studios, which has bankrolled Bethlehem Kudumba Unit.“When we went for shooting in an ashram, there was a swami (monk). The scene was supposed to feature the swami blessing me. When the director said ‘action,’ I bowed down for his blessing, and he gave me a hard slap on my back. Shocked, I tried to get up through the pain. But he held my head, pushed it down, and slapped me again and again,” Forrt shared.The actor joked that some of his ruthless friends still revisit the song often. Nivin Pauly, who was sitting beside Vinay Forrt as he shared the story, added, “That song is still on YouTube, and you can clearly see the scene in it. Upon receiving the first slap, he flinches and tries to get up, and then gets slapped again.”I think whenever Fahadh Faasil (actor and co-producer of Bethlehem Kudumba Unit) feels low or sad in life, he plays that song on YouTube,” Forrt humorously remarked.Also starring Swasika, Madhu, Kalabhavan Mani, and Salim Kumar in key roles, Prabhuvinte Makkal marked Tovino Thomas’s acting debut as well.

Orry calls Akanksha Chamola a ‘real snake’, says she is ‘milking Gaurav Khanna’s fame’

Gaurav Khanna has found support from Orry amid a growing controversy involving his estranged wife Akanksha Chamola and Khatron Ke Khiladi 15 contestant Shagun Sharma. Orry, who is also participating in the stunt reality show, has defended Gaurav after Akanksha and Shagun made comments about the actor.The controversy surrounding Gaurav and Akanksha began during Lock Upp: Sach Ya Sazaa, where Akanksha revealed that she and Gaurav were getting divorced. She also spoke about her sexuality, revealing that she had been bisexual before her marriage. The couple, who married in 2016, had been living separately, according to Akanksha.

Gaurav later entered Lock Upp to support Akanksha. It was during the show that he clarified that they were still legally married and had not yet filed for divorce. After his appearance, Akanksha made another comment about him, saying that she would rather have her pet dog visit her than Gaurav. The remark later became another talking point around their relationship.

Orry comes out in Gaurav Khanna’s supportRecently, a post on Instagram highlighted comments made by Akanksha Chamola and Shagun Sharma about Gaurav Khanna and noted that both actors are represented by the same talent agency.Orry responded to the post and defended Gaurav, drawing on his own experience of spending time with the actor during the filming of Khatron Ke Khiladi 15 in Cape Town.“She is just blackening his good name and milking his fame for her own views no one knows who she is I dint even know he was married and we shared a vanity together for a month in Capetown during KKK filming this is complete shameless behavior to test and take advantage of a good man this girl is a real snake in the grass and as for shagun I am pretty sure I bullied her more during KKK and we are still good friends it’s just fun to bully her cause she gives good reactions and we needed entertainment.”Shagun Sharma had earlier spoken about her experience with Gaurav Khanna while shooting Khatron Ke Khiladi 15. Speaking to Filmygyan, she claimed that the actor bullied her during the show.“He was someone who bullied me a lot. Let’s say, for example, if five people performed a task and four of them aborted it, out of those four, he would pick on me the most. He would say, ‘Ye to chor deti hai’, ‘She is weak’ and ‘Don’t do this.’ I don’t know whether he is the same in real life too,” she said.

Akanksha Chamola on accusations of using Gaurav Khanna’s popularityAfter her eviction from Lock Upp, Akanksha Chamola was asked whether she had spoken about her divorce to generate publicity. She rejected the suggestion and said the divorce proceedings had already

been underway before she entered the show.“No girl will ever say these things for TRP on such a big platform. There is nothing I would like to say to those who think like this. Everyone who thinks this was for publicity can come home and talk to my legal team. Now that I am out, we are sorting things out. Before coming on Lock Upp, our legal teams were discussing this, and now we just have to sign the papers. The process has already been done.”Akanksha also addressed the criticism she received over comparing Gaurav Khanna with her pet dog.“Even when Gaurav and I were getting married, people thought it was for publicity. Just because we are actors, it doesn’t mean we do things for publicity only. I don’t understand why the media is so cynical about everything; nobody got offended when I compared Gaurav to my parents, but people got offended that I compared him to my dog. Why are you guys only getting offended about Gaurav?”In another conversation with SCREEN, Akanksha Chamola denied that she repeatedly discussed Gaurav Khanna on Lock Upp to use his popularity to stay in the show. She said she addressed the subject because people kept asking her about him.“I only kept talking about Gaurav on the show because people kept asking about him. I didn’t speak because I wanted to; people just want to pick a point. It wasn’t like I just spoke about Gaurav all the time. I did a lot more; Gaurav was not the only topic for me in the game. The thing is, people only want to make an issue of the thing they want to; if they are so selective as to only look at this part, there is nothing much I can say.”Akanksha Chamola and Gaurav Khanna married on November 24, 2016, after reportedly meeting during an audition and falling in love.

From Vikramarkudu to Irumudi: Ravi Teja and the father who fights for his daughter

Ravi Teja has played cops, gangsters, con men, thieves and vigilantes across 77 films and 25 years. He has danced, fought, cracked jokes and delivered mass dialogues. But if you ask most Telugu audiences to name the one Ravi Teja moment that genuinely moved them, a surprising number will point to the lullaby “Jo Laali” from Vikramarkudu, where a petty thief sings a child to sleep because she believes he is her father. Twenty years later, with Irumudi releasing on Friday, he is back in the same emotional territory. Different story, different director, different stakes. But the same trope: A father, a daughter, a threat and a man who has to become better than he is.

In 2006, SS Rajamouli took one of Telugu cinema’s most hyperactive, loudest leading men and asked him to hold a child in his arms. The result was Vikramarkudu, a film that should not have worked as well as it did. Ravi Teja played a dual role: Vikram Singh Rathod, an honest, fearless police officer, and Athili Sathi Babu, a shameless petty thief who lies, cheats, steals and has no redeeming quality anyone can point to. Then a little girl shows up and calls him “Daddy.” She refuses to leave and the man who spent the first half of the film making you laugh at his pathetic life spends the second half making you believe he would die for this child.The soulful lullaby “Jo Laali”, composed by MM Keeravani, became one of the most beloved father-daughter songs in Telugu cinema. Baby Neha, who played the little girl, became an instant audience favourite. And Ravi Teja, the ‘Mass Maharaja’, who was known for his comedy timing and physical energy, proved he could break your heart if the script gave him the room.

Ravi Teja and Baby Neha in Vikramarkudu Ravi Teja and Baby Neha in a still from Vikramarkudu.Vikramarkudu went on to become a blockbuster and ran for over 175 days in multiple centres. It was later remade in Hindi as Rowdy Rathore, starring Akshay Kumar, in Tamil as Siruthai, starring Karthi, in Kannada as Veera Madakari, starring Sudeep, and in Bengali as Bikram Singha, starring Prosenjit Chatterjee.

Twenty years later, the same trope returnsNow, in 2026, Ravi Teja is back with a child. Irumudi, directed by Shiva Nirvana and produced by Mythri Movie Makers, places the actor in a role that shares unmistakable DNA with Vikramarkudu but operates in a completely different emotional register.In Vikramarkudu, the father-daughter bond was accidental. Athili Sathi Babu did not choose to be a father. A child simply showed up, mistook him for her father, and his life changed. The emotion came from a bad man becoming good because of a child’s unconditional trust.In Irumudi, the bond is real from the start. Ravi Teja plays Trinadh, a devoted father to his young daughter Mani, played by child artist Baby Nakshathra. There is no dual role. There is no mistaken identity. There is no comedy-to-emotion pivot. Instead, the film begins with a man who already loves his daughter more than anything, and then systematically breaks him down. A tragedy pushes Trinadh into alcoholism and violence. His daughter begins to fear him. When she asks him to stop drinking, he undertakes the 41-day Ayyappa Deeksha as a way to reclaim himself, wearing the sacred mala and committing to the pilgrimage to Sabarimala.And then, just as in Vikramarkudu, the violence catches up. Young girls in the village begin to disappear. Trinadh’s daughter is threatened. The man who was trying to find peace through devotion is forced to fight.The same question, asked differentlyThe emotional architecture of both films is fundamentally the same: what will a flawed man do when his daughter is in dangerVikramarkudu answered that question with spectacle, with Ravi Teja in a police uniform, with whistle-worthy mass moments and with a climax that turned a thief into a hero. Irumudi, from what the trailer and early reports suggest, answers it with something different. Trinadh is neither a cop nor a man with a hidden identity. He is just a man, an alcoholic, an absent father, trying to hold his life together long enough to keep his child safe.

The child’s role in both films serves the same narrative purpose: she is the reason the hero transforms. In Vikramarkudu, Baby Neha’s innocent attachment to a man she believed was her father was the catalyst for Satya’s redemption. In Irumudi, Baby Nakshathra’s simple request to her father to stop drinking pushes Trinadh to change for the better, ultimately leading him to confront the violence around him.

Ravi Teja and children on screen

What is interesting is how rarely Ravi Teja has returned to this territory between these two films. In a career spanning over 25 years and over 60 films, the father-daughter dynamic has not been a recurring theme in his filmography the way action, comedy and mass entertainment have. He has played fathers before, but rarely has the child been the emotional centre of the story the way it was in Vikramarkudu and the way it appears to be in Irumudi.His recent filmography tells the story of a different kind of actor. Eagle, Mr. Bachchan, Mass Jathara, Bhartha Mahasayulaku Wignyapthi, all of these were action-driven or comedy-driven vehicles where Ravi Teja was the centre of the film in the traditional ‘Mass Maharaja’ mode. None of them asked him to be vulnerable or gave him a child to protect and a personal demon to fight

Johnny Walker quit acting after Guru Dutt’s death: ‘He lost somebody more than a co-actor’

One of the most enduring screen partnerships in the history of Hindi cinema has been that of late legendary actor-filmmaker Guru Dutt and iconic comic actor Johnny Walker. In fact, Dutt was the one who discovered Walker, even giving him his screen name after the popular whisky brand.Talking about Johnny Walker and Guru Dutt’s friendship, the comedian’s son Nasir Khan said, “Their friendship was beyond the screen because daddy was in every film of Guru Dutt sahab. There was no need for him to do that.” Khan quoted the instance of Dutt’s 1957 seminal tragic film Pyaasa, in which the role of masseur Abdul Sattar was specifically written for Walker.

“There was another role he was supposed to do in Pyaasa. But Guru Dutt sahab said, ‘No, Johnny won’t do this role because it turns out to be negative at the end.’ So, another role was written for daddy, which was positive till the end,” Nasir Khan told The Print. Shyam, the role originally written for Walker, was eventually taken up by Shyam Kapoor.Directed by and starring Guru Dutt, Pyaasa also featured Waheeda Rehman, Mala Sinha, Rehman, Leela Mishra, Mehmood and Tun Tun. Although the film underperformed at the box office upon its release, it has since come to be regarded as one of the greatest Hindi films ever made.Johnny Walker’s association with Guru Dutt was rooted in a friendship that extended well beyond their work together. “Guru Dutt thought that if Johnny Walker is his friend, he should stay with him even in the film. Irrespective of what the story is, their friendship would remain till the end,” said Nasir.Johnny Walker was first cast in Guru Dutt’s 1951 noir film Baazi. Post that breakthrough, he featured in

Dutt’s 1954 noir comedy Aar Paar as garage mechanic Rustom aka Rusty.The filmmaker followed that up by casting Walker in his 1955 romantic comedy Mr. & Mrs. ’55, also starring Madhubala opposite the director. Then came Pyaasa, in which Walker made a mark lip-syncing to Mohammed Rafi’s memorable song “Sar Jo Tera Chakraye” in his custom-made role. However, Dutt and Walker’s onscreen partnership was cut short soon with the death of Dutt in 1964.“When Guru Dutt died in 1964, daddy told us a couple of years later that he doesn’t want to do films because he lost somebody more than a co-actor. You come across such people so rarely,” said Nasir Khan.While Johnny Walker continued to play comic characters in films, none of those movies could replicate the impact of his collaborations with Guru Dutt in the 1950s.

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