

SCR to run special MMTS trains for Ganesh idol immersion rush

Hyderabad: The South Central Railway (SCR) will operate special MMTS train services during September 25-26 and September 26-27 to handle the additional passenger rush expected during Ganesh idol immersion.The special services will operate between 11 pm and 5 am, covering key routes connecting Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Lingampalli and Falaknuma. The railway has introduced additional services to facilitate the movement of passengers during the late night immersion festivities.The services include a Secunderabad-Hyderabad MMTS at 11.50 pm, followed by a Hyderabad-Lingampalli service at 12.30 am and a Lingampalli-Hyderabad train at 1.50 am. A Hyderabad-Secunderabad service will depart at 3.30 am.

Congress MLA Rajender admits not spending funds on MGH Hospital

Hanamkonda: Warangal (West) Congress MLA Naini Rajender Reddy acknowledged that funds were not being spent on Warangal's MGM Hospital.Speaking to the media here on Tuesday, he said the hospital had fallen into a dilapidated state because funds were being withheld in anticipation of the opening of the Warangal Super Specialty Hospital, where MGM Hospital's operations would be shifted.He further alleged that MGM Hospital was suffering from neglect due to the selfishness of certain doctors and that doctors were often unavailable at the facility despite several requests and warnings.

Hyundai launches Mobility Innovation Ideathon for students

Hyderabad: Hyundai Motor Group has announced the 'Hyundai CoE Mobility Innovation Ideathon' for student innovators, with prize money of Rs 10 lakh.Geographic ReferenceThe Mobility Innovation Ideathon will run till early December 2026 and invite students from Hyundai CoE member universities to develop ideas under the theme "Enhanced In-Vehicle Experience."Established in 2025, Hyundai CoE serves as Hyundai Motor Group's collaborative research platform with leading academic institutions in India. The network currently includes IIT Hyderabad, IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Madras, IIT Kanpur, Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology (VNIT) Nagpur, and Tezpur University.



ACB seizes Rs 6.13 crore assets during searches at premises of NIMS official

Hyderabad, Sep 22 Telangana's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has covered assets worth Rs 6.13 crore in a disproportionate assets case against Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) Additional Medical Superintendent Nori Lakshmi Bhasker.

Multiple flats, plots, a Jaguar, an Audi and 517.8 grams gold are among the assets found during the simultaneous searches by the ACB officials on Tuesday at the residence and other premises of the doctor serving at NIMS, a top government-run hospitals in Hyderabad.

The ACB said in a statement that a case was registered against Bhasker (56) as he had acquired assets disproportionate to his known sources of income by indulging in corrupt practices and dubious means during his service.Searches were conducted at his residence and seven other places belonging to his relatives, friends, benamis, and other aides.During the searches, ACB officials found documents relating to one four bed room flat in high-rise gated community, two triple bedroom flats in the high-rise gated community at Kukatpally, five double room flats at Manikonda, Petbasheerabad, and Kukatpally, four open plots at Yadradi, Nandigama, Shamirpet and one 800 square yards open plot in Visakhapatnam City in Andhra Pradesh.

They also found bank balances of Rs 41 lakh, deposits of Rs 12 lakh in post office, Rs 35 lakh investment

in private financial institutions, Rs 29.55 lakh investments in mutual funds, gold ornaments weighing about 517.8 grams, one Jaguar, one Audi, one TATA Nexon, Royal Enfield, Vespa, Activa, Yamaha, electronic gadgets worth valued at 5 lakh.

"The total worth of assets is Rs 6.13 crore. The market value of movable and immovable property may be many times higher than the document value," the ACB said.The accused doctor has invested Rs 1.30 crore to purchase a flat which was in dispute before the Debts Recovery Tribunal. He lent another Rs 1.33 crore to various persons as hand loans."Further verification of additional assets is underway. The case is under investigation," it added.

Telangana's anti-narcotics efforts earn national recognition

Hyderabad, Sep 22 (IANS) Telangana's efforts to combat drug trafficking and substance abuse have received national recognition, with the State's Narcotics Bureau and Eagle Force securing over 80% marks on seven parameters prescribed by the Union Government for assessing the performance of Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs).

The Telangana Eagle Force Director Sandeep Sandilya received the national-level award on behalf of Telangana Police from Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the third National Conference of Anti-Narcotics Task Force Heads, held in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Anant Nag honoured with Dadasaheb Phalke Award at 72nd National Film Awards

New Delhi, Sept 22

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday presented the 72nd National Film Awards at a ceremony held against the backdrop of the Statue of Unity, urging filmmakers to create meaningful cinema and calling for greater representation of women on award juries.

A total of 92 awardees were honoured during the ceremony.Expressing satisfaction over the number of women among the winners, the President said she would like to see more women serving on award juries as well. She also encouraged the film industry to focus on socially relevant and responsible storytelling.

Revanth Reddy directs officials to remain alert after heavy rains in Hyderabad



Hyderabad:,Sept22

Following heavy rains in Hyderabad on Tuesday evening, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed the official machinery to remain alert.

The Chief Minister instructed the Commissioners of the three Municipal Corporations in the Greater Hyderabad region, HYDRAA and Police Commissioners to work in coordination and monitor the situation constantly.

Officials were ordered to take immediate measures to prevent waterlogging on main roads, junctions and in residential colonies. Required personnel and machinery should be deployed promptly in waterlogged areas, he said.

The Chief Minister also instructed the Energy Department to ensure there were no power outages. The Traffic Police wing was directed to take proactive measures to prevent traffic congestion.

Revanth Reddy suggested paying special attention to low-lying areas and colonies prone to flooding. Special teams should be pressed into service to clear obstructions to the flow of water in drains and storm-water channels. Rescue teams should remain ready for immediate response during emergencies, and control rooms should remain vigilant, he ordered.

"Officials must be available on the ground to monitor the situation. Take all necessary measures and ensure people do not face any inconvenience," Revanth Reddy said.

Can't penalise 'conscientious objector' for refusing to sing Vande Mataram: SC

New Delhi, Sept 22

Maintaining that a "conscientious objector" should not be punished for refusing to sing Vande Mataram, the Supreme Court asked the Centre to respond to Carnatic vocalist TM Krishna's petition challenging the law mandating singing of six stanzas of the National Song.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana said the Government should keep in mind the 1986 judgment in the Bijoe Emmanuel case protecting children following Jehovah's Witnesses religious practices who said 'no' to singing the National Anthem on grounds of conscience.

"Mr. Solicitor, we are not inclined to issue notice. But, we would expect that the law of the land, as declared by this Court in Bijoe Emmanuel, will govern the Act. What the national song is is not in dispute. The declaration of law in Bijoe Emmanuel is not yet questioned. It is for the democratic state to decide what is the National Song, whether two stanzas or four stanzas," Justice Bagchi told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta.

"But nobody who feels an infraction of Articles 25, 26 to rights (Right to Religion and Freedom to manage religious affairs) or a conscientious objector would be subjected to (penal consequences). It's not the remit of the court to second-guess what is the national sentiment or aspiration associated with Vande Mataram. It is for the State... It is for a conscientious objector not to sing one or all stanzas, and [the State is] not going to subject him to criminal consequences," Justice Bagchi added.

In the Bijoe Emmanuel case, the Supreme Court ruled that individuals have the right to refuse to participate in activities that go against their religious beliefs, as long as they do not show disrespect to national symbols in the process or disrupt public order.

Krishna has challenged the recent amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, which gives the national song the same status as the national anthem, and the Centre's circulars mandating the singing of six stanzas of Vande Mataram, which include names of Hindu deities, at official functions.



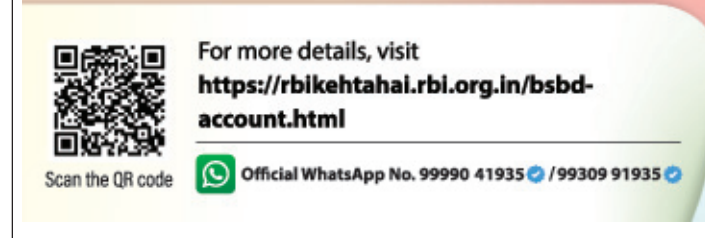
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Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Diluting institutional autonomy may boomerang

Over the last decade, the NDA government has been displaying a dangerous propensity to dilute the autonomy of public institutions and move towards overcentralisation of powers. The latest targets are the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Opening the doors to select private players may help in capacity building, but regulating their work through bureaucrats toeing the line of political masters raises disturbing questions. Scientists need autonomy to function to their full potential. No country can afford to sideline the vision of its scientific community. The reorganisation of the ICMR raises questions over the future of its autonomy. Instead of medical scientists and public health specialists guiding health research, the national health research agenda will now be set by a highly centralised National Health Research Stewardship Committee headed by the Principal Scientific Adviser and having bureaucrats as members. The Department of Health Research will act as the implementing agency, and the ICMR will be at the last tier as the in charge of "scientific and technical execution." There has been a systematic attempt to place the decision-making powers in the hands of non-technical people, centralise decision-making, and undermine the autonomy of scientific agencies. All this could eventually lead to the hollowing out of expertise and talent in public-funded R&D bodies. In the case of ISRO, a recent policy shift to involve the private sector in many operations has raised the hackles of employees. Representatives of nine employee bodies, comprising over 5,000 members, addressed a joint letter to ISRO chairman V Narayanan, seeking clarification about the organisation's future role. The exodus of senior scientists has further deepened concerns over the future of the premier organisation. The government has pushed for the entry of private players into the space sector without a legally binding regulatory framework. Space activities involve a plethora of international obligations and regulations, ranging from allocation of orbital slots for satellites to liability and insurance in the case of accidents on Earth or in orbit. It is, therefore, important to have a proper regulatory system in place. ISRO first proposed a space law in 2015, and while deliberations were ongoing, the government announced a new space policy in 2023, under which IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) was formed. Its role is still unclear, and it is not backed by any statutory provisions. While its enabling role as a single-window point for startups is obvious, calling it a regulator is misleading. If private-sector facilitation is all that IN-SPACe is doing, then ISRO and its two commercial arms — Antrix Corporation and New Space India Limited — were better placed to do that, given their cumulative experience of interfacing

Three held in Karimnagar investment fraud case.

Karimnagar September 22, Khaja Sikandar Mohiuddin (Correspondent): Karimnagar police have arrested three persons, including the alleged prime accused, in connection with a major investment fraud involving Shreya Infra and Marketing Private Limited.

The accused have been identified as Hemant Kumar Rai, Rajesh Kumar and Brijesh Kumar Mishra. They were arrested in Lucknow on September 18 by a special team of the Central Crime Station (CCS), Karimnagar, and brought to Karimnagar on a transit warrant after being produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate in Lucknow.

According to the police, the company, which was established in Lucknow in 2020, allegedly attracted investors by promising to double or triple their investments within a short period. The accused are alleged to have operated a network-based scheme in which funds collected from new investors were used to make payments to earlier investors.

The company had appointed agents in Karimnagar district and other parts of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and other States to mobilise investments, the police said. Payments were allegedly made for some time before being stopped from May 2024, leaving investors facing losses.

The case was initially registered at the Karimnagar I Town police station following a complaint by a victim, Guguloth Shivraju. It was subsequently transferred to the CCS on the directions of Police Commissioner Gaush Alam.



A special team led by CCS Inspector R. Prakash Goud, along with SI D. Mahipal Reddy and other personnel, traced the accused to Lucknow. Mobile phones allegedly used in the offence were seized, the police said.

Mr. Alam appreciated the CCS team for its role in tracing and arresting the accused.

Police have appealed to other persons who may have been affected by the alleged fraud to approach the nearest police station or the CCS, Karimnagar. Further investigation is under way.

Grandly Commences Song Shooting for 'Taqdeer'

Film Production Begins with a Traditional Pooja Ceremony

Hyderabad: The song shooting of 'Taqdeer', presented by SVN Rao and produced under the banners of Flimmy Creations and Orange Media Art Entertainment, commenced grandly with a traditional pooja ceremony. Dr. Challagali Venkataraju gave the first clap for the song shoot. The song was initially recorded with singers Sharada Sai and Ram Durvasi. A press meet was also held on the occasion, where the film's team shared details about the project. The film is directed by Deekshit Jukanti, while K. Parandhamulu is producing the movie. K. Lakshman Sai is composing the music, Bhaskar is handling the cinematography, and Chandra Aditya is providing the lyrics. KK is the Sound Engineer, M. Murali Reddy is the Production Executive, Swamy is handling Photography, and N. Sahadev Mudiraj is looking after Coordination. With the commencement of the song shooting, 'Taqdeer' has generated interest among film enthusiasts. The movie is being made against the backdrop of family, love, and emotions, and the makers stated that it is being crafted to connect with and entertain audiences. The film team announced that more details



about 'Taqdeer' will be revealed soon. Technical team Directed by Deekshit Jukanti Producer : K Parandhamulu music : K Laxman Sai DOP : Bhaskar Lyrics Chandra Aditya production Executive : M Murali Reddy Photography : Swamy Co-ordinator : N Sahadev Mudiraj PR & Digital: Colorfull Digital Media

Need to Accelerate Development Works in Uppal Constituency



Uppal MLA BANDARI LAKSHMA REDDY Discusses Development Issues with MMC Commissioner Vijay Krishna Reddy UPPAL, SEPTEMBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy met MMC Commissioner Vijay Krishna Reddy and held detailed discussions on various ongoing development

works and essential infrastructure requirements in the Uppal constituency. During the meeting, the MLA brought several public issues from different areas of the constituency to the Commissioner's attention. Key issues discussed included road development, drainage systems, sanitation, and the provision of basic infrastructure. The MLA requested that pending development works in various areas be completed at the earliest and that necessary measures be taken to minimise inconvenience to the public. He also urged the authorities to give priority to issues raised by residents and expedite the implementation of development works. Bandari Lakshma Reddy further requested the authorities to take all necessary measures for the comprehensive development of the Uppal constituency and ensure better basic infrastructure for the people. He emphasised the need for the concerned departments to work in coordination to address public issues effectively. BRS state leaders Gandham Nageswara Rao and Saizen Shekhar, among others, were present at the meeting.

CONG GOVT RESORTING ARRESTS WHEN QUESTIONED ON PUBLIC ISSUES INSTEAD OF RESOLVING: BJP ALLEGES

Hyderabad, Sept 22 : Launching a scathing attack on the state Congress government, BJP Telangana State President N Ramchander Rao today alleged that instead of addressing public issues and resolving failures raised by the opposition, the government is attempting to suppress protests through illegal arrests. He was speaking to media at jadcherla. Rao strongly condemned the police for intercepting and detaining the BJP delegation at Jadcherla while they were en route to visit the Jurala Project.

BJP state chief stated that whenever any program is undertaken or the government is questioned on public and civic issues, arrests are being made instead of taking steps to resolve the problems. He expressed disapproval that whether it was the recent struggle over student fee reimbursement issues or today's response to farmers' grievances, detention has become the government's only response. He mentioned that since the police blocked farmers from meeting them at the site, they had to come here to listen to the farmers' anguish. Rao expressed deep concern that farmers in the Godavari basin areas, Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation, and under the Jurala Project command area are facing severe hardships due to the lack of irrigation water. He questioned why the government did not arrange counseling for farmers through agricultural officers and mandal-level officers if there was genuinely a water shortage due to the El Niño effect. He lashed out, calling it utmost cruelty to withhold water now after farmers had already sown seeds and the crops had partially germinated, without informing them well in advance to sow alternative crops due to low water availability.

He questioned why the Ministers for Agriculture and Irrigation are remaining silent despite knowing that farmers' crops require water. He stated that while local ministers claim water is being reserved for drinking purposes, projects like Narayanpur and Almati are full to the brim, and playing politics without releasing that water is improper. Rao warned that stopping them will not halt the farmers' movement. He asserted that not only under Jurala, but every farmer growing turmeric, cotton, paddy, and maize under Nagarjuna Sagar and Godavari projects stands against the Congress government. He criticized the government for failing to introduce a crop insurance scheme better than the Centre's Fasal Bima Yojana as promised in the Warangal Farmer Declaration even after 1,000 days of rule.

He emphasized that an insurance scheme is crucial during such disastrous times and demanded that the government either implement the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) or introduce a new state insurance scheme. He stated that had PMFBY been in place for farmers under Jurala, this loss would not have occurred, but the state government neither implemented the scheme nor paid the premium. He reminded that the combined Mahabubnagar district is Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's home district, and the Chief Minister bears the responsibility to protect this district and its farmers. He said that if the government considers releasing water, it would be a welcome move, and they would view it as a victory for the farmers. Rao alleged that the Congress government exhibits an attitude of stopping welfare schemes whenever even a single rupee has to be released from the state exchequer to farmers. He demanded an account of how many acres received the promised Rs.15,000 under Rythu Bandhu and clarification on how many individuals received the Rs. 500 bonus at procurement centers. He criticized that whatever is given to farmers is an investment, not an expenditure, but the government treats everything given to farmers as an expense. He pointed out that while the Central Government provides nearly 80 per

cent subsidy on fertilizers, the state government attempts to shift blame onto the Centre whenever a fertilizer shortage arises by pushing dysfunctional mobile apps. He reminded that fertilizer management and marketing are entirely the state government's responsibility. He stated that when farmers are in distress, the government should offer reassurance instead, arresting those who question, resorting to lathi-charges on farmers, and blocking visits to projects is unconstitutional and anti-democratic. BJP chief also highlighted problems of farmers who lost land under the Palamuru and Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation projects. He said these farmers have not been compensated to date. He mentioned that local victims met him and shared their plight, stating it is unjust to forcibly offer only Rs.15 lakh per acre with borewells, wells, and mango trees when farmers are asking for up to Rs 20 rupees per acre. He demanded that the government provide fair compensation to the displaced farmers here on the same basis as the compensation given for land acquisition in the Kodangal Industrial Estate. He assured that the Bharatiya Janata Party will stand by the farmers and displaced persons and fight on their behalf. He also expressed deep condolences over the tragic incident involving the death of infants at the RIMS hospital at Adilabad. he disclosed that party MLA Payal Shanker has already visited the site to assess the situation. He emphasized that it is the government's responsibility to regularly inspect air conditioners, oxygen machines, and equipment in hospitals, and to ensure precautions are taken against short circuits and power fluctuations. He demanded that the government immediately conduct an inquiry into the incident and take strict action against those responsible for any human error.

Smart Ration Card Distribution Held in Tirumalanagar

"Smart Ration Card Distribution Continues for the Third Day in Nacharam Circle""Nacharam, September 22(INDIAN CHORNICLE):""The Smart Ration Card distribution programme continued for the third consecutive day at the Welfare Building Hall in Tirumalanagar Colony under Nacharam Circle."Smart Ration Cards were distributed to eligible beneficiaries under Ration Shop Nos. 3302076 and 3302223 in the presence of Civil Supplies Inspector Kiran Kumar Goud and under the supervision of Ration Shop Dealer Malleshham Goud."A large number of beneficiaries attended the programme and collected their Smart Ration Cards. The officials monitored the distribution process and assisted the beneficiaries in receiving their cards smoothly."The distribution programme was conducted in an orderly manner, with necessary arrangements made for the convenience of the beneficiaries.



POLICE ARRESTED BJP LEADERS GOING TOWARDS JURALA

Hyderabad, Sept 22 : Police today prevented BJP delegation led by state BJP President N Ramchander Rao proceeding towards Jurala project by taking them into custody at Jadcherla. The Police stopped convoy of Ramchander Rao and took him into custody along with others. There was commotion on the national highway when BJP workers raised objection with the sudden action of police and raised slogans against the state Congress government.

A high-level BJP delegation led by state party chief Ramchander was proceeding to Jurala project to assess water level and understand problems faced by farmer in downstream regions who were agitating demanding release of water to safeguard their standing crop.

Rao said his arrest is undemocratic and the Congress government is trying to suppress their voice who wanted to meet agitating farmers at Jurala. He alleged that the Congress government with the help of police resorting to arrests BJP leaders in every programme taken up by the party on public issues instead of resolving the issues.

Union minister of state for Home affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Mahabubnagar MP Dr D K Aruna strongly condemned the arrest of Ramchander Rao and house arrest of other leaders and demanded immediate release of water from Jurala ayacut. The union minister, in a statement, questioned is there democratic rule running in Telangana state and termed arrests as a "wicked" act of Congress government. What is wrong if BJP leaders going to meet farmers to understand their problems, he asked and said Congress government actions is reminding people of emergency days.

Sanjay demanded release of state party chief and others immediately and unconditionally.

In a separate statement, Mahabubnagar MP Dr D K Aruna strongly condemned party chief arrest and house arrests of BJP leaders aimed at blocking the party's visit to the Jurala Project a visit organized in support of farmers demanding the immediate release of irrigation water to save drying crops under the project's command area. She expressed anger over the police placing district leaders under house arrest, including Gadwal District BJP President Ramanjaneyulu, young BJP leader DK Snigdha Reddy, former Municipal Chairman Bandala Venkatramulu, and Venkateshwar Reddy, among others.

Aruna made it clear that the BJP will fight continuously on behalf of the farmers. She demanded that the government respond immediately and release irrigation water as crops cultivated under the Jurala command area are wilting due to a lack of water supply. "The Congress government lacks sincerity in protecting the farmers' crops. Irrigation water must be released immediately from the Jurala Project to the ayacut (command area). House arresting leaders who are protesting peacefully instead of resolving farmers' issues is a clear suppression of democratic rights," MP DK Aruna alleged. She pointed out that despite adequate water storage in the Jurala Project, farmers are facing severe hardships because water is not being released to the command area, causing cultivated crops to dry up and leaving farmers distressed.

BJP STATE CHIEF EXPRESSED SHOCK OVER RIMS HOSPITAL FIRE AND DEMANDED AN INQUIRY

Hyderabad, Sept 22 : BJP State President N Ramchander Rao today expressed deep shock over the Adilabad RIMS hospital fire incident and extended profound condolences to the parents who lost their children in the tragedy.

Rao, in a statement, said the midnight fire incident in the NICU ward of RIMS Hospital, Adilabad, is deeply heartbreaking. It is agonizing beyond words that infants, who ought to be protected like the apple of one's eye, fell victim to death in the form of thick smoke, resulting in two newborns losing their lives while undergoing treatment. This incident stands as direct proof of the pathetic state to which public healthcare in the state has degraded. Failing to adhere to basic electrical safety standards and neglecting the maintenance of air conditioners in a ward as sensitive and critical as the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) where infants in life-threatening conditions are treated, is an unforgivable offense. Innocent lives were sacrificed purely due to the negligence of officials and the lukewarm attitude of the government, he alleged.

BJP state chief demanded that immediate measures be taken by the Congress government to ensure the best advanced medical care for all the remaining children who survived the accident and are currently undergoing treatment in other hospitals. Instead of washing their hands of the matter with cosmetic statements, a comprehensive, high-level inquiry must be ordered into this tragedy, and strict action must be taken against the responsible officials and hospital management for this failure, he said. He demanded that the government support the affected families who have lost their babies and been left stranded, providing them with immediate and adequate financial assistance and asked the government to immediately conduct safety and fire audits in all government hospitals across the state and rectify all safety lapses.

'Pootakoollava' Novel Launched in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, September 22 (Indian Chronicle) : The novel Pootakoollava, authored by acclaimed writer Madarapu Vanisri, was formally launched on Tuesday at Oxford Grammar School in Himayatnagar under the aegis of the Deccan Heritage Academy Trust. Osmania University Associate Professor Dr.S.Raghu presided over the programme, while Navatelangana Associate Editor K.Ananda chary unveiled the novel. Manikonda Vedakumar delivered the felicitation address, while noted poet and critic Dr.Kondapalli Niharini reviewed the novel. Dr.S.Raghu observed that the novel's natural portrayal of everyday life, human relationships, emotional bonds and conflicts reminded him of R.K.Narayan's Malgudi Days. K.Anandachary said books not only reflect society but also engage in a dialogue with it. He noted that Pootakoollava gives prominence to the realities of life and human relationships. Author Madarapu Vanisri said the life around her, social conditions and personal experiences had inspired her to write the novel. The programme was coordinated by Dr.IdikozuSrinivasa chary. Several writers, literary personalities and researchers attended the event and congratulated Vanisri on the publication.

Youth Should Strive to Serve the Nation Inspired by Captain Veera Raja Reddy: HABSIGUDA DIVISION CONGRESS PRESIDENT KANDI SHRAVAN KUMAR REDDY

““HABSIGUDA , SEPTEMBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): A commemorative programme was held in Habsiguda to pay tribute to late Captain Rapolu Veera Raja Reddy, an Indian Army officer who attained martyrdom while fighting terrorists in Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir, on the occasion of his 49th birth anniversary. Habsiguda Division Congress President Kandi Shraavan Kumar Reddy, DCC Vice-President Boppanapalli Sudhakar Reddy, and other leaders, along with the martyr's family members, garlanded Captain Veera Raja Reddy's statue and paid their respects. "Speaking on the occasion, Kandi Shraavan Kumar Reddy praised Captain Veera Raja Reddy, a native of Habsiguda, for bringing pride to the nation. He stated that the captain's courage, valour, and patriotism continue to inspire the younger generation. He called upon the youth to dedicate themselves to serving the nation, drawing inspiration from the captain's exemplary life and sacrifice. He recalled that the Indian Army's Northern Command had inscribed Captain Veera Raja Reddy's name on the 'Dhruva' War Memorial in honour of his supreme sacrifice. He also highlighted the installation of the captain's statue in Habsiguda and the naming of a road after him as 'Veera Reddy Marg.' He stated that remembering the services and sacrifices rendered by Captain Veera Raja Reddy to the nation on his birth anniversary was the responsibility of every citizen. "The programme was attended by Reddy Association President and DCC Vice-President Boppanapalli Sudhakar Reddy, General Secretary Srikanth Reddy, senior Congress leaders Rondla Damodar Reddy, Murali Krishna



Mudiraj, Gundu Rajanna, Vasu Naik, Habsiguda residents Malla Reddy, Shirish Reddy, Ajith Reddy, Ravinder Reddy, Pradeep Reddy, Yadav Reddy, members of the Reddy Association, and family members of Captain Veera Raja Reddy, among others.

Elaborate security arrangements for Ganesh immersion in Karimnagar 850 police personnel deployed; traffic diversions put in place at key points.



Karimnagar September 22, Khaja Sikandar Mohiuddin (Correspondent): Elaborate security and traffic arrangements have been made in Karimnagar for the immersion of Ganesh idols, with the police deploying 850 personnel across the Commissionerate limits, Police Commissioner Gaush Alam said on Tuesday.

The Commissionerate has drawn up a security plan for the immersion of about 3,100 idols. Of these, nearly 1,000 are located within the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation limits, and more than 800 are expected to be taken through the main roads of the city to designated immersion points.

Around 50% of the idols in the city are expected to be immersed at Manakondur tank, 30% at Chintakunta canal and the remaining 20% at Kothapalli tank. Cranes and lighting arrangements have been made at Manakondur and Chintakunta to facilitate the immersion

of large and tall idols.

Static pickets, pushing parties and patrolling vehicles will be deployed at major junctions and vulnerable points. Special security arrangements have been made at sensitive locations and places of worship, while roof-top teams will keep watch from high-rise buildings. Striking and reserve forces have also been kept ready to respond to emergencies.

The police have coordinated with the District Collector, municipal authorities and other departments to review the arrangements. Barricades, lighting, trained swimmers and Disaster Response Force boats have been positioned at the immersion points.

Traffic restrictions will be enforced as part of the arrangements. Heavy vehicles will be diverted outside Manakondur on the Karimnagar-Warangal National Highway and will not be allowed towards the tank. Restrictions will also apply to heavy vehicles approaching from the Jagtial side, with diversions at Velchala Cross Road.

A one-way system will be enforced around Kothapalli tank. In the city, traffic restrictions will be imposed from Gandhi Statue through Tower Circle, Ganj and Kaman Circle in view of the expected rush. A detailed traffic advisory is being issued separately.

Mr. Gaush Alam appealed to organisers and the public to celebrate the immersion peacefully and cooperate with the police. Organisers have been asked to adhere to prescribed limits on the use of DJs and high-powered sound systems and avoid noise pollution, particularly near hospitals and residential areas.

Telangana Movement Forum State Conference on Sept 27

Telangana Movement Activist and Former BRS State Secretary Nerdam Bhaskar Goud Invited as Chief Guest

““UPPAL, SEPTEMBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Telangana Movement activist and former BRS State Secretary Nerdam Bhaskar Goud has been invited as the chief guest for the state conference of the Telangana Movement Forum, scheduled to be held at Yadagirigutta on September 27. Telangana Movement Forum Chairman Dr. Cheema Srinivas met Bhaskar Goud and extended the invitation to him to attend the state conference as the chief guest. On the occasion, the poster for the state conference was also unveiled. Speaking on the occasion, Bhaskar Goud called upon Telangana movement activists, leaders who continue to uphold the spirit of the movement, and representatives to participate in large numbers and make the state conference a success. He also demanded that the Congress government fulfil all the promises made to Telangana movement activists. He urged the committee constituted by the Congress gov-



ernment to address the problems of movement activists not to delay the process and to take immediate steps to ensure justice for all eligible activists.

Ayurveda Walk Held Grandly on Ayurveda Day

“Students Create Awareness on Ayurveda, Homeopathy and AYUSH

““RAMANTHAPUR, SEPTEMBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): As part of the 11th Ayurveda Day celebrations, an Ayurveda Walk was organised on Tuesday under the auspices of the NSS Department of JSPSGHMC. The programme was conducted under the guidance of NSS Department Coordinator Dr. Dasari Parthasarathi, with around 300 students participating enthusiastically. "The students took part in the walk carrying messages and raising slogans to create awareness about Ayurveda, Homeopathy and AYUSH systems of medicine. Through the awareness campaign, they highlighted the importance of traditional systems of medicine and their relevance to society. "Speaking on the occasion, College Principal Dr. Lingaraju explained the significance and unique importance of Ayurveda as a traditional system of medicine. He recalled the valuable contributions of ancient physicians Charaka and Sushruta to the development of Ayurveda. He stated that programmes



of this nature play an important role in introducing ancient medical knowledge and its significance to the younger generation. Vice-Principals Dr. Srinivas Reddy and Dr. Krishnamurthy, Hospital Superintendent Dr. Vijaya, teaching and non-teaching staff, medical personnel and NSS students participated in the programme.

Collector directs officials to ensure safe, smooth Ganesh idol immersion.

Karimnagar September 22, Khaja Sikandar Mohiuddin (Correspondent): Collector Chitra Mishra has directed officials to make comprehensive arrangements for the smooth and safe immersion of Ganesh idols, with particular emphasis on public safety, traffic management and cleanliness at immersion points.

Ms. Mishra, along with Police Commissioner Gaush Alam, Municipal Commissioner Praful Desai and officials of various departments, inspected the arrangements at Kothapalli tank and the Chintakunta canal on Tuesday.

She instructed the police to strictly enforce the prescribed rules and ensure that traffic movement was not disrupted during the immersion process. Adequate lighting and other essential facilities should be provided at the immersion points, she said.

At Kothapalli tank, arrangements should be made at two immersion points, with the second point being used for smaller idols, she said. The Collector stressed the need for close coordination among the departments and continuous monitoring of the arrangements to prevent any untoward incidents.

She also directed officials to keep the areas surrounding the immersion points clean and make proper arrangements for the transportation of large idols to avoid congestion and confusion.



The Collector issued instructions to officials of the police and municipal departments during the inspection. Officials from various departments participated in the inspection.

MLA Gangula Kamalakar Launches Poster for ‘Koti 50: The Biggest Live Concert in Hyderabad

— The Grandest Roar of His Legacy', By Manato Entertainments; Grand Musical Concert on November 28 “““Legendary music director Koti has completed an incredible 50-year journey in the Telugu film industry. Over the course of five decades, he has delivered numerous blockbuster albums and timeless songs that continue to remain popular with music lovers across generations. ““The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the phenomenal popularity of the Raj-Koti duo, who created a distinct musical identity with their memorable compositions. After the duo's journey, Koti continued to make his mark as an independent music director, scoring music for several successful films and delivering songs that went on to become chartbusters. ““Celebrating his remarkable five-decade contribution to Telugu cinema and music, Manato Entertainments is organizing a grand musical extravaganza titled 'Koti 50: The Biggest Live Concert in Hyderabad – The Grandest Roar of His Legacy.' The concert is being grandly sponsored by SMS Group of Companies, Visisht Gold & Diamonds, NSR Developers, Naveen Gold & Bros, GNR Mayukha Infra, and Kanchipuram Laxmi Varahi Silks. ““The concert will celebrate Koti's illustrious musical journey, his unforgettable compositions and the enduring legacy he has created through his work. ““A media conference was held on Monday to officially announce the event and unveil details about the upcoming concert. MLA and former minister Gangula Kamalakar attended the event as the chief guest and launched the official poster of 'Koti 50: The Biggest Live Concert in Hyderabad – The Grandest Roar of His Legacy.' ““The grand musical concert is scheduled to take place on November 28 in Hyderabad. The event is expected to bring together music lovers and fans of Koti to celebrate his extraordinary journey and revisit some of the most memorable musical moments of his illustrious career. ““ MLA Gangula Kamalakar said , “I grew up listening to many of Koti garu's songs. It is a great pleasure to meet him here today like this. Technology has changed tremendously over the past 50 years. There was a time when I used to listen to his songs on a gramophone. His music and songs played a major role in making many films successful. Our generation knows a lot about Koti garu. However, through this event, today's Gen Z audience will also get to know who Koti garu is and understand his contribution to music. I will also attend the programme taking place on November 28. I wish Koti garu would compose music for the films I am making as well. As long as there is air on this earth, Koti garu's

songs will continue to live on.”“ “ Music director Koti said , “Coming here today reminded me of my parents. I have always worked with the thought that I should never bring a bad name to my father, Saluri Rajeswara Rao garu. I treated every film and every song as my first opportunity and worked extremely hard. I worked on every song with the intention that it should be remembered for generations. As Raj-Koti, we created several wonderful songs together. Later, during my solo journey as Koti, I delivered many great songs as well. Koti's songs will always remain in the hearts of music lovers. I can confidently challenge that nobody can create songs like those today. ““Raj and I studied beats extensively. The popularity of our songs was further enhanced by Chiranjeevi garu's breakdance performances, which were associated with many of them, and they continue to be popular even today. At the concert taking place in November, we will perform songs that are close to everyone's hearts. ““From 1984 to 1994, the Raj-Koti duo created a sensation among audiences. After that, every song I composed during my solo journey became a hit. The audience embraced every song and brought me to this level. I always used to think ahead of my time. It makes me very happy to see A.R. Rahman, Devi Sri Prasad, Thaman and Harris Jayaraj, who worked with me, are now reaching such great heights. It was my good fortune to give a unique beat to each song. Everything happened because of God's grace and the blessings of my parents. I thank every single person who came to this event for me.”“ “ Manjula Rao Jupally said , “No matter how many crores we earn, we will be remembered by people only for a certain period of time. But people like Koti garu will be remembered for generations. A few members of the Manato team approached me and told me about this event. The moment they mentioned that it was for Koti garu, I immediately agreed to attend. Koti garu has worked on films featuring almost every hero. Is something like that possible for the current generation? His songs don't come merely from the throat; they come from the navel. I feel fortunate to get an opportunity to contribute in my own way to programmes like this.”“ “ Manato Entertainments' Shobhan said , “We have grown up along with Koti garu's music. His beat is our heartbeat. We have been enjoying his music for five decades. From audio cassettes to artificial intelligence, Koti garu is a truly remarkable music director who has remained relevant across generations and technological changes. It is a great pleasure to announce Koti garu's concert in this manner today,” he said.



Krishna Reddy, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Tummala Deva Reddy, Narasimha, Katta Venkata Reddy, Manda Suman Krishna Reddy, Budige Mallesh, Venkatesh, Ganesh, Shivareddy, Jangir Goud, Shekhar, Ghouse, Fakir, Chinnna, Pawan, Srisailam, Ramu, Suresh, Chari, Karunakar Reddy and other colony residents were present.



---Former Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Takes Up Residents' Road Issue with MMC Commissioner““UPPAL, SEPTEMBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Residents of Hanmasainagar in Uppal Division are expected to get relief from the long-pending road problem, as CC road construction works are likely to commence soon, former corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy said. "Residents of the colony had brought the issue to her notice, stating that they had been facing difficulties due to the lack of proper road facilities for some time. "Responding positively to their request, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy visited Hanmasainagar along with the residents and inspected the condition of the roads. She subsequently brought the issue to the attention of MMC Commissioner Vinay Krishna Reddy and urged him to take immediate steps to undertake CC road construction works in the colony. "According to Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, the officials responded positively and assured her that necessary measures would be taken to commence the CC road construction works soon. She stated that completion of the road would help resolve the transportation difficulties faced by the residents. "Dubha Lakshma Reddy, Dadi Narasimha Reddy, Shameerpet Hanumanth Reddy, Pujala Lakshman, Katta Kishtareddy, Kanchamida Sheenu, Anwar Pasha, Manda Murali

All Measures Being Taken to Ensure Hassle-Free Movement of Ganesh Idols for Immersion“

— BRS STATE LEADER BANNALA PRAVEEN MUDIRAJ““BEERAPPA GADDA, SEPTEMBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): BRS state leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj stated that road repair works are being undertaken in Beerappa Gadda Division to ensure that Ganesh idols proceeding for immersion face no inconvenience. "Speaking on the occasion, Bannala Praveen Mudiraj said that several roads in Beerappa Gadda Division had developed large potholes. He said he had brought the issue to the attention of Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta during the Prajavani programme held on Monday. "Responding promptly to the request, two loads of bituminous material were arranged for road repair works. The repair works were subsequently taken up on the badly damaged stretches of major roads under the supervision of Bannala Praveen Mudiraj. Bannala Praveen Mudiraj expressed his special thanks and gratitude to Zonal Commissioner Radhika Gupta for responding immediately and arranging the required bituminous material for the road repairs. "[

BKC’s pod taxi ‘economically inefficient’: 129 architects register opposition



GNS News Agency, Sept 22

As work continues on the Bandra Kurla Complex’s (BKC) pod taxi, connecting Bandra to Kurla, prominent architects recently wrote to metropolitan commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee to reconsider the Rs 1,016 crore project, calling it “economically inefficient” due to its “low capacity”. Signed by several prominent architects, including Brinda Somaya, Rahul Kadri, PK Das, Vivek Pai, Vikas Dilawari, Abraham John, and Nondita Correa Mehrotra, it says, “At a projected fare of approximately Rs 21 per kilometre, the Personal Rapid Transit System operates as an exclusive, high-cost transit mode rather than an inclusive mass transit solution.”

“Spending over 1,016 crore on a low-capacity system (4-6 passengers per pod) that caters primarily to a limited demographic is economically inefficient. Also, this decreases the carrying capacity of the roads below,” the architects under the Mumbai Architects Collective

wrote.Requesting a meeting to discuss the pod taxi project, the Collective detailed several construction-related environmental concerns, including dumping debris in Bandra East’s Urban Plaza and City Park and damaging tree cover along road medians and through mangroves.Construction of the first phase of BKC’s pod taxi started in May, with around 140 piers underway. The first phase will cover 3.36 km, with two disconnected arms from Bandra East and Kurla, each covering four stations.

These include Bandra East, Kalanagar, MMRDA Old Building, Excise Department from Bandra East, and Bharat Diamond Bourse Gate 11, MMRDA Pay & Park, LBS Marg, and Kurla, due by the end of 2027.Work on the ground has only begun in Bandra East due to monsoon and traffic complications.Residents have flagged that the Urban Plaza and City Park, a public open space, has been barricaded and is being used like a “civil dump yard and equipment staging area” for the construction; and that the project stands to affect 499 trees along the road medians.Additionally, 041 hectares of mangroves may also be cut for the project.The architects wrote, “Excavations along road medians threaten local trees and fail to mitigate localized microclimate disruptions, loss of canopy coverage, and ‘Urban Heat Island’ escalation in BKC,” questioning the need for the low-capacity pod taxi.Mumbai’s prime business district, BKC, sees footfall of four to six lakh people every day – and it is expected to grow with the start of the bullet train.The MMRDA estimates that the pod taxi will carry 1.09 lakh passengers by 2031. Now, urban planners and transport experts have pointed out that high ridership would not solve the traffic problem in BKC.

NTA’s move to find hotels for outstation officials near Central Delhi office

GNS News Agency, Sept 22

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has floated a tender to empanel hotels to lodge outstation officials visiting Delhi for various work. The agency has specified that the hotels must be within a 5 km radius of NTA’s new office on Minto Road in Central Delhi.“NTA requires a panel of hotels in the vicinity of the new office for accommodation of outstation officials, examination observers/City Coordinators, Governing Body/Committee members, resource persons, and other official visitors, on an as-and-when-required basis,” the exam body said in the tender issued on Thursday.

NTA has relocated to the Government of India Press building on Minto Road from its earlier address in Okhla. NTA said the empanelled hotels shall provide accommodation on a room-only or room-with-breakfast basis, as booked, to NTA officials/guests as and when required, at the rates agreed upon.“Bookings shall be made by NTA’s Administration/Con-Ops Division directly with the empanelled hotel(s), specifying dates, number of rooms, and category required. There is no minimum guaranteed business committed to any empanelled hotel; bookings shall be placed purely on the basis of actual requirement, availability, and suitability,” the NTA said in the tender notice.

NTA also said empanelled hotels may be required to provide, on request and at mutually agreed additional rates,



facilities such as conference and meeting rooms and pick-up from the airport or railway station.It said the hotels should be rated 3-star or equivalent, with a minimum of 20 rooms available for empanelment. The hotels should have fire safety clearance, FSSAI licence, GST registration and other required civic approvals.The agency, which conducts all-India competitive exams such as NEET, JEE Mains and others, jas also invited an expression of interest from academics, scientists, researchers and others to join a three-year panel of Subject Matter Experts for setting question papers, translation, vetting, moderation, answer key verification, curriculum mapping, research, psychometric validation and other confidential academic assignments.

Bribes for Karnataka vet posts funded Rs 52 lakh jewellery for IAS officer’s friend: CID

GNS News Agency, Sept 22

A CID probe into the money trail of the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) veterinary doctor recruitment scam has allegedly found that bribes paid by some aspirants to a middleman were used to purchase jewellery worth Rs 52 lakh for a friend of a senior IAS officer who served as the commission’s exam controller.Public Prosecutor K L Bhagyalakshmi presented the CID’s findings before a Bengaluru court on Thursday during a hearing of a bail plea filed by the middleman, Basavaraj Kannale.

According to the CID, arrested IAS officer Gyanendra Kumar Gangwar diverted Rs 52 lakh of funds collected from 11 aspirants—who paid around Rs 70 lakh through RTGS bank transfers to accounts indicated by Kannale—to a Bhima Gold store for purchasing gold and diamond jewellery.The CID presented records of accounts in cooperative banks in the Bidar region where aspirants allegedly transferred funds and the subsequent transfer of funds to a gold showroom. The CID also submitted CCTV pictures of Gangwar and his female friend purchasing gold jewellery worth Rs 21 lakh and gold and diamond jewellery worth Rs 23 lakh on different occasions at the gold showroom earlier this year.“The money paid through online transfers by some of the aspirants was deposited in accounts of friends of the accused in the Om Lakshmi Souharda Sahakari Sangh Niyamit Bank. The funds were then transferred to a gold store for purchase of Rs 52 lakh worth of gold and diamond jewellery by the controller of the exams,” Bhagyalakshmi told the court.Rs 11 lakh spent on air travel, funds withdrawn in UPCIID sources said that, as per the probe, 11 aspirants paid around Rs 70 lakh in bank transfers and the remainder in black money to Kannale.Apart from the Rs 52 lakh allegedly used to purchase jewellery, around Rs 11 lakh was used for air travel by Gangwar’s female friend and some funds were withdrawn through an ATM in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, where the IAS officer is from, the CID told the court.

The CID has also presented evidence suggesting a close association between Kannale and Gangwar: CCTV footage of Kannale visiting the IAS officer’s apartment and their phone call records.Kannale, who worked as an accountant in an agricultural banana market in Bengaluru for a monthly salary of Rs 20,000, has seen a meteoric rise in his wealth and businesses, especially following his association with Gangwar, who became the KPSC exam controller in 2024 and served in the position till March 2026, CID sources said. Kannale and Gangwar became acquainted around 2019 when the IAS officer served as the chief executive officer of Bidar, Kannale’s home district.

The CID has seized as many as 13 bank accounts linked to Kannale, who identifies himself as a BJP worker and served as a personal aide to former BJP minister Dr Ashwattharayan. A total of Rs 67 lakh has been frozen in the accounts. “The mastermind (in the exam fraud) is Kannale, who brings in the aspirants, collects funds, deposits the funds in the bank accounts of friends and distributes them,” Bhagyalakshmi told the court on Thursday.

The CID refuted Kannale’s claims seeking bail because his wife was pregnant, stating that he was arrested at the Delhi airport on August 30 while he was allegedly set



to flee to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with visas valid till November 13. Kannale’s arrest came on the basis of information provided by Gangwar, who was arrested on August 29, the CID said.Middleman allegedly offered leaked papers to 29 aspirantsKannale, identified by the CID as the mastermind of the fraud, allegedly approached 29 of the 1,400 aspirants for the 400 veterinary doctor posts with offers of providing the question papers for the entrance exams conducted on January 8 and 9 this year. Kannale allegedly exploited his ties with Gangwar to obtain the questions and leaked them to 11 aspirants who paid between Rs 35 lakh and Rs 80 lakh.

“Aspirants from different parts of Karnataka came to Bengaluru before the exam and were taken to a resort on the outskirts by the middlemen a day before the exam. At the resort they were confined to different rooms and provided the questions for the exam. They were trained to answer and transported to the exam venue the next day,” a CID source said.According to the FIR registered in the case following a complaint by Dr S Manjunath, a veterinary doctor who was not selected, 29 aspirants who scored poorly in college exams scored unusually high marks (in the range of 450 plus out of 500) in the entrance exams. Of the 1,400 aspirants who wrote the exam, 329 were selected.

“All communications between the involved parties were carried out through encrypted channels, ensuring confidentiality and security. It appears that the question papers were provided to the candidates in both handwritten and printed formats,” the source added. “The mediators took responsibility for coordinating transport, including collecting and dropping off the candidates.”Suspended KPSC head cooperating with probe: CIDKPSC chairman Shivashankarappa S Sahukar, who has been suspended for a separate fraud linked to the illegal recruitment of his daughter as an industrial extension officer, is also under investigation for the veterinarians exam fraud for allegedly recruiting people related to him through illegal means.

Car hits bike, drags it half a km in Delhi’s RK Puram; 73-year-old arrested



GNS News Agency, Sept 22A 73-year-old man was arrested after his car allegedly hit a parked motorcycle in South Delhi’s RK Puram on Wednesday night, dragging it for around half a kilometre.Police said its rider fell on the road and escaped without serious injuries. Passersby had chased the car along Africa Avenue and forced the driver to stop.The incident took place around 10 pm when the car was travelling from Bhikaji Cama Place towards R K Puram

Metro Station. Police received information about the accident at 10.22 pm and a team from the RK Puram police station reached the spot.According to police, Tanish Tokas, 21, a resident of Munirka village, was sitting on the motorcycle parked by the roadside when a blue Honda Amaze allegedly driven by Venu Gopal, a resident of Vasant Kunj, hit him.

The impact caused Tokas to fall off the two-wheeler. Police said the motorcycle was subsequently dragged by the car for some distance.A three-minute video recorded by people at the spot showed commuters following the vehicle as it dragged the bike, causing sparks on the road, and eventually forcing the driver to stop.The video shows people surrounding the car and asking the driver to step out. Gopal can be seen folding his hands and apologising during the confrontation. Some people allegedly slapped him.Police said Tokas was medically examined and did not sustain any serious injuries. The accused was examined as well and no alcohol was detected in his system.A case has been registered for rash driving or riding on a public way and rash or negligent act that endangers human life or personal safety and causes simple hurt.

St Stephen’s student rams car into Delhi worksite, 3 labourers killed

GNS News Agency, Sept 22

Three construction workers were killed, and another was critically injured after a speeding vehicle, allegedly driven by a 20-year-old Delhi University student, crashed into a worksite on Dwarka Expressway early on Thursday, police have said. The driver, identified as Vedant Khanna, a third-year student of Economics Honours at St. Stephen’s College, has suffered serious injuries in the incident and is in hospital.According to senior officers, the incident occurred between 1.50 am and 2.30 am near Ram Chowk. A group of labourers was installing an iron fence on the central median when a white hatchback with a Delhi registration plate, coming from Delhi, hit the workers, police said.



Police identified the dead as Bijender Singh (58), his cousin Pappu Singh (55) and site contractor Satish Chand (43). All three, along with the injured worker, Ram Kumar (28), were from Sarvana village in Uttar Pradesh’s Bulandshahr district. The men moved to Gurugram just two days ago and lived together in a rented accommodation in nearby Bajghera. Ram Kumar is currently in the ICU of a private hospital.An FIR was registered after a complaint by Chand’s brother, Jitender Kumar, who was also working at the site. The complaint says the work site was clearly demarcated with standard safety gear, including reflective warning boards, barricades, and trestles.

What the complaint saysThe complaint says that while two workers were pouring concrete into the foundation at the base of the median, others were supporting the iron railing panels. The speeding car struck the safety barriers, ran over the workers on the divider, slammed into a pickup truck parked ahead, and mounted the median before coming to a stop.The impact pushed the parked utility truck forward by

over 100 metres, and the car was crumpled. Passersby and workers who escaped the crash notified emergency services, and police and ambulances reached the scene. The injured were rushed to the Civil Hospital, where Bijender and Pappu were declared dead. Chand succumbed to his injuries later that night.Khanna was initially transported to a local hospital before being shifted to a private facility. While the complainant and other workers have alleged that Khanna appeared drunk, police said this could only be confirmed after forensic reports. Gurugram Police’s Public Relations Officer Sandeep Turan said blood samples have been collected to confirm whether the driver was under the influence of alcohol or other substances.The vehicles involved in the crash have been impounded. Based on Kumar’s statement, an FIR has been registered against Khanna under sections relating to causing death by negligence, rash driving, act endangering life or personal safety, among others.

Uddhav Thackeray says dragging his name into Disha Salian case politically motivated

GNS News Agency, Sept 22

Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday alleged that dragging his name into the Disha Salian case was “politically motivated” and warned of taking legal action if the “character assassination” did not stop.Uddhav’s remark came a day after Sena UBT MLA Aaditya Thackeray denied ever knowing or meeting Disha Salian.“My name is mentioned (in the FIR). Tomorrow yours will be too. There is no connection whatsoever, direct or indirect. How long are we supposed to endure this? Tomorrow Narendra Modi and Donald Trump’s names might be added too. Why is my name being dragged into this? It is politically motivated. We remained silent, but enough with this cheap character assassination. Otherwise, we will take legal recourse as well. We have no connection to this matter,” the Sena (UBT) chief said in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, where he addressed a rally on the occasion of Marathwada Liberation Day.

Following the directives from the Bombay High Court, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR in the Disha Salian case based on the statement given by her father, Satish Salian. The FIR mentions the names of several individuals, including Uddhav Thackeray, Aaditya Thackeray, former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, Sachin Waze, actor Sooraj Pancholi, Dino Morea, and Rhea Chakraborty, among others.A former celebrity manager, Disha Salian had worked with actor Sushant Singh Rajput. She died in June 2020, after falling from a high-rise residential building in Mumbai, days before the actor’s death.

On Wednesday, Aaditya Thackeray had denied even knowing Disha Salian. “To clear the air and put an end to rumors, I am stating the pure facts once again. I have never met Disha Salian, nor did I know her. For the past six years, certain individuals have been deliberately attempting to link



my name to this tragic incident due to political motives, personal enmity, and an intent to malign my character, despite there being zero evidence or connection. This continuous false campaign, lacking any facts or truth, is unfortunate.”Meanwhile, Uddhav Thackeray alleged that the “mystery” surrounding Gopinath Munde’s death needs to be unraveled.Raising doubts over the former Union Minister’s death, Thackeray said, “Munde’s death remains a mystery. He could not sit in the Lok Sabha even for a single day as a Union Minister.”The Sena (UBT) chief said leaders like Pramod Mahajan and Gopinath Munde built the BJP’s roots in Maharashtra but could not enjoy power.Supporting Thackeray’s views, Congress leader Nana Patole said, “We continuously raised our stance regarding Ajit Pawar in the Assembly, but even a simple FIR could not be registered. What is being hidden? Uddhav Thackeray mentioned Gopinath Munde. Munde Saheb was a great leader. He raised the question of whether his death was due to an accident or foul play. The government should investigate this so that everything becomes crystal clear,” Patole said.Munde at died in a car accident when he was heading to Delhi airport to catch a flight to Beed in June 2014.

KTR’s PRO Mahesh Manikya Mudiraj released after Bolarum police notice

GNS News Agency, Sept 22Hyderabad: BRS working president K.T.Rama Rao’s public relations officer Mahesh Manikya Mudiraj was released by the Bolarum police on Friday morning, after serving him a notice under Section 35(3) of the BNSS.He had been taken from Saifabad police station to Bolarum police station on Thursday night in connection with a case alleging obstruction of police duties.Mahesh had earlier appeared before Saifabad police after being served a notice in connection with a separate case registered over an alleged incident at the Telangana Assembly on September 7.The Saifabad police had booked Mahesh and KTR’s personal assistant Mahender for allegedly abusing and threatening a reserve inspector and obstructing him from performing their duties.While Mahesh was at Saifabad police station, Bolarum police took him into custody in connection with another case registered over an incident on September 8.Police had stopped BRS leaders at the Bolarum check-post while they were proceeding towards former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao’s Erravalli farmhouse, citing law-and-order restrictions.



How a Chandigarh hospital sat on crores of public money and deprived poor patients



GNS News Agency, Sept 22

For a poor patient, the cost of getting treated does not end with the hospital bill. There is the cost of medicines, transport to hospital, and, sometimes, food and accommodation for an attendant. At Chandigarh’s Government Multi-Speciality Hospital, Sector 16 (GMSH-16), a fund meant to cushion patients against precisely these hardships never reached them. During the year 2024-2025, Rs 38.57 crore of the Rs 40.44 crore available under the Rogi Kalyan Samiti (RKS) remained untouched even when it could have helped several, with just Rs 1.87 crore utilised in 2024-25 for patients welfare. At the same time, fingerprint scanners worth Rs 20.40 lakh, purchased with public money, remained dumped in the hospital store for years. The twin findings have been flagged in a government audit of the functioning of GMSH-16, pointing to a gap between the resources available with the hospital and their utilisation for patients and hospital functioning. The audit said the RKS funds were “primarily meant for patient welfare and that their non-utilisation defeated the very objective of the scheme — ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare while minimising financial hardship for patients”. Under the RKS guidelines, at least two-thirds of revenue generated through service provision is to be spent on patients’ welfare. The funds can be used for expenses related to treatment, transportation, diet and stay of attendants, particularly for patients from economi-

cally disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised groups. It further flagged the expenditure at GMSH-16 as being in contravention of the prescribed rules.

When the matter was raised with Dr Suman Singh, Director, Health Services, who also handles the functioning of the institute, she said there was a prescribed protocol for spending Rogi Kalyan Samiti funds and the requisite permissions had to be obtained before the money could be utilised. “As and when we receive the funds and the required permissions, we utilise them. There is a procedure that has to be followed,” she said. Rs 20.40 lakh scanners not used for years. The audit also found that 20 fingerprint scanners costing Rs 20.40 lakh were procured during 2021-22, but their utilisation was delayed for years and they remained dumped in the stores. Only one scanner was issued to the Administration Block on May 8, 2023 — nearly two years after purchase. The remaining 19 scanners continued to lie unutilised in the store till March 18, 2025, before being issued to the IT Cell on March 19, 2025. The prolonged retention, the audit observed, indicated that the requirement for the fingerprint scanners “was not assessed realistically at the time of procurement” and resulted in blockage of government funds and loss of the warranty period “without any productive use”. The audit termed procurement in excess of the actual requirement irregular and in contravention of the prescribed rules, which require authorities to avoid purchasing quantities beyond requirement. Suman Singh said biometric attendance systems had now been installed at several places and at “many places, we now have fingerprint sensors as per requirement.” R K Garg, activist who obtained the audit report said that the findings raise a “serious question” of accountability. “When funds are specifically earmarked for patient welfare but remain unutilised, responsibility must be fixed for the failure to use them. There should be a clear explanation from the authorities concerned, along with corrective measures to ensure that public funds meant for patients are actually put to use. Similarly, procurement should be based on genuine requirements so that taxpayers’ money does not remain blocked in unused equipment” Garg added.

Rs 1.9 crore, 12,600g gold, silver: What Lalbaugcha received in donations in 3 days

GNS News Agency, Sept 22

In the first three days of Ganeshotsav, Mumbai’s iconic Lalbaugcha Raja Ganesh Mandal has received donations worth Rs 3.18 crore in cash, including US dollars, 600 grams of gold and 12,000 grams of silver jewellery. Lalbaugcha Raja is one of Mumbai’s famous Sarvajani Ganesh Mandals, attracting lakhs of devotees every year during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. Not just common people, Lalbaugcha Raja is also regularly frequented by Bollywood biggies, politicians, and business tycoons during the 10-day festival. Earlier this week, on the first day of the festival, Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the puja mandal with his family. The Ambanis, Shah Rukh Khan, his son AbRam, and actor Ranveer Singh were also spotted taking blessings at the Lalbaugcha. Lalbaugcha raja donations Devotees’ offerings being counted at Lalbaugcha Raja in Mumbai. The donation boxes are opened every day after the puja rituals. According to the Lalbaugcha managing committee, the mandal received Rs 1.9 crore in cash in the first three days of the festival. It also received 647.47 grams of gold worth Rs 98.9 lakh, and around 12,389 grams of silver worth Rs 30.35 lakh. The total valuation of the donation stands at Rs 3.18 crore. The gold and silver donated to the Lalbaugcha include gold bangles, chains, silver pens, silver-carved cricket bats and more. The foreign exchange currencies are yet to be valued as per the day’s ongoing exchange rates.

On the first day, the temple had received Rs 48.5 lakh in cash, 66.77 grams of gold and 2806 grams of silver. The next day, on September 16, the donation box contained Rs



88.9 lakh in cash, 226.12 grams of gold and 5,516 grams of silver. On September 17, the mandal retrieved Rs 53 lakh in cash, 354.58 grams of gold and 4,067 grams of silver. “The donation boxes are being opened and scrutinized by a team comprising officials of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), members of Bank of Maharashtra and the managing committee member of the Lalbaugcha Raja trust. The money received will be sent to the bank and will be used for various charitable works that are carried out by the organisation throughout the year,” a member of the trust told the. The Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations started on September 14, and the 10-day-long festival will continue until Friday, September 25.

BRS-Congress face-off sharpens in Telangana as police arrest social media convenor

Political tensions between the Telangana Congress government and the Opposition BRS escalated after police arrested party social media convenor Manne Krishank over a post linked to an Assembly protest. Political tensions between the Telangana Congress government and the Opposition BRS escalated after police arrested party social media convenor Manne Krishank over a post linked to an Assembly protest. Tensions between the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Congress government escalated in Telangana Friday after a large contingent of police surrounded the house of BRS leader and social media convenor Manne Krishank and arrested him over a social media post.

Krishank was booked over a social media post on the ruckus inside and outside the Legislative Assembly during a BRS protest against the state government earlier this month. He was questioned and released on September 17. Meanwhile, speaking to the media after appearing before an Anti-Corruption Bureau court in connection with the Formula E case, KTR accused the Revanth Reddy government of targeting Opposition leaders.

“For the last three years, ever since the Congress government came to power, its entire focus has been on targeting the Opposition. The government has been trying to harass and trouble KCR and the leadership of the BRS party. After coming to power, the government should have focused on how to implement its manifesto and fulfil the promises it made to the people,” KTR told the media after the court appearance. “The Congress government made tall promises to farmers — including a Rs 2 lakh loan waiver, Rs 15,000 Rythu Bharosa, and a bonus for farmers — but has failed to fulfil them.” Stating that he has been cooperating fully with the investigation and attending court whenever summoned, KTR said his former chief minister father K Chandrashekar Rao and his family were targets of “malicious propaganda” by the Revanth Reddy government. “The Formula E race was an initiative that brought a good name to Hyderabad and Telangana. The Formula E race was an effort to attract large-scale investments into the electric vehicle sector. The race was organised as part of efforts to bring investments to Telangana, but the government is now making allegations against it. I have appeared before the court twice in the Formula E race case. I will cooperate with the court and will appear for the inquiry whenever I am called,” he stated.



The Formula E race case against KTR involves the transfer of Rs 45 crore to a foreign company, Formula-E Organisers (FOE), in February 2023, when KTR was minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, and Hyderabad hosted the Formula E race, an international electric car racing event. After the Congress came to power in 2023, the ACB booked him in December 2024 under the Prevention of Corruption Act as well as IPC Sections 409 (criminal breach of trust) and 120B (criminal conspiracy).

The ACB alleges that KTR failed to take clearance from the state Cabinet before authorising former Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) principal secretary Arvind Kumar to pay Rs 45 crore to FOE. It also alleges that the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HMDA) paid Rs 45 crore in two instalments to FOE. The money transfers, made in sterling, allegedly violated Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rules, which resulted in a fine of Rs 8 crore being imposed on the Telangana government, then headed by KTR’s father, KCR.

The ruckus broke out earlier this month during a BRS protest against the state government, with a confrontation between BRS members and police reported both inside and outside the Assembly premises. The protest, over the government’s policies and alleged failure to fulfil its poll promises, led to a series of cases and counter-allegations between the ruling Congress and the Opposition BRS. On September 7, BRS legislators who were wearing black T-shirts with anti-Congress slogans were stopped from entering the state Assembly, leading to a scuffle with the police. Krishank was booked over a social media post over a social-media post on this confrontation.

Sharad Pawar seeks Rs 50,000 per hectare aid for farmers



GNS News Agency, Sept 22

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Friday urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to immediately declare rain-deficit talukas across the state as drought-hit and announce a relief package of at least Rs 50,000 per hectare for the affected farmers. In a post on X, Pawar said deficient rainfall had left farmers facing a serious crisis, with standing crops such as soybean, cotton, bajra, maize, pigeon pea, green gram and black gram withering in several parts of the state. He also pointed to a rise in pest and disease attacks, warning that the situation could further affect agriculture, drinking water and fodder availability.

Pawar said the state should declare drought without

waiting for the formal criteria to be met, and identify the affected talukas immediately and provide relief measures. He also sought Rs 25,000 in special assistance for each family of farm labourers. Pawar also sought the implementation of a loan waiver scheme and the release of fresh crop loans to farmers. He demanded an increase in the incentive — from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh — given to farmers who regularly repay their loans, and urged the government to bring farmers who had taken crop loans in 2025-26 but defaulted this year under the proposed loan waiver scheme. On crop insurance, Pawar demanded that the Re-1 crop insurance scheme be implemented retrospectively and that all previously excluded insurance triggers be applied retrospectively to provide coverage to farmers. He also sought distribution of crop insurance assistance of Rs 17,000 per hectare announced for losses caused by unseasonal rains last year. Pawar further urged the government to take up employment guarantee scheme works on a priority basis in talukas facing drought-like conditions, including agriculture and water conservation-related works. He sought tanker arrangements to protect fruit orchards from water shortages. The NCP(SP) chief sought the opening of fodder camps in affected areas, along with arrangements for drinking water for people, livestock and veterinary services. He also sought a special drive by the administration to ensure that repairs to faulty electricity transformers are completed promptly, citing the possibility of increased load-shedding in drought-hit areas.

‘Only 389 of 1,016 voters left in 1 booth’: Karnataka Congress flags SIR concerns

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has written to the state chief electoral officer, citing “serious discrepancies” in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. In a letter dated September 17, the KPCC urged immediate intervention to ensure that eligible voters were not wrongfully expelled. Highlighting irregularities in Part No 512 of the Yeshvanthapura constituency in Bengaluru, Congress leader Ramesh Babu said that of the 1,016 voters there, only 389 were listed as valid after revision—leaving nearly 62 per cent excluded. Of the total voters in the booth, 339 were marked as permanently shifted, 19 as deceased, and 265 as “unmapped” in the last SIR. “The reported figure of 389 valid voters...requires an official explanation and reconciliation,” the letter said.

Similar issues are being reported statewide, he said, adding that complaints included enumeration forms not collected or uploaded, eligible voters wrongly classified as shifted, deceased entries unchecked, and poor response from booth-level officers and electoral registration officers, among others. “The integrity of the electoral roll requires both accurate registration and effective protection against the wrongful exclusion of eligible voters. Every eligible citizen



must have a fair opportunity to establish their eligibility, submit the required documents, seek correction of records and participate in the electoral process,” the complaint read. Congress has demanded a statewide review, polling-part-wise statistical reports, special verification of unmapped voters, confirmation of shifted and deceased classifications, and stronger grievance redressal mechanisms. It also called for transparency, adequate time for corrections, and accountability for administrative lapses.

IIT Bombay locks lecture hall for overnight use, students scramble for study spaces

With mid-semester examinations underway, IIT Bombay students have raised concerns over inadequate late-night study spaces after the institute discontinued its practice of keeping rooms in the Lecture Hall Complex (LHC) open overnight during exams. Following demands from students, the administration has opened four rooms in the Department of Energy Science and Engineering as an alternative. Students, however, say the space is inadequate and lacks sufficient charging points, which are increasingly important as study material is accessed on laptops and tablets.

The issue was highlighted by Insight, IIT Bombay’s student media body, which said the LHC had traditionally remained open late into the night and early morning during examinations. The facility was particularly useful for students living in hostels with limited study space and poor or no Wi-Fi connectivity. This semester, however, the administration decided to close the LHC at night, citing concerns over cleanliness and security, citing the issue of littering. Following discussions with student representatives, four rooms in the Energy department building were opened. Students were informed about the arrangement through an email on September 5, which said additional rooms could be opened depending on demand. Students said the alternative remains inadequate. “More than inadequacy of space,



the reason is a lack of sufficient charging ports,” said a student.

Another student said the growing dependence on digital academic material made charging facilities essential. “Lecture notes, coding assignments, book PDFs, everything is on devices, online explanations, even AI is more convenient on tabs and laptops,” the student said. The institute said the arrangement was temporary and aimed at ensuring smooth conduct for preparations of examinations. “These temporary measures are being taken for proper coordination and smooth conduct of exams. This arrangement is only for the exam session,” the administration said.

How human activity altered Mumbai climate

A recent study found that on 86 out of 92 days between June 1 and August 31, human activity, such as vehicle and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, influenced local weather patterns in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, contributing to climate change. The study indicates that during the specified period, the cities recorded extreme heat and rainfall that were directly influenced by man-made factors that contribute to climate change.

The report also shows that after Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, districts in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), including Dombivli and Thane, had as many as 81 days affected by human activity, followed by 79 in Kalyan and 76 days each in Pimpri, Pune and Shivaji Nagar. Mumbai Monsoons, Mumbai rains, Mumbai climate, Mumbai climate conditions, Mumbai weather, Navi Mumbai, Navi Mumbai climate, Climate change, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Mumbai news, Maharashtra news, Indian express, current affairs. Furthermore, the study stated that out of the 86 days, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai recorded extreme heat days on 28 days. Of the 59 analysed cities, the top nine cities featuring in the list were from Maharashtra, with the MMR region recording the most days where significant weather patterns, such as temperature and rainfall, were driven by human activity. The report, published by Climate Central, a US-based climate research organisation, comes weeks after the United Nations published a study highlighting Mumbai’s growing vulnerability to rising sea levels. Notably, the months coincide with Mumbai’s monsoon season, when the region usually cools down due to incessant rains. However, in 2026, Mumbai recorded deficit rainfall in June and August, but surpassed its average quota in July. In the latest report, scientists used a climate shift index (CSI) to identify the impact of climate change on

daily temperatures. By analysing temperatures and weather patterns, the scientists placed cities between a CSI level of zero-5 — zero being the lowest impact and 4 and 5 showing a severe impact. For Mumbai, the average markings ranged between 4 and 5 throughout this period. During the period, Indian cities recorded an average increase of 0.7 degrees in day temperatures. Speaking to Mahesh Palawat, climate scientist and meteorologist, said that the warmer temperatures during monsoon months were caused directly by El Niño — a climate pattern that warms the surface waters of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. However, man-made climate change has played a major role in altering the current rainfall pattern.

“The El Niño effect was very strong in India this year. Due to this factor, every state in the country has recorded uneven rainfall distribution, which has led to a rise in temperature between June and August. This factor was further aggravated by man-made issues like vehicular emissions and industrial practices, which contribute to the increase in local temperatures,” Palawat told Express. Another concern for Indian subcontinent. Palawat said there is another case of concern for the Indian subcontinent. Earlier, during the monsoon, there was an even distribution of rainfall. Data now shows that in the last 4-5 years, Mumbai has recorded heavy downpours where a single day’s rainfall totals 100-200 mm. “This phenomenon is mainly caused by the absence of Alto Strauss Cloud. These clouds would exist 800-1,000 feet above the surface and would create consistent drizzle over the cities, making rainfall uniform. However, due to factors like industrial emissions and vehicular pollution, the lower atmosphere is getting heated up, which is affecting the formation of these clouds.

Warren Buffett steps down as Berkshire Hathaway chairman; son Howard takes over



GNS News Agency, Sept 22

Warren Buffett is stepping down as chairman of Berkshire Hathaway after serving in the role for more than 50 years. The company said Friday that the 96-year-old Buffett will become chairman emeritus and will take on his new role immediately. "Father Time always wins. He has, however, been ?generous with ?me," Buffett wrote in a letter to shareholders. His son, Howard, will become Berkshire Hathaway's new chairman. Howard Buffett has served as a Berkshire Hathaway board member since 1993. Warren Buffett will remain a director. He has served as Berkshire Hathaway's chairman since 1970. Buffett stepped down as CEO of the company late last year. He was succeeded by Greg Abel. "As Chairman ?Emeritus, Mr. Buffett will remain a member of the Board of ?Directors and will continue to offer his valued judgment and perspective," Berkshire said in a statement.

At 96 he has given up the Berkshire Hathaway chairmanship he held for more than half a century, becoming chairman emeritus. He stays on the board. His son Howard takes the chair, and Greg Abel keeps running the company. Warren Buffett, smiling, walks through the exhibit hall at a Berkshire Hathaway annual shareholder meeting. Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett walks through the exhibit hall as shareholders gather to hear from the billionaire investor at Berkshire Hathaway Inc's annual shareholder meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, U.S., May 4, 2019. "Father Time always wins. He has, however, been generous with me. He has given me the opportunity to see Berkshire reach a point where I am more confident than ever about what lies ahead." Warren Buffett, in his letter to shareholders on Friday Close to double the index, sustained for sixty years. It is the number that made him the most closely studied investor alive, and the reason chief executives across corporate America have used him as a sounding board on acquisitions, succession and market panics. Berkshire stock is up about 1% in 2026 while the S&P 500 has risen more than 11%. Rising oil prices and investor appetite for faster-growing companies explain part of it; the rest is shareholders waiting to see whether Abel can deploy capital as his predecessor did. Berkshire sat on \$365.5 billion in cash. It has begun spending: billions into stocks including Alphabet, and buybacks stepped up to \$4.5 billion in the second quarter. Quarterly operating profit rose 16% to \$12.98 billion, ahead of forecasts. Berkshire Hathaway was a failing textile manufacturer when Buffett took control in 1965. What he leaves is a roughly \$1.03 trillion conglomerate, run from Omaha, Nebraska, on a philosophy of long-term holding, disciplined capital allocation

16 killed, 50 injured in suicide blast at Pakistan mosque during Friday namaz



GNS News Agency, Sept 22

At least 16 people were killed and more than 50 others were injured after a powerful suicide blast struck a mosque near the old Police Lines in Kohat district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province during Friday prayers, officials said. The explosion took place at a mosque located close to the old Police Lines in Kohat, around 60 kilometres southwest of Peshawar, the provincial capital. The blast occurred while worshippers had gathered for Friday prayers. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Chief Zulfiqar Hameed said the death toll included five police personnel and 11 civilians. No individual or organisation has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. A powerful mosque blast in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reportedly injured many

Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight brawl caught on camera: Passengers exchange blows mid-air

Punches were thrown, a T-shirt was torn and panic spread through the cabin as two passengers broke into a fight aboard a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight. A video showing the mid-air brawl has gone viral on social media, with cabin crew and fellow passengers eventually stepping in to separate the men. The incident was reported on a Biman flight between London and Bangladesh, the Dhaka Tribune reported. A video shared online shows two male passengers arguing before the confrontation turns physical. At one point, one passenger's T-shirt appears to be torn during the scuffle.

What does the video show? The footage circulating on social media shows the two men arguing inside the aircraft before exchanging punches. Other passengers can be seen watching as the confrontation escalates. A video showing two passengers involved in a physical fight aboard a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight has gone viral on social media.

The exact reason for the argument has not been established. No information was immediately available on whether either passenger was injured or whether any law-enforcement action had been taken. A passenger identified as Uddin Alim said on Facebook that he had been travelling on the flight and witnessed the incident. Alim said he was on the Biman flight on September 16 and described the incident as frightening, particularly because children and elderly passengers were on board.

and plain speaking.

Howard Buffett, a director since 1993 and chairman of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, takes the chairmanship under a long-standing succession plan. Susan Decker continues as lead independent director. Warren Buffett remains on the board. That is what \$365.5 billion in cash and a share price up 1% in a year of an 11% market are really asking. Abel has started answering — billions into stocks including Alphabet, buybacks stepped up to \$4.5 billion in the quarter — but the record he is measured against is 19.7% a year for sixty years. Abel runs the company. Howard Buffett guards the culture — as Abel put it, the values his father championed will stay at the heart of Berkshire and Howard will be their guardian. Warren Buffett keeps a board seat and, in Berkshire's words, will go on offering his judgment and perspective. Warren Buffett keeps a seat on the board as chairman emeritus. Berkshire says he will go on offering his judgment and perspective. Susan Decker continues as lead independent director, the governance counterweight to a founder's son holding the chair. Sources: Reuters; Associated Press; CNBC; Berkshire Hathaway's statement and Warren Buffett's letter to shareholders, September 18, 2026.

Buffett transformed the company from a struggling textile business into an investment giant ?worth more ?than \$1 trillion.

Buffett delivered steady gains Known for his long-term strategy and focus on ?buying high-quality ?businesses at reasonable prices, ?Buffett delivered steady gains that outpaced ?broader markets, making him a trusted steward of capital. Buffett ?built Berkshire into an approximately \$1.03 trillion conglomerate ?with dozens of businesses, including GEICO car insurance, the BNSF railroad, Berkshire Hathaway Energy, Dairy Queen ice cream, Fruit of ?the Loom underwear and Squishmallows plush toys. "The culture Warren built and the values he championed will remain at the heart of Berkshire, and Howard will be their guardian," Abel said in a statement on Friday.

How Buffett shaped generations Buffett's influence has extended far beyond Berkshire, shaping generations of corporate leaders and investors with his emphasis on long-term thinking, disciplined capital allocation and ?straightforward management. CEOs across Corporate ?America have looked to him as a sounding board on everything from acquisitions and succession to navigating periods ?of market ?turmoil, while his annual shareholder meetings became a gathering point ?for investors seeking insight into the broader business ?landscape. Buffett first announced plans to step away from the conglomerate in May 2025, surprising shareholders and analysts despite his age. After ?decades at the helm, ?he had ?become synonymous with ?the company, making his succession one of the most closely watched in corporate America. In August, Berkshire said ?it began reducing its enormous stockpile of cash in ?the second quarter, investing billions of dollars in stocks such as Alphabet and repurchasing billions of its own, as it reported higher-than-expected profit. Its quarterly operating ?profit rose ?16% to \$12.98 billion, topping analyst forecasts, while net income more than doubled to \$25.67 billion, including unrealised gains and ?losses on stocks that Omaha, Nebraska-based Berkshire still owns.

worshippers, with possible fatalities.

The number of casualties was confirmed by officials at the District Headquarters Hospital. According to hospital Medical Superintendent Tahir Ali Shah, 15 bodies had been brought to the facility along with more than 50 injured people following the explosion, the PTI reported. Police said most of those wounded were worshippers who were inside or near the mosque at the time of the blast. The explosion was reportedly so powerful that it created a crater outside the mosque. Police officers secure a road leading to the site of a powerful bomb at a mosque in Kohat, Pakistan, Friday, September 18, 2026. (AP Photo) Police officers secure a road leading to the site of a powerful bomb at a mosque in Kohat, Pakistan, Friday, September 18, 2026. (AP Photo)

Rescue operation underway Rescue teams from Rescue 1122 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reached the location soon after receiving information about the explosion and began operations at the site. Rescue 1122 spokesperson Bilal Ahmad Faizi said several injured people were transported to nearby hospitals for initial treatment, the PTI report said. Rescue personnel remained at the scene while authorities assessed the situation and continued their response. The attack comes amid continued security concerns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, though no group has claimed responsibility for the Kohat mosque blast so far. Further details about the circumstances of the explosion and the identities of those killed and injured were not immediately available.



Punches were thrown, a T-shirt was torn and panic spread through the cabin as two passengers broke into a fight aboard a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight. A video showing the mid-air brawl has gone viral on social media, with cabin crew and fellow passengers eventually stepping in to separate the men.

What did Biman Bangladesh Airlines say?

Biman Bangladesh Airlines general manager (public relations) Mahbubuddin Ahmed told Dhaka Tribune that he was initially unaware of the incident. "I am not aware of the matter yet. I am looking into it," he said. Some reports claimed that the incident occurred on September 17 on a flight from Sylhet to London.

US drone firm Powerus signs Pakistan Army MoU amid warming US ties



US drone maker Powerus has signed a deal with the Pakistan Army and landed its first order, just weeks before it merges with a company backed by Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army chief General Asim Munir with US President Donald Trump at the White House.

US drone company Powerus has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Pakistan Army, and has already secured its first order under the arrangement, the firm's co-founder Brett Velicovich has confirmed. Speaking to Reuters, Velicovich said the deal falls under the category of unmanned aerial systems, though he declined to give further details or reveal the value of the order, citing security sensitivities and confidentiality. Neither the signing of the MoU nor the initial order had been reported before now. The agreement comes as ties between Washington and Islamabad have improved after years of strained relations. It also comes weeks before Powerus is due to merge with US-listed Aureus Greenway Holdings, in which President Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, hold a stake through the investment fund American Ventures.

What did Powerus agree with Pakistan?

Brett Velicovich, co-founder of Powerus, told Reuters on Wednesday that the company had signed a MoU with the Pakistan Army. He said the deal covers unmanned aerial systems, but did not share further details or the value of the order, citing security and confidentiality reasons. The agreement and the order have not been made public before now. Powerus builds drones for both air and sea use, meant for military and industrial work.

How is the deal linked to Trump's family?

Africa's urban waste crisis outpacing infrastructure investment, choking neighbourhoods



Johannesburg: Two men sit on top of a hill at the end of a narrow road in Johannesburg's industrial suburb of Kya Sands. But the hill is no natural feature — it is a mountain of illegally dumped trash, piled so high it now swallows the road beyond. "When I started as a ward councillor in 2021, this mountain was very small. I could even drive my vehicle down this road," municipal councillor Devon Steenkamp told The Associated Press. "It's now quite a high, big mountain; there are always constant fumes."

The mound is only the edge of a dumpsite that mushroomed after the municipal landfill reached capacity and closed in 2010. Adjacent to it, waves of waste spread across a valley as smoke rises and trucks unload more trash. Johannesburg's mounting waste problem reflects a broader challenge across Africa. Rapidly growing cities, including Lagos, Dakar, and Accra, are generating waste far faster than many municipalities can collect, recycle, or safely dispose of it.

Africa's urban population is projected to double by 2050 to 1.4 billion people, according to a joint report last year by the OECD, African Development Bank, Cities Alliance and United Cities and Local Governments of Africa. The United Nations Environment Program estimates that more than 90 per cent of waste generated in Africa is disposed of at uncontrolled dumpsites and landfills, often with associated open burning. The World Bank projects that waste generation in sub-Saharan Africa will increase by 124 per cent between now and 2050 — the fastest growth of any region. Over 2,000 illegal dumping hot spots

In Johannesburg's densely populated Alexandra township, goats forage through piles of household waste as residents navigate sidewalks strewn with plastic, food scraps, and construction debris. Local resident Linda Makole, 75, is especially concerned about children, many of whom live in one-room homes and rely on sidewalks and a few parks for space to play. "Small children can't possibly be healthy living in this environment," Makole told the AP. "Weekly, my landlord takes all his tenants' garbage in a van and goes to dispose of it," she said. "I don't know where he dumps it." Pikitup, the city's waste company, has identified more than 2,000 illegal dumping hot spots and allocated 115 million rand (USD 6.4 million) in 2025/26 to tackle the

Powerus is planning to merge with Aureus Greenway Holdings, a company listed on the stock market and backed by two of President Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump. Both firms expect the merger to be completed in early October. Will Islamabad talks on West Asia conflict cement Pakistan's role as a credible interlocutor? US President Donald Trump with Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir at the White House. (Image source: White House) US regulatory records show the brothers hold a stake in Aureus through a fund called American Ventures. Once the merger is done, that fund is expected to own close to a tenth of the new combined company.

What did the company say about a conflict of interest?

Andrew Fox, the founder and chief executive of Powerus, rejected any suggestion that the firm's growth was connected to the Trump family's involvement. He said contracts were won on merit, and that the Trump sons play no part in running the business. A spokesperson for Donald Trump Jr said he is only a passive investor with an indirect stake, adding that he had no role in managing the company or in winning contracts anywhere in the world, and no knowledge of this deal before it was made. Eric Trump could not be reached for comment. The White House also weighed in, with Deputy Press Secretary Anna Kelly saying there is no conflict of interest.

What did Pakistan's military say?

Pakistan's army said a Powerus team, led by Velicovich, met army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir this week. The two sides discussed buying defence equipment, building it locally, and long-term plans to grow Pakistan's own defence industry. The army's statement did not mention the MoU directly. The agreement comes at a time when ties between Washington and Islamabad are warming after a rocky few years. Trump has spoken positively about General Munir, while Pakistan has been working on several fronts, economic and defence, to build a closer relationship with the US. Fox said Pakistan's private defence industry is still young and not fully developed, which he believes gives American firms a chance to move in quickly. Velicovich added that the aim is a two-way technology partnership, combining US and Pakistani strengths, and that Powerus is also looking at building some of its technology inside Pakistan.

problem. Some residents said their garbage went uncollected for up to four weeks. The Johannesburg Crisis Alliance has blamed the disruptions on labour disputes, financial constraints, and an aging fleet. Unreliable waste collection has driven demand for informal waste haulers. "If the municipality is not collecting the general waste, then of course people are going to phone anybody with a truck to come and collect," said Carmen Jordaan, who co-runs Whole Earth Recycling. Jordaan said that legal disposal required registration and landfill fees, prompting some informal haulers to dump waste illegally in areas like Kya Sands. Polluting the air, soil, and water

Bryce McCall, a former South African equestrian show jumper, has watched a separate dumpsite sprawl alongside his home, where he runs a stables and beekeeping business. "I used to have 70 horses here; now we've got 28," McCall said. "Clients don't want to come here anymore." Illegal dump sites also burn trash to make room for more, polluting the air, soil, and water and exposing nearby communities to toxic substances, Jordaan warned. "You're burning toxic plastics, and we're all inhaling that," she said.

"At night, the air is so toxic you can't breathe. We've got air purifiers in our bedroom," McCall said. "The air quality is so bad (bees) don't produce as they should." Dr. Suzan Oelofse, a principal scientist at South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said that poorly managed waste also attracts vermin and can clog stormwater drains, increasing the risk of flooding. It's really, really close to tipping point "The waste generation rate has consistently outpaced investment in new waste management infrastructure," Oelofse said, adding that the city remains heavily dependent on aging landfill sites while recycling and composting lack momentum. South Africa's draft National Waste Management Strategy warns that landfill space is depleting at an "unsustainable rate." The pressure is already evident in Johannesburg, where only two of the city's four municipal landfills still accept general waste. Oelofse said a recent CSIR study found that on average, Johannesburg's landfills have less than a year of disposal capacity remaining. "If we've got years, we're lucky," Jordaan said. "It's really, really close to that tipping point." Simply building more landfills is difficult because suitable land is scarce and environmental regulations are stringent.

Oelofse estimates that as much as 80 per cent of Johannesburg's waste could be diverted through recycling and organic waste treatment if households and businesses separated waste at the source. Pikitup is also pushing separation at the source to preserve dwindling landfill space, with plans to expand recycling infrastructure and collaborate with waste reclaimers. Recycler and law student Nomvula Phaliso, 35, said waste pickers are already helping keep recyclable material out of landfills but need greater support, including safe access to bins, community buy-back centres, protective equipment and storage. For Jordaan, keeping waste out of landfills also requires changing how people think about what they throw away.

Foreigners in Nepal may soon travel without carrying physical passports

Kathmandu: Nepal's Department of Immigration is preparing to introduce a system that will enable foreigners to travel across the Himalayan country without carrying their physical passports. The system, which the department has called a "Passport-Free Travel" arrangement, aims to make the stay of foreign nationals in Nepal more convenient, the department said. To use the facility, foreign nationals, once they arrive in Nepal, will be required to install the official app of the Department of Immigration on their mobile devices and fill in the necessary information, including a scanned copy of their passport and visa details.

"Then they can freely travel across the country without carrying their physical passports," said Ram Chandra Tiwari, director general of the department. The department

said the app is available on both Android and Apple iOS platforms. Once they register their details on the app, foreign nationals will not be required to produce their physical passports while boarding domestic flights, exchanging currencies at money exchange counters, checking into hotels, or making travel arrangements through trekking agencies. "For example, they may forget their passport at a hotel while travelling and be unable to produce it when required," he said. "By updating their information on the app, they will no longer have to worry about forgetting their passport at a hotel or elsewhere while they are inside Nepal." He said that even genuine foreign nationals have occasionally faced problems for not possessing their passports and that the "Passport-Free Travel" arrangement would help eliminate such difficulties."

The never-ending controversy of NEET 2025



The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) or the examination touted to determine the fate of about 24 lakh students across the country has been mired in controversy. This year the examination was plagued with multiple controversies, be it paper leaks, tampered OMR sheets, distribution of wrong question papers, statistically impossible scores and an unprecedented high score.

On May 5, NEET was held across the country and roughly 24 lakh students appeared in it. As per reports, a day before the examination on May 4, the paper was leaked, and a group of problem solvers were tasked with solving the paper and aiding four candidates in preparing for the exam. During the investigation, the Bihar police claimed it had procured confession letters from candidates stating that the paper they were shown on the 4th was the same as the NEET question paper on May 5. On the day of the exam itself, social media was abuzz with allegations of paper leaks. The Gujarat District Education Department of Panchmahal district raided a NEET UG exam centre at Jai Jalaram School in Godhra, Gujarat and seized a list of students from a schoolteacher who had allegedly told the students to only attempt questions they were confident about and he would complete the remainder. An FIR was registered by the Gujarat police.

The National Testing Agency, the body responsible for conducting the examination, was quick to rubbish claims of paper leak and explained the social media videos of students leaving the hall being a result of the invigilator distributing the English Language paper instead of Hindi. It ensured that the integrity of the examination process remained intact and even declared that the students who were given the wrong paper were being given a retest on the same day. On May 17, Vanshika Yadav moved the Supreme Court asking for a fresh NEET-UG examination, on the ground that the paper leaks are in violation of Article 14 and give an unfair advantage to a select group of students. As an interim prayer, the Petitioner sought a stay on the declaration of results. The Supreme Court refused to grant the stay but issued notice to the State to hear the matter in July.

The results were declared on June 4, 10 days before the scheduled date. Further, a record 67 students scored the perfect score of 720. In 2023, only two students had got the perfect score. Several questions were raised about the sudden surge in the candidates getting the perfect score. It was found that 6 of the students who got the perfect score had seat numbers in the same sequence and were from Haryana. Some results were also statistically impossible considering negative marking. On June 6, the NTA issued a three-page press release addressing the controversial results and paper leak allegations. It explained the statistically impossible scores and high marks on account of grace marks allocated for loss of time to certain candidates. It also categorically ruled out any paper leaks and stated isolated acts of unfair means were being dealt in accordance with the law. A few days later, on June 11, several petitions challenging the NEET exams came up before a vacation bench of the Supreme Court. All the matters were directed to be tagged together and the Court asked the NTA to respond. Justice Amanullah stated that “Sanctity has been affected, so we need answers.” All NEET matters were ad-

What was the tussle over Covaxin IPR? | Explained



The story so far: The maker of the indigenous coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin, Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL), has admitted to an “inadvertent error” in patent filings to protect the vaccine’s Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). One of India’s leading biotechnology companies, it had failed to include scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) as co-inventors in the Covaxin patent filings.

What kind of rights govern vaccine patents?

India’s patent laws govern both product and process patents. Product patents grant an inventor a monopoly over, say, a drug. Process patents bar competitors from making a similar drug using the same sequence of steps. In response to queries from The Hindu, Bharat Biotech said it had patented the process, namely of making a batch of vaccines from the virus strains that were provided by the ICMR-NIV (National Institute of Virology). This is the lab that has expertise in extracting viruses from blood samples, identifying its characteristics, conducting various tests to gauge its infectiousness and qualify it in comparison to related strains. However, preparing a vaccine out of this at an industrial scale is beyond the capabilities of a lab and requires a different order of facilities that only established vaccine manufacturers have. Covaxin is an inactivated version of COVID-causing coronavirus; once injected into the body it coaxes it into producing antibodies that can potentially protect against severe disease from a coronavirus in-

fection. To do this effectively, an ‘adjuvant’ is added which increases the vaccine’s potency. Vaccine makers may have their own ways of bringing all of these steps together and, given the competitive nature of the field, strive to ward off competitors from imitating these processes to gain a temporary monopoly in the market and rake profits. To be sure, while companies are free to file for a product or process patent in as many countries as they can afford, a patent is only granted after regulatory authorities grant them one or are convinced that this process is indeed novel or inventive. BBIL, as far is publicly known, hasn’t yet been granted these patents.

What were the roles of BBIL and ICMR?

BBIL had collaborated with the ICMR-NIV for all the steps in developing a vaccine. The two organisations had signed an agreement that spelt out each entity’s responsibilities. As ICMR is a public entity and because of the scale of the COVID crisis, there were Right To Information requests to make this agreement public. However, it was only in July 2021, that parts of the agreement were made public in Rajya Sabha. Beyond transferring the strains and making vaccines, the agreement said, ICMR would also test these vaccines on animals — rodents to monkeys — and then on people to establish that the vaccine worked as intended. The ICMR also funded these clinical trials — ₹35 crore — and incurred costs in developing Covaxin. In return it was to get 5% of royalties that BBIL earned from the sale of Covaxin. Since the announcement of the BBIL and ICMR collaboration, it was generally accepted that both entities would contribute to the vaccine and would therefore hold “joint intellectual property rights,” as was stated in Parliament. However, BBIL first told The Hindu that it made a distinction between the rights governing the making of the vaccine and the rights over the data generated from clinical trials. The ICMR hadn’t invested in the actual making of the vaccine and so wasn’t included in patent applications. However, a day after the matter became public, BBIL said it had made a mistake, and that it would be making amends by filing fresh applications that listed ICMR personnel as inventors. It is unclear what prompted this.

Why does being cited as an inventor matter?

IPR is a vast, complex domain and spans the minutest parts of the product invention process. As the development of pharmaceutical products involves a wide range of expertise, it is hard for single firms or entities to develop everything in-house.

Why dengue cases are on the rise | Explained



The story so far: In the past few weeks, cases of dengue have been rising in some parts of the country. Karnataka, in particular, has been experiencing a rapid surge in cases in the last few days, while the cases have been climbing up in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as well. According to data published on the website of the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control, the country has recorded 19,447 cases of dengue and 16 deaths till April 30, 2024. Going by this data, Kerala and Tamil Nadu accounted for the most number of cases; the former had 4,412 cases and 14 deaths and the latter registered 4,204 cases and two deaths. Karnataka, where cases are currently soaring, had, till then, recorded 2,503 cases and nil deaths. Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh were the only other States with over 1,000 cases each.

Figures from the daily bulletin now being issued by Karnataka’s Department of Health and Family Welfare show that the State recorded a total of 7,840 cases of dengue and seven deaths from January 1 to July 10. Of this, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike recorded the most number of cases at 2,292. The active caseload in the State stood at 358. On July 10 alone, the State reported 293 cases.

What is the global situation of dengue?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of April 30, over 7.6 million cases of dengue were reported in 2024. This included 3.4 million confirmed cases, over 16,000 severe cases and over 3,000 deaths. In an update on the global scenario dated May 30, it said that 90 countries have known active dengue transmission, adding that “not all of which have been captured in formal reporting”. WHO pinpointed that the actual burden of dengue is underestimated as many endemic countries did not have strong detection and reporting mechanisms. The WHO noted that at least five countries, including India, were grappling with the onset of monsoon season, which created suitable conditions for the breeding and survival of Aedes mosquito. Urbanisation and population movements have also played a pivotal role in the increasing burden in the region. WHO observed that the incidence of dengue has grown dramatically around the world in recent decades. “About half of the world’s population is now at risk of dengue with an estimated 100-400 million infections occurring each year. Dengue is found in tropical and sub-tropical climates worldwide, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas,” it pointed

out. Dengue is endemic in more than 100 countries in the WHO regions of Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia and Western Pacific. The Americas, South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions were the most seriously affected, with Asia accounting for around 70% of the global disease burden. However, it also went on to note that dengue is spreading to new areas in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and South America.

How does dengue spread and how is it treated?

Dengue virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes, with the primary vector that transmits the disease being Aedes aegypti. While cases are mostly asymptomatic or mild, some may develop severe dengue that could include shock, severe bleeding or organ impairment. According to the National Guidelines for Clinical Management of Dengue Fever, an acute febrile illness of two to seven days duration with two or more of the following manifestations - headache, retro-orbital pain, myalgia, arthralgia, rash and haemorrhagic manifestations - were the clinical features of dengue fever. Clinical management of dengue fever may vary depending on the severity of illness. In those without any warning signs or complications, dengue is managed through symptomatic and supportive treatment.

What are the emerging patterns in dengue?

Researchers and public health experts have been closely monitoring the emerging patterns in dengue. While it remains a serious public health concern, surveillance, vector control, prevention of disease transmission, access to proper medical care, early and prompt diagnosis and appropriate management of cases are the much-needed focus areas. Among the several factors associated with an increasing risk of dengue epidemics were changing distribution of Aedes aegypti vector, urbanisation and human activities fostering conducive environments for vector-host interaction and climate change-induced shifts in weather patterns, according to WHO.

In the article ‘Prevention and Control Strategies to Counter the Dengue Cyclical Trend in Tamil Nadu’, published in the Tamil Nadu Journal of Public Health and Medical Research, public health officials said that the first epidemic of clinical dengue-like illness was recorded in erst-while Madras in 1780. Dengue virus was isolated in India during 1945 for the first time. The first evidence of the occurrence of dengue fever in the country was reported in 1956 from Vellore district in the State, they said. Noting that dengue was once considered to be an arboviral disease of the urban environment infecting populations in municipalities, corporations and cities, they said the infection has spread to all geographic regions including rural and urban due to rapid increase in urbanisation, expanding travel patterns and climatic changes. Tamil Nadu, they said, has witnessed outbreaks of dengue infection once in every five years in the past decade with the last outbreak occurring in 2017. With every outbreak, the prevalence has increased since 2008, the year when the first ever outbreak was noted, followed by 2012 and 2017.

Zika virus: the need to improve surveillance and vector control



The Zika virus is making the news once again. At least 15 cases, including eight pregnant women, of Zika have been discovered so far in Pune, Maharashtra. In Karnataka, a 74-year-old who had Zika has died. State Health Department officials say the death was caused by other factors. Another suspected case in Karnataka is being investigated as well. The Pune Municipal Corporation has said it has stepped up surveillance; the Karnataka Health Department has released guidelines on the virus for the public, and both States have urged members of the public to ensure there are no mosquito-breeding sites at their homes. Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry has issued an advisory to States to be vigilant; screen pregnant women, and strengthen entomological surveillance and intensify vector-control activities. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked States not only to increase testing for Zika but also to test patients with chikungunya and dengue-like symptoms who test negative for these infections for Zika, as per a news report. As the monsoon continues over large parts of the country, creating ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and with cases of dengue spiking as well, State administrations and members of the public need to step up mosquito-control measures to prevent transmission of diseases.

What is the Zika virus?

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus first identified in Uganda in 1947 in a Rhesus macaque monkey, followed by evidence of infection and disease in humans in other African countries in the 1950s. Zika virus occurs through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, mainly Aedes aegypti, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya. The Aedes mosquitoes usually bite during the day. Sexual transmission, transmission from mother to foetus and transfusions of blood and blood products are other routes of transmission.

What are the symptoms?

Most people infected with the Zika virus do not develop symptoms, the WHO says. Among those who do, they typically start 3–14 days after infection and are generally mild, including rash, fever, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, and headache, which usually last for 2–7 days.

How is the Zika virus diagnosed?

Zika virus may be suspected based on symptoms or the fact that the person is living in or visiting areas where Zika transmission has occurred. A diagnosis can only be given after a laboratory test. A recent report in The Hindu pointed to gaps in the tracking and surveillance of the virus, highlighting the fact that in March 2023, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), India’s apex agency for diagnostic approvals, confirmed that there was no approved diagnostic test for Zika. This limitation, the report said, hinders the country’s ability to diagnose Zika. At present, samples are generally sent to a few select labs, including the National Institute of Virology, for confirmation. The NIV, a media report indicates, is flooded with samples, leading to delays in the issuing of reports.

What are the complications caused by Zika?

Zika virus infection during pregnancy, the WHO says, can cause infants to be born with microcephaly and other congenital malformations and can also cause preterm births and miscarriage. Microcephaly is a condition in which an infant’s head is smaller than what is typical for their age and can be caused by the brain not developing properly. An estimated 5–15% of infants born to women infected with Zika virus during pregnancy have evidence of Zika-related com-

plications, as per the WHO. Zika virus infection is also associated with Guillain-Barré syndrome, neuropathy, and myelitis in adults and children. Guillain-Barré syndrome is a rare condition that causes a person’s immune system attacks the peripheral nerves.

Is there a vaccine?

No vaccine is as yet available for the prevention or treatment of Zika virus infection, the WHO says. The development of a Zika vaccine remains an active area of research. A few studies have shown promising results. In India for instance, several companies are attempting to make a vaccine. In a study published in 2017, Bharat Biotech’s “killed Zika virus vaccine” which uses an African strain showed 100% efficacy against mortality and disease in animal studies. Indian Immunologicals Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board said earlier this year that it was also working on developing a vaccine.

Meta agrees to change child abuse reporting process in India

New Delhi: Meta officials admitted to a mistake during their appearance before the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Wednesday and said the company would report child abuse content directly to Indian law enforcement agencies, government sources said. The officials also indicated that going forward, Meta would itself vet such content, amid scrutiny over the role of its algorithms in amplifying content and determining its visibility on its platforms. Meta India chief Arun Srinivas and other senior executives appeared before the child rights panel for the second time in a week as the NCPCR intensified its inquiry into alleged advertisements linked to Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material (CSEAM) on Instagram.

Government sources said Meta officials acknowledged the mistake during the hearing and agreed to strengthen the company’s reporting mechanism for child safety-related cases in India. The officials said Meta would directly report child abuse content to Indian law enforcement agencies through the cybercrime portal managed by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), the sources said. Going forward, Meta will itself vet such content, according to the government sources. The development assumes significance amid questions over the role of the platform’s algorithms in amplifying content and determining what users see. Government sources said Meta could no longer be viewed simply as an intermediary, given the role played by its systems and algorithms in influencing content visibility on its platforms.

From Gemini, Claude to Llama: How AI titans shaped the industry in 2024



Artificial Intelligence was seen as novelty in 2023 with the launch of ChatGPT just a month before the start of that year. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, after investing \$10 billion in OpenAI, threw down the gauntlet to Google, taunting the DeepMind owner to show what its AI could do. Google tottered with its half-baked Bard bot that spewed out inaccurate answers. In subsequent months, the Alphabet-owned company went through a baptism of fire and finally came out with a rechristened AI, Gemini, by the end of 2023. Building on that momentum, the search giant steadily rebuilt its reputation and began infusing Gemini capabilities in almost all of its products and services in 2024. Google's recent AI advances, including the second generation of Gemini, the Trillium AI accelerator chip, and breakthroughs in quantum computing with the Willow chip, have significantly boosted investor confidence, driving its stock price to a record high.

OpenAI did not give Google's Gemini an easy run. The competition between the two Silicon Valley giants was intense. Both the firms launched advanced AI models with improved reasoning capabilities. OpenAI's o3 model built on top of its predecessor, o1, by focusing on enhanced reasoning skills, outperforming previous models in complex coding and advanced mathematics. Similarly, Google's Gemini 2.0 Flash Thinking model answered complex questions by outlining its thought process, enhancing the model's reasoning capabilities. OpenAI's o3 model, with its advanced reasoning capabilities, garnered more attention from Microsoft as the tech giant relies on OpenAI models for its AI assistant, Microsoft 365 Copilot. While o3 promises better performance, its increased cost and computation time are significant considerations for business applications.

It wasn't just Google's turn-around this year. Product launches and updates from a clutch of other AI companies have, in some instances, stolen OpenAI's thunder this year. Amazon-backed Anthropic upgraded its AI model, Claude 3.5 Sonnet, with a "computer use" capability. That feature enables the AI to autonomously perform tasks such as moving the cursor, typing, and browsing the Internet, effectively automating complex computer interactions. This development aims to enhance productivity, particularly for software developers, by allowing the AI to execute multi-step actions with minimal human intervention. Another area Anthropic made strides this year was in how it implemented safety measures. During the U.S. presidential election, with its Clio tool, it analysed AI usage to ensure responsible AI deployment. In another instance, the AI company allowed the UK's AI Safety Institute to early-test its Claude 3.5 Sonnet model. French AI company Mistral for its part brought in a certain level of transparency in AI with its open-weight models, including Mistral 7B and Mixtral 8x7B, designed for customisation and deployment across various applications. These models were available under open licenses, promoting accessibility and innovation within the AI community. Mistral Large 2, the startup's flagship model, was integrated into IBM's Watsonx platform, offering enhanced capabilities in code generation, mathematics, and reasoning. In November, the France-based startup expanded into the US by establishing an office in Palo Alto, California, a strategic move aimed at attracting top AI talent and enhancing the company's sales operations. Such moves show how Silicon Valley continues to be the epicentre for top tech talent. Mistral AI also collaborated with Qualcomm to bring new generative AI models to devices powered by Snapdragon and Qualcomm platforms, indicating a focus on enhancing AI accessibility and performance in consumer electronics. Meta's LlamaMeta's large language models (LLMs), while quite late to the AI race, aren't far behind. In some ways, Facebook's parent company can be credited for modularizing AI models with its Llama models. In April, Meta released Llama 3, offering models with 8 billion (8B) and 70 billion (70B) parameters. These models were pre-

trained on approximately 15 trillion tokens from publicly available sources, with fine-tuning on over 10 million human-annotated examples. With performance in coding, reasoning, and multilingual support, Llama 3 was positioned by Meta as an open-source AI model.

In July, Llama 3.1 expanded the context windows for the 8B and 70B parameters models. Plus, it also launched a 405 billion (405B) parameter model. In September, Meta introduced Llama 3.2, featuring models with 1B, 3B, 11B, and 90B parameters. This version marked a significant milestone by incorporating multimodal capabilities, allowing the models to process both text and images. Additionally, Llama 3.2 was optimized for deployment on edge and mobile devices, broadening its applicability. Llama models were gradually integrated into Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, enhancing user experiences with AI-driven features like real-time translation and content generation. By the end of 2024, Llama has received a wider adoption with over 650 million downloads, per a company blog, citing downloads from Hugging Face. Meta's Llama and Mistral AI are giving open-source alternative to the OpenAI-style closed source AI models. Open-source models allow a broader audience to engage with AI technology, facilitating collaborative development and rapid innovation. This openness contrasts with the closed nature of proprietary models, which restrict access to underlying code and data. Developers can customise open-source LLMs to specific needs, enhancing versatility across diverse applications. This adaptability is often limited in closed-source models due to proprietary restrictions. While open-source models offer benefits, they may face challenges in matching the performance and specialised capabilities of proprietary systems. Proprietary models often have access to extensive resources and data, enabling them to achieve higher performance in certain tasks. And success in AI is dependent on the kind of data the models are trained in.

Apple intelligence and on-device experienceIn 2024, AI models were increasingly deployed across various devices to bring their capabilities closer to end-users, enhance functionality, and provide real-time experiences. For instance, in smartphones and tablets, Apple's Neural Engine, Qualcomm's Snapdragon AI Engine, and Google's Tensor chipsets were integrated with LLMs and vision models to power various tasks, including voice assistants like Siri and Google Assistant, real-time image processing for photo enhancements and augmented reality, and multimodal AI for speech, text, and image-based queries. Apple's incorporation of AI features into its latest iPhones, such as Visual Intelligence and Image Playground, has revitalised consumer interest, contributing to a significant increase in iPhone sales. This integration has positioned Apple on the brink of becoming the first company to surpass a \$4 trillion market capitalisation. PC manufacturers are fully embracing AI by integrating AI accelerators such as NVIDIA GeForce RTX series GPUs, AMD Radeon chips, and Apple's M-series chips. These accelerators enable generative models and advanced features like AI-powered transcription and video editing tools, enhanced productivity tools, gaming enhancements including real-time ray tracing and AI-driven non-playable characters (NPCs) to run on device. Talent is key

At the core of the current AI revolution lies a dual-engine system. One engine is responsible for training the data, while the other leverages the trained data to make inferences. To effectively operate these engines, hardware resources alone are insufficient. Human expertise plays a crucial role.

This has become a pain point for OpenAI in particular as it has been bleeding top talent this year. A notable departure from the AI giant is co-founder Ilya Sutskever. The company also lost its chief technology officer Mira Murati, and several other leading computer scientists. To make matters worse, some of the departing members are joining rivals. For instance, John Schulman, another OpenAI co-founder, moved to Anthropic. Schulman is a key leader in the creation of ChatGPT. Per a BCG analysis of top skilled labour, AI experts are the most mobile at nearly 11 out of 100 experts moving internationally every five years. So, where they go can make a big difference. Companies and countries that attract the best talent can gain a competitive edge in the tech world. Countries that are open to global talent tend to invent more and grow faster. As countries compete for leadership in AI, their ability to attract top talent is crucial for their success.

Bitcoin crosses \$100k: What are some crypto dangers you should be aware of?



Social media was aflame with euphoria and glee on December 5 as Bitcoin crossed \$100,000 for the very first time, buoyed by investors' hopes in a pro-crypto Trump administration. As Bitcoin's value spiked, other cryptocurrencies and tokens followed suit. During that week, Ripple's XRP surged by almost 50%, TRON's TRX shot up by more than 60%, and Hedera's HBAR rose by a formidable 90%. Meme coins and tokens were also riding high as Elon Musk's DOGE - Department of Government Efficiency - as well as the ticker for the Dogecoin currency, entered the common lingo. Several investors are now wondering whether to enter the buzzing crypto economy, while others are making their first crypto trades to capitalise on the spurt in price. Such a market environment is also filled with dangers. Here are some potential pitfalls and risk factors that every crypto investor should be aware of. Scams

There are countless ways to dupe aspiring crypto investors who want to make a quick buck without bothering to learn about the market. Malicious actors often try to lure in buyers with meme coins that are based on popular cultural references. These tokens can enjoy skyrocketing prices in a matter of hours or days, luring others to buy huge volumes of the token. Soon enough, many investors will realise that their tokens cannot be sold or returned as the makers of those cryptocurrencies will abscond, leaving no trace of their digital footprint. Alternatively, the tokens can be sold normally, but the creators may hold large amounts of the currency themselves; when the prices are high enough, they quickly sell their assets and cash out. This causes the overall market cap of the token to crash, leaving other investors with nearly worthless assets. Hacks While crypto hacks remain an ever-present risk all-year round, hackers and scammers are especially incentivised to try and dupe customers when crypto prices rise high. With Bitcoin crossing \$100k, hackers know that there will be a large pool of new and curious traders who are looking to invest their money. More advanced hackers, including those backed by enemy state regimes, may attack users' wallets or even the wallets maintained by crypto exchanges. On the other end of the spectrum, even amateur hackers may successfully target victims through the use of romantic manipulation (known as pig-butchering scams) on dating apps, fake "airdrops" online, offers of technical help/advice on social media, or phishing emails that contain malware. Many AI chatbots have also simplified the process of generating malicious code or fake messages that can be used to fool crypto investors into giving up their credentials.

Failed currencies Even cryptocurrencies/tokens that were started by trusted teams of technologists and expert traders can fail without reason, wiping off millions or even billions of dollars in value. Now consider that not all cryptocurrencies are helmed by professionals. Crypto tokens on major blockchains can be created by almost anyone, including those who create such assets as a joke or to benefit themselves alone. While non-malicious actors such as influencers or celebrities might promote crypto tokens or take part in ads featuring them, be aware that the person's fame does not necessarily guarantee the success of the cryptocurrency or the token. A case in point is Halley Welch's meme-token HAWK, which references an explicit catchphrase popularised by the internet personality this year. Despite her viral fame, the influencer's token crashed soon after its launch, with several investors planning to take legal action against her. There are also multiple crypto tokens

inspired by the viral Thai pygmy hippo Moo Deng; many of these have more or less completely crashed shortly after being launched, according to the blockchain statistics on CoinMarketCap. For this reason, crypto investors must invest time in researching the assets they wish to obtain or trade, and study the relevant metrics to assess their health. With Bitcoin hitting \$100k, a number of investors are likely to be bitten by the FOMO (fear of missing out) bug. This means that in an effort to ride the wave of market euphoria while prices last, amateur traders are likely to make sudden or reckless trading decisions they would not have done so otherwise. These investors may buy more than they originally planned, hoping that prices will rise. This is a risky strategy as it could result in inexperienced investors diving into the market without being equipped with the information they need. Others might end up buying/selling crypto on the basis of their emotions, trending headlines, or peer pressure. Some may go far beyond their means and invest such huge sums of money that they can no longer support their or their family's daily expenses. More experienced traders would be able to invest their funds efficiently and carry out both short-term and long-term crypto trades with the help of a carefully calculated plan that aligns with their goals and financial position. As crypto adoption grows, many new investors who enter the market may be ignorant of essential facts such as the blockchain technology underpinning crypto, India's crypto tax regulations, and the legal status of existing crypto exchanges and lending platforms. This puts them in both financial and legal danger. Furthermore, many traders do not carry out their own research before buying assets, but uncritically follow self-styled analysts, finance influencers, or content creators who may be receiving payments to promote highly unstable or even scam-based cryptocurrencies.

New investors may also choose the services of a particular crypto exchange simply because it is popular and based in their own country, instead of choosing an institution that is right for their needs. Many crypto investors also lack basic market skills such as reading candlestick charts, using trading indicators to understand currency movements, analysing and estimating possible price movements, identifying potential scam coins, setting up automatic orders, etc. that are used to maximise profits and reduce losses. Non-technical traders who are new to crypto may also not understand fundamental categories, such as the difference between a coin and a token, the difference between Ether and Ethereum, the difference between Bitcoin and a meme-coin, etc.

Others who wrongly believe that crypto investments can be equated to traditional financial instruments - such as fixed deposits - invest their life savings or family members' pension funds without realising just how quickly these assets can be lost or frozen by their largely unregulated custodians. What crypto investors need to keep in mind India has a tax framework in place for digital/virtual assets that crypto investors must comply with, or risk facing legal action. Even centralised exchanges that declare they are in compliance with Indian laws can stop you from depositing or withdrawing your assets for a range of reasons. Due to the volatility of crypto asset prices, common inconveniences such as a slow internet connection, a frozen computer screen, power cuts, etc. can lead to investors losing huge sums of money if they do not have back-up measures in place. Even scam-based crypto coins and tokens may be listed on reputable price-tracking platforms, causing new investors to mistakenly believe that they are safe and vetted projects. Reporting crypto crimes or hacks is still a long and difficult process in India due to the lack of mainstream knowledge about blockchain technology and how it works. There is currently no official method to certify India-based "finfluencers" or crypto traders, so advice from such "experts" should be treated with extreme caution. The crypto market is best understood on the basis of its own merits and as a completely different field where science, mathematics, technology, and economics all intersect. It is not advisable to equate it to the traditional stock market

AI can help improve learning outcomes in Indian schools

There are particularly low levels of engagement in learning and education among the vast majority of students in India, according to multiple experts who spoke to The Hindu. Most children fail to do their homework or engage substantively with their course material. This atmosphere creates a unique opportunity for cutting-edge technologies like generative A.I. tools to improve learning outcomes and help students interact positively with their study material, said former Rajya Sabha MP and former BJD party IT and Tech cell head, Amar Patnaik. "A.I. in education is a boon in disguise because it will force and push students to have critical thinking skills and creativity which is sorely lacking in India," said Mr. Patnaik. "The OpenAI study says that A.I. in education could negatively affect students but I think instead that it will make more students interested in learning and therefore school curriculum will need to be changed significantly because of A.I. tools that everyone will and should use," Mr. Patnaik added. Furthermore, some educators say that the technology will force students to learn in a digital-friendly and evidence-based way in the near future.

"A.I. systems can be beneficial in education because the more you put into the prompt, the more you explain your understanding of a problem, the better your answer will be from A.I. tools. So we have to see this as an opportunity for educators to use the technology to get students to engage more on subjects that they're not always interested in," said Mr. Krishnan from IIT Madras. Another potential benefit of A.I. educational tools in India is that they could provide a better, more productive outlet for students to spend their free time, especially in comparison to social media platforms. "With kids spending so much time on their devices and computers, A.I. systems provide a far, far better alternative than social media or other things they do on their devices. It's far more fruitful for students to use fun educational A.I. tools like ours compared to spending an hour on TikTok or Instagram," said Mr. Sharma from Schoolnet. Nevertheless, educators, politicians, and tech executives say that some thoughtful, carefully considered guardrails and regulations will be needed to successfully implement and use the technology in the long run. "Guardrails for A.I. in education to ensure it's accurate, unbiased, and helpful have to be taken seriously because students are our future and we need to ensure that they learn the right way," said Mr. Krishnan. "If you don't expose students to thoughtfully designed generative A.I. educational tools that use a Socratic style and have other checks and balances they will be forced to learn from general A.I. tools and the internet at large which have many existing issues as we know," Mr. Krishnan added. Another challenge is en-



suring that the data collected in India to create and run A.I. tools within the educational sector as well as other fields are appropriately gathered and that students don't blindly follow the output of the technology. "A.I. biases baked into the current data sets are a big issue. So if you're making decisions based on flawed or biased data sets and their corresponding A.I. tools, there will be worse or problematic actions taken," said Mr. Patnaik, the former Rajya Sabha member. "In the Indian context, as a civil servant and public official, I have the experience to know that we cannot create A.I. systems that are built only upon data collected through formal official channels such as government records, consumer purchases, online behavior, etc. because a lot of insights and answers to problems in India come through informal data channels from entities like street vendors, labourers, unskilled workers, and others in informal sectors," Mr. Patnaik added. Although potential A.I. risks to education in India were highlighted in the OpenAI study, major concerns around other prominent use cases of the technology deserve just as much or more attention in the coming months, according to some tech-policy experts like Mr. Krishnan from IIT-Madras and Mr. Patnaik, the former Rajya Sabha member. Mr. Krishnan said he was surprised that the results of OpenAI's risk perception survey didn't highlight threats like the role of A.I. in the military and warfare while Patnaik said he would have expected the study to highlight how the technology could be used negatively or positively to impact climate change. EdTech executives like Mr. Sharma from Schoolnet say that the future of A.I. in education is full of excitement and innovation because of the potential to democratise and scale access to world-class educational tools across India including among the poorest schools and students. "Soon we will have an A.I. avatar or teacher trained on Einstein, Aristotle, Tagore, you know the best of the best, and every student then gets access to a genius teacher," said Mr. Sharma. "

Six essential tech tools and skills that Management students must know

Imagine stepping into a boardroom today, where executives make decisions based not just on instinct or mere experience but on data drawn from complex algorithms and visualised on sleek dashboards. This is no longer a futuristic scenario; it's the reality of the modern business world. While core competencies like leadership and strategy remain essential, proficiency in tech tools is now indispensable for staying competitive and innovative in the job market. Therefore, MBA students need to be well-versed in both traditional and modern tools. Here are six key tech tools and skills that every MBA student should master to thrive in a dynamic landscape. Portfolio Optimisation: In finance and consulting, optimising portfolios is a crucial skill. This goes beyond just theory. MBA students have to be proficient in tools like Tableau and Power BI to analyse and visualise historical market data into actionable insights and be able to identify trends, assess and forecast risks, and make data-informed decisions about asset allocation and create robust financial models. Digital Marketing: The digital economy has transformed how businesses engage with customers. MBA students need to understand digital marketing strategies to reach target audiences and manage brand presence effectively. Mastering tools like Google Analytics, which tracks customer behaviour and website performance, or SEMrush, which offers valuable insights into SEO and competitor tactics, or Hootsuite, which facilitates the efficient management of social media platforms, ensuring consistent brand communication, is essential.

Basic Programming and Data Science: In an era where data fuels business growth, MBA students must know the basics of programming and Data Science. Python helps automate processes, analyse data, and generate predictive models. Widely recognised for its versatility in business applications, it is the go-to programming language for data analysis, automation, and predictive modelling. SQL is indispensable for managing and querying databases. Tools like Jupyter Notebook make writing and sharing code alongside visualisations easier, facilitating collaboration with data science teams. Entrepreneurial Experience: Today, B-schools emphasise entrepreneurship, encouraging students to develop business ideas. With the rise of incubators and venture capital funding, MBA students increasingly gain



hands-on experience in launching start-ups. Platforms like Kickstarter and Y Combinator provide valuable ecosystems for students looking to pitch ideas, develop products, and gain hands-on experience developing revenue-generating businesses even while they study. This allows them to apply classroom knowledge in a real-world setting and equips them with practical skills in leadership, product development, and market strategy. Business Performance Optimisation: A successful business requires more than a great idea; it demands efficient operations and strategy alignment across all departments. Many MBA programmes incorporate real-world projects where students analyse a company's operations in areas like financial accounting, marketing, and operations management.

ERP systems — such as SAP and Oracle — are widely used to streamline processes and improve operational efficiency. Familiarity with such tools can help optimise performance, whether by improving workflows, managing resources, or driving profitability. Leveraging Tech and AI: As businesses increasingly turn to automation and AI, MBA students must learn how to leverage these technologies to enhance efficiency and streamline operations. Tools like Zapier allow users to automate routine tasks while AI-driven platforms, such as chatbots, transform customer service by providing fast, efficient solutions to customer inquiries. A PwC report stated that that AI can potentially increase business productivity by 40% by 2035.

No health without skin health: a global call to end skin bleaching and prioritise dermatological equity



Every July 8, World Skin Health Day asks the world to reconsider what we see and what we choose not to see. Skin, the body’s largest organ, is also its most visible and most vulnerable. It is both a physical barrier and a mirror of health, dignity and social belonging. Yet, despite its profound role in our well-being, skin health is routinely side-lined in global health agendas. In 2025, the message of World Skin Health Day is clear and urgent: #NoHealthWithoutSkinHealth.

This year’s campaign builds on a historic achievement: the 78th World Health Assembly passed a landmark resolution officially recognising skin diseases as a public health priority. “The resolution is the result of years of work by ministries of health and the dermatological community,” says Esther Freeman, director of global health dermatology at Harvard Medical School. “Skin disease touches so many areas, infectious diseases, neglected tropical diseases, even cancer. Its inclusion signals long-overdue recognition.” “What this means for patients is greater visibility, better funding, and stronger policy support,” she adds. “It opens the door to cross-sectoral partnerships and the integration of dermatology into broader health systems.” But recognition is just the beginning. One of the most urgent and visible challenges facing dermatologists today is the global crisis of skin bleaching and this year, International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) has taken a bold next step. The International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) represents over 200 dermatological societies across the globe. The World Skin Health Day is a joint initiative by the ILDS and the International Society of Dermatology (ISD). These societies collectively include more than 2,00,000 dermatologists, serving an estimated 4–5 billion people worldwide - particularly when accounting for both direct clinical care and public health outreach. Together, they work to elevate skin health on the international stage, advocate for underserved populations, and influence policy at institutions like the World Health Organization. The campaign is more than symbolic - it aims to unite clinicians, researchers, public health professionals, patients and policymakers in recognising that healthy skin is not a luxury, but a fundamental part of human health. Globally, more than 1.8 billion people live with at least one skin disease, making skin conditions one of the most common human health problems. Conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, acne, infections, leprosy, pigmentary disorders, and skin cancers cut across age, geography, and social status. But their visibility often brings stigma, especially when access to treatment is limited.

“Skin diseases are among the most visible and stigmatised conditions worldwide, yet they continue to be sidelined in the global health agenda,” says Rashmi Sarkar, director and professor of dermatology, Lady Hardinge Medical College, Delhi and Regional Director of ILDS (Asia, Middle East and Africa). “You cannot speak of health equity while ignoring the skin. Skin health is not cosmetic- it is central to mental wellbeing, quality of life, and social inclusion.” Building on the World Health Assembly resolution, the ILDS, in a new resolution, is calling for urgent global action against skin bleaching - a dangerous and deeply-rooted practice affecting communities across Africa, Asia,

South America and the Caribbean. The dangers of skin bleaching

Skin bleaching is not about beauty. It is a symptom of something much deeper,” says Prof. Sarkar. “It stems from systemic colourism, colonial histories, and socio-cultural messaging that equate lighter skin with success, desirability, and access. These narratives are reinforced every day - on screens, in advertisements and even, at times, in clinical spaces.” People often use bleaching products in an attempt to lighten or ‘brighten’ their skin tone, unaware of the serious risks involved. Many of these products contain potent steroids, hydroquinone, mercury and other heavy metals. These substances can severely compromise the skin barrier, leading to conditions like exogenous ochronosis, steroid-induced acne, skin thinning, and even systemic toxicity. “The creams may seem harmless, even helpful at first glance,” explains Prof. Sarkar, “but they can cause irreversible damage—both physically and psychologically. And because many are self-compounded or sold through informal channels, their safety is not regulated at all.” This isn’t just a women’s issue. “We are now seeing increasing numbers of young men using skin-lightening products,” she adds. “Social media pressures, dating preferences, and workplace discrimination are pushing men toward the same harmful practices. Skin bleaching cuts across gender, age, geography, and economic background. It is a full-blown public health crisis.” Prof. Sarkar has worked with partners across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to bring global attention to this issue. The Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL) has also played a pivotal role, making awareness about steroid misuse, skin bleaching and its consequences a national campaign priority. “This year’s World Skin Health Days not just about telling people to stop using creams. It’s about rewriting the story,” she says. “We must educate people that the skin they have is the skin they’re meant to have. Darker skin is not a flaw - it is functional, protective and beautiful. We need to challenge the very idea that lighter is better.”

The new ILDS resolution is a call for cross-sectoral action. Dermatologists cannot fight this alone. “We need public health leaders, media influencers, government regulators, educators, and people from all walks of life to join us,” she urges. “Because it’s not enough to just treat the damage - we must prevent it, by shifting both culture and policy.” Prof. Sarkar emphasises that skin health is often a window into systemic health. “The skin is where we first see signs of malnutrition, HIV, diabetes, autoimmune disease - especially in low-resource settings. If we ignore the skin, we miss crucial opportunities for early diagnosis and care.” In her work across countries, she has seen first-hand how lack of dermatological training and access creates wide inequities in care. “We need dermatology included in national health programmes, greater investment in training, research and especially in regulation of harmful products. But more than anything, we need compassion,” she says. “Every person deserves care, regardless of the colour of their skin.”

More than a medical campaign As the world marks World Skin Health Day 2025, Prof. Sarkar reminds us that this is more than a medical campaign, it is a movement. Clinics around the world will host free skin health consultations, school programmes, and community awareness drives. Social media will share stories of real people who’ve lived with the stigma, damage and courage to reclaim their skin. Later this year, the ILDS will convene the 4th World Skin Summit in Cape Town, where leaders from over 80 countries will gather to discuss how to make skin care more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable. “Our message is clear,” says Prof. Sarkar. “We cannot keep skin health at the margins. If we truly want universal health coverage, dignity in care and equity in public health - then skin must be part of the conversation.” She concludes: “What is visible is not always seen. Until we see the skin and the people who live in it, there can be no health for all.”

Punugulu, mirchi bajji, masala vada are the best snacks for a rainy day in Hyd



Hyderabad’s chilly winds and sudden rain spells make the perfect backdrop for craving something deep-fried and local. Think crisp, golden snacks with just the right hit of chilli — flavourful enough to warm you up, but not so spicy that you skip your hot cuppa. If you love crunchy bites, you might end up frying some at home. But if cooking is not your thing, just order in or head to your go-to bajji joint.

Punugulu: These bite-sized dollops of idli-dosa batter are fried till golden brown and impossible to stop at just one. That slight tang from the fermented batter is your excuse for going in for seconds (or thirds). Let the gut-health benefits of fermentation ease your guilt as you bite into these crunchy, oily little devils.

Mirchi Bajji: In Hyderabad, this is not just a snack, it is practically a celebration. From wedding menus to desi-themed high teas, the mirchi bajji makes an appearance with pride. Street-side or served on silver trays, it remains a firm local favourite. Made using banana chilies, which are quite mild, the seeds are scooped out and the inside is filled with a salty, tangy mixture that balances the gentle heat. Then, it is dipped in a thick besan batter and fried till golden and crisp. Honourable mentions go to its bajji cousins: alu bajji (potato) and aratikaya bajji (raw banana), also deep-fried and delicious. Masala Vada: This holeless vada is hearty, humble, and hard to resist. Made by coarsely grinding soaked split chickpeas (Bengal gram) and sometimes a bit of toor dal with spices, the batter is shaped into flat discs and deep-fried. Sounds simple enough, but the secret to that perfect crunch lies in slow frying over a low flame, with constant stirring. The result is a golden shell that is crisp on the outside and soft, almost fluffy, within. Patti Samosa: This is a snack that needs no season, or reason. But when it rains, Hyderabad’s tea stalls start filling up with samosa loyalists, especially those chasing the onion-filled kind. Unlike the samosas (or singaras) loved in the north and east, the Hyderabad patti samosa is its own thing. Its name comes from the thin dough strips — patti — used to wrap the caramelised onion filling into crisp, triangle-shaped



bites. Pro tip: The non-vegetarian version, packed with spiced minced meat, is a local favourite among seasoned snackers.

Satya Nadella praises Seattle-India tech ties at CEOs forum

New York: Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella lauded Seattle’s burgeoning technology community and its strengthening relationship with India as he addressed leading Indian-origin tech CEOs from across sectors, including AI, quantum computing and enterprise software. Nadella was the guest of honour at a special event organised by the Consulate General of India in Seattle under the leadership of Consul General Prakash Gupta.

The event, titled ‘Ideas4India: Indian American Tech CEOs Forum | Unlocking the Tech Dividend’, was held on Thursday at the consulate premises as a follow-up to the India AI Impact Summit, which was organised in New Delhi in February. The event aimed to learn from the unique expertise pool of the Indian-American technology community based in the Greater Seattle area.

Nadella said he was proud to have watched the Seattle technology community grow over roughly 35 years and was pleased to see it forming and strengthening its relationship with India, the consulate said in a press statement. Nadella described artificial intelligence as a general-purpose technology whose benefits would depend on its broad diffusion across countries, communities and sectors. Addressing the event, India’s Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra welcomed the strong desire of Indian-origin tech CEOs and other forum participants to further deepen the India-US technology partnership.

The free fall of moral leadership



In an era of global conflicts and democratic decline, the question of political leadership in the democratic world has acquired a heightened significance. Intensified rivalries in several parts of the world represent a failure of leadership. The unconscionable ambivalence of world leaders in standing up for principle over expediency, and their abject surrender to hegemonic power, speaks for itself. The tragedies of Ukraine, Gaza, and the Israel-Iran conflict show the ravages of war caused by the insolence of power, untamed by humanitarian interdicts. Justice above raw power

Despite the fragile ceasefire brokered by U.S. President Donald Trump from a position of overarching military superiority, the footprints of these hostilities will remain visible symbols of an oppressive exercise of military power that has taken thousands of innocent lives. Those responsible for the catastrophe have clearly forgotten the abiding lesson of history that people carrying a festering wound in their souls find closure only when injustice is avenged. Lasting peace in West Asia will remain hostage to an indelible sense of injustice and moral outrage. It is, therefore, imperative to foster leadership that values justice above raw power. In the deeply distressing trans border conflicts that have driven the world perilously close to a global war, the moral and intellectual impoverishment of the principal actors has raised concerns about the failure of contemporary democracies to yield inspiring leadership, answerable to the ‘injunctions of conscience’. The pretence of a functional rules-based international order helmed by the United Nations Charter stands demolished yet again, reconfirming the impotence of international law in outlawing the use of force in relations between nations. The illegal invasion of Iraq and parts of Ukraine are no more than footnotes of history. Lessons to learn

But there are lessons to be learned. The world needs leadership, driven by a search for global consensus and subject to the discipline of international law to address the defining challenges of our times, including the settlement of territorial disputes. This is a particularly important reminder for those who claim to lead the democratic world and propound the necessity of a credible international legal

order. Democratic leadership is about walking alone in defence of principle, where necessary. It is about holding on to the truth against all odds and empowering the weak. It is about uniting people in trying times and advancing human dignity by removing disparities. Inspirational leadership is about an unremitting endeavour to create favourable conditions of social and political existence that can optimise the realisation of human potential in an environment of peace and harmony. And as shown in the tortuous process of securing a fragile truce between Israel and Iran, deceit and two-facedness annual leadership. Leadership does not emerge out of a vacuum. As Karl Marx reminded us famously, ‘Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please... [they do so] under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.’ The French statesman Chateaubriand proclaimed that ‘the leader of the nation must be the leader of the times’, so that his exertions mirror the aspirations of the people and invest politics with a moral purpose larger than himself. The current global conflicts present an opportunity for democracies to look inwards for correction and to reinforce their appeal.

In defence of justicelndian democracy, which has survived several vicissitudes and a ‘thousand mutinies’, has been enriched by the exertions and selflessness of several of its towering leaders. They were led by Mahatma Gandhi, who defined for us the meaning of transformative leadership. The Mahatma’s promise of politics, impervious to the trappings of power and rooted instead in the moral imagination of the people yearning for freedom and dignity, enabled him to forge a sustainable non-violent struggle against injustice. He accomplished the ‘will of his age’, defined it for the people, and personified it. As a proud inheritor of the Gandhian legacy of morality-driven politics and drawing strength from its civilisational ethos of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbham’, India must stand out in defence of justice everywhere. It must flex its moral muscle for shaping a just world order. Its economic heft, nuclear capabilities, and regional power status should enable India to espouse international morality without compromising its strategic autonomy or without alienating key allies. In these defying times, we must summon our tallest leaders to collectively energise Indian democracy. They must establish the exceptionality of their leadership in the service of national goals and global peace. Our leaders must ‘reinforce the tone of modesty’, introduce dignity at the centre of political processes, revive the spirit of collegiality, be seen as symbols of hope in times of fracture and fear, and re-purpose their politics beyond the pursuit of raw power. At this juncture of the nation’s history, when domestic and external challenges threaten the social accord and disruptive shifts in the power pendulum are testing the societal equilibrium, we need leadership that is strong and compassionate, resolute but conciliatory, and decisive while striving for democratic consensus on critical issues.

On the Golden Dome: how Trump’s missile shield tests space law

From golden citadels to divine shields, rulers across time have dreamt of impregnable security. But in every age, these ambitions have either collapsed under their own weight or have provoked greater instability. In 2025, this ancient dream went to orbit. In May, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled a bold new national defence initiative called the “Golden Dome”, a \$175-billion space-based missile shield designed to fend off ballistic, hypersonic, and orbital threats. The plan involves deploying a constellation of satellite interceptors, potentially armed with kinetic or directed-energy weapons, to form a protective layer over the U.S. Framed as a defence move, the project has sparked concerns worldwide for its geopolitical ramifications as well as for its implications under international space law. In particular, the Golden Dome challenges the Outer Space Treaty’s limits, raises constitutional concerns within the U.S., and puts pressure on key strategic partners such as India. Loophole or legal red line? At the heart of the legal debate is Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty (OST), 1967. It prohibits placing “nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction” in orbit or stationing them “in outer space in any other manner”. It further mandates that celestial bodies shall be used “exclusively for peaceful purposes”. The language of Article IV, particularly its explicit focus on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), has created a loophole for conventional weapons in space. The term “peaceful purposes” has been subject to various interpretations, with some nations claiming that it permits all non-aggressive military use, while others insist it implies complete demilitarisation.

The treaty further states: “The establishment of military bases, installations and fortifications, the testing of any type of weapons and the conduct of military manoeuvres on celestial bodies shall be forbidden.” The use of military personnel for scientific research or any other peaceful purposes isn’t prohibited, however. The use of any equipment or facility necessary to peacefully explore the moon and other celestial bodies is also not prohibited (Article IV). Because the Golden Dome’s interceptors are not classified as WMDs, they don’t violate the letter of Article IV per se. There are a few concerns nonetheless. In arms control, the practical outcome must always take precedence over the technical details or official classifications of a weapon. This means what a weapon is called matters far less than its actual strategic effect. For instance, if kinetic interceptors are used to disable or destroy missiles or satellites, their impact could fundamentally alter the balance of power in space. This capability could create a dangerous first-strike advantage for one nation, thereby eroding the principle of mutual deterrence, which relies on the threat of retaliation to prevent an attack. Such a development would undermine the core goal of arms control treaties, which is to foster stability through restraint, and could trigger a significant and destabilising shift in the dynamics of power in outer space. UN General Assembly resolutions under the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) Treaty, while lacking legal enforceability, have successfully established an interpretive norm against the militarisation of space. The deployment of space-based interceptors, therefore, directly threatens this norm and could trigger a cascade of similar actions by other nations.

These systems are plagued by dual-use ambi-



guity. A kinetic interceptor, ostensibly for missile defence, possesses the inherent capability to be instantly repurposed to neutralise an adversary’s vital communication or surveillance satellites. This inherent uncertainty risks inflaming suspicion and driving miscalculation, especially during heightened crises involving major space powers like China and Russia, both of which have already explicitly condemned the proposed deployment. Partners in crossfire India, a rising space power and a key U.S. partner in satellite tracking and space situational awareness, now finds itself tactically aligned but normatively conflicted. Quiet cooperation in areas like debris monitoring could tacitly link India to the Golden Dome’s strategic ecosystem. However, India is also a vocal champion of peaceful space use. It has consistently supported PAROS resolutions and has positioned itself as a leader of the Global South in advocating for equitable and demilitarised space governance. Supporting or even appearing to tolerate the Golden Dome could undermine that credibility, damaging India’s image as a responsible spacefaring nation and a potential norm-setter in future treaty negotiations. Conversely, non-cooperation might strain its growing strategic ties with Washington. This dilemma becomes even more consequential in the context of India’s pending Space Activities Bill, which will shape how the country defines and regulates dual-use platforms, private-sector participation, and treaty

compliance. The Golden Dome is thus more than a U.S. policy issue: it’s a litmus test for India’s own legal and diplomatic posture and could significantly influence the direction and content of the Space Activities Bill. Less than golden precedent The broader concern is that the Golden Dome will normalise the weaponisation of outer space. If the U.S. crosses this threshold without facing legal repercussions, China, Russia, and other actors are likely to follow suit. This could trigger a destabilising cycle of orbital arms races, forcing smaller nations to resort to asymmetric capabilities, such as cyberattacks, jamming or even the deliberate generation of debris in orbit. Such developments would not only weaken the OST’s authority but could also unravel the fragile consensus that has governed space for over half a century. In the absence of updated and enforceable treaties, outer space risks becoming a legal grey zone or, worse, a battlefield governed by force rather than law. Thus, the Golden Dome is more than a military gamble or a political spectacle. It’s a legal inflection point for space governance in the 21st century. It exposes loopholes in a 58-year-old treaty, reveals structural weaknesses in domestic oversight, and underscores the urgent and immediate need for modern legal instruments that can keep pace with technological realities. Strategic partners, such as India, along with like-minded spacefaring nations, should notably push to clarify and modernise the OST,

World needs new, trusted chip bases, India ready for it: PM Modi

The world needs new and trusted bases for semiconductor manufacturing and India is readying itself to meet that requirement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday, as he pitched the country as an alternative manufacturing hub at a time when chip companies are looking to diversify their global supply chains. “The world needs new and trusted locations for chip manufacturing and India is preparing itself for this,” Modi said, inaugurating SEMICON India 2026 in New Delhi. He said India had now entered the second phase of its semiconductor journey, moving beyond policy announcements and construction of plants towards commercial production of chips.

The Prime Minister said India had achieved in about four years what generally takes countries around a decade to build, but described semiconductor manufacturing as a “never-ending journey”. 12 semiconductor projects were approved under the first phase of the India Semiconductor Mission, spanning fabrication, packaging and other parts of the chip value chain. Three of these have already started commercial production.

The government has now moved to Semicon 2.0, a Rs 1.27 lakh crore programme that widens the focus beyond large chip factories to areas such as semiconductor equipment, materials, design, research and development, supply chains and skilled manpower. Modi said the next phase would see the number of projects increase further, as India sought to build the wider ecosystem needed around semiconductor fabs. India is witnessing rapidly rising semiconductor demand. It is projected to reach \$110 billion by FY30 and exceed \$200 billion by FY35, while domestic manufacturing remains at a nascent stage. India spent almost \$150 billion on semiconductor product imports between FY17–FY25. Imports grew at a CAGR of 23% during this period, and if this trend continues, annual imports could reach \$240 billion by 2035. The government, therefore, has identified building a comprehensive semiconductor ecosystem as an urgent national priority.

Modi sought greater participation from private companies in research and development, saying the country needed industry to play a bigger role in developing advanced technologies. “I urge industry leaders to lead R&D in the country,” Modi said, while also calling on young Indian researchers, including those working overseas, to participate in the sector’s growth. The government, he added, was opening more avenues for international companies to work



with Indian start-ups and chip design firms. At Semicon India, 2026 fresh investments were also announced from two of the world’s biggest semiconductor equipment companies. Applied Materials announced its India Vision 2035, under which it will invest \$5 billion over the next decade, including on R&D, expanding the domestic semiconductor supply chain and developing talent. The company also announced a new 140-acre advanced semiconductor research park, and said it aims to expand its India-based supply-chain capacity ten-fold by 2035.

Lam Research, meanwhile, has announced plans to invest around Rs 10,000 crore in India over the next several years to establish its first silicon-component manufacturing facility in the country and expand its advanced R&D operations. The proposed facility will cover silicon ingot production and processing for advanced semiconductor technologies, while building on Lam’s existing engineering and R&D presence in India. Other global semiconductor executives also pointed to the shift from plans to production. Micron Technology CEO Sanjay Mehrotra said the company’s Sanand facility in Gujarat had begun shipping DRAM (Dynamic Random-Access Memory) and NAND memory products to customers globally. Micron expects to assemble and test tens of millions of chips at the plant this year and scale that to hundreds of millions next year. Its Indian teams have also contributed to more than 3,700 patents, inventions and disclosures, he said. Infineon Technologies CEO Jochen Hanebeck said India had the potential to strengthen its position across the global semiconductor value chain as its domestic market and technological capabilities expanded. The German chipmaker now has more than 2,800 employees in India.

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 prod-



ucts 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.

Why India’s top nuclear scientist wants thorium in its reactors sooner

India’s top nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar has advocated the early introduction of thorium-based fuel into the country’s indigenous pressurised heavy water reactor (PHWR) fleet, while parallelly continuing with the three-stage nuclear power programme, to speed up the utilisation of the country’s abundant thorium reserves. The three-stage nuclear power programme was conceived in the 1950s by Homi Jehangir Bhabha, the architect of the country’s nuclear programme.

With the world transiting from uranium to thorium, the appeal for PHWRs will grow particularly in emerging economy countries, Kakodkar, the former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, who now holds the position of the Chancellor at the Homi Bhabha National Institute and the Chairman of the Rajiv Gandhi Science & Technology Commission, told The Indian Express in an interview. Edited excerpts: After the passage of the SHANTI Act, the government seems veering around to the view that opening up of this strategic atomic energy sector is to primarily access external funding, rather than source foreign technology. So, would it be safe to presume that indigenous PHWRs would continue to be the mainstay of the future capacity addition plans? Unlike other energy forms, nuclear reactors are fuel producers as well, alongside their role as energy producers. Leveraging this feature is important for a country like India which has large energy needs with very insufficient energy resources. National nuclear energy and nuclear fuel recycle policy thus remains an important guid-

ing force, along with economic considerations, for driving the choice of nuclear reactor systems and their growth. Since the fuel recycle activities have to remain within the government, nurturing a symbiotic and mentoring relationship between the government and the public or private sector utilities holds utmost importance. The PHWR system has been developed as a part of our well conceived approach to India’s self-reliance, and long-term energy security or independence, to be realised through India’s globally-largest thorium resources. Barring molten salt reactors (MSRs), which are yet to mature, PHWRs are the best platforms for utilising thorium among thermal reactors.

Most importantly, PHWR has also established itself as a robust, safe and economically competitive technology, and thus offers significant attraction to investors — while also taking India’s nuclear energy policy forward. It would thus be natural to expect domestic PHWR to occupy a major share of the 100 gigawatt electric (GWe) nuclear mission (to be implemented between now and 2047) with imported LWRs occupying most of the remaining share.

The large-scale deployment of FBRs, or fast breeder reactors (it is the vital second stage in the DAE’s three-stage power programme that uses recycled fuel and breeds much more fuel at the end of a reaction cycle), is still a work-in-progress. In order to catch up, how compelling is the need for a quick solution to tide over the slowdown in nuclear capacity addition rate due to fuel supply constraints?

8 states have acted. Now, food regulator may ban analogue paneer across India

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the country’s apex food regulator, is considering a nationwide ban on analogue paneer—a non-dairy product where the milk constituents such as milk fats and milk protein are substituted with vegetable oil, fats, and vegetable proteins. A senior official confirmed that consultations on a regulation for analogue paneer is underway and a draft is likely to be put out soon. At least eight states, including Karnataka, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, have already implemented a similar state-level ban.

The issue came into focus last year after social media posts about “fake paneer” being served at a Mumbai restaurant owned by Shah Rukh Khan’s wife, producer and interior designer Gauri Khan. Subsequently, the food regulator met with stakeholders and asked whether foods prepared using vegetable-oil based ‘paneer’ should clearly state terms such as ‘non-dairy’ and ‘analogue’ and then describe its constituents. For example, ‘analogue of cheese (milk solids, refined palm oil, hydrogenated vegetable fat, modified starch, emulsifier)’.

Vegetable-oil based paneer under scanner While the FSSAI’s labelling norms already state that restaurants must provide details of the foods they are selling, the food regulator also asked whether menu cards should specifically mention whether the paneer or cheese being used are “non-dairy” or “analogue”. The food regulator’s dairy products



standard states that the raw materials for paneer should be milk and milk solids—and it may only contain acidulants such as lactic acid, citric acid, malic acid, vinegar, glucono delta lactone, sour whey; salt; and spices or condiments. It does not allow for vegetable oil, fats, and vegetable proteins. According to the official in the know of the matter, the regulator is also considering whether or not to allow the sale of the vegetable-oil based paneer if it goes by a different name. Last year, the food regulator had also considered whether or not there should be a prohibition on the sale of these items in the loose form. Another suggestion is to register all manufacturers of dairy analogues. Usually, smaller food manufacturers with an annual turnover of less than Rs 12 lakh or a capacity of less than 100 kgs/ litres per day do not have to register with the FSSAI.

Safer chemotherapy for penile cancer: Tata Memorial trial finds new treatment

A small clinical trial by doctors at Mumbai’s Tata Memorial Centre has found that a chemotherapy drug combination was easier for patients with high-risk penile cancer to tolerate than commonly used chemotherapy treatments. Chemotherapy uses medicines to kill cancer cells or stop them from growing and penile cancer needs early treatment lest it spreads to lymph nodes in the groin.

The trial compared paclitaxel against 5-FU (fluorouracil), both of which were given with a platinum drug. Patients who received paclitaxel had fewer serious side effects, fewer treatment-related hospitalisations and were more likely to complete all four planned rounds of chemotherapy. However, the study was too small to establish whether paclitaxel was better at preventing the cancer from returning or helping patients live longer. The findings from the BACuP trial have been published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute. “Penile cancer is a rare cancer, and because of this, there is a lack of high-quality evidence to guide treatment,” said Dr Vanita Noronha, lead author of the paper and professor and medical oncologist at Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai. “There have not been any randomized studies evaluating chemotherapy regimens in penile cancer to date,” she said.

Why was the study needed? Most earlier research on chemotherapy for penile cancer has looked back at patients who had already received different treatments. Doctors had not randomly assigned patients to different treatments, making such studies more vulnerable to bias. “Treatment of patients was based on retrospective and observational studies which are low-quality evidence and prone to multiple biases,” Dr Noronha said. “Hence, we decided to attempt to conduct a randomised study to help understand the optimal chemotherapy regimen in men with penile cancer who had undergone surgery and were at high risk of the disease recurring,” she added.

What makes penile cancer high-risk? Penile cancer is rare, accounting for less than one per cent of cancers in men worldwide. India reported 16,677 new cases in 2020, the highest number globally that year, according to the study. The cancer usually begins in the skin or lining of the penis and is most often a type called squamous cell cancer (happens in the outer layer of the skin). When found early, it can often be successfully treated with surgery. The disease is considered particularly high-risk when the cancer has reached the pelvic lymph nodes, when it has grown outside a lymph node, or when a cancerous lymph node is at least 4 cm across. Chemotherapy given after surgery is intended to destroy cancer cells that may remain in the body but are too small to be seen on scans. This is known as adjuvant chemotherapy.

What drugs did patients receive? The 49 men in the trial were randomly divided into two groups. One group received 5-FU plus a platinum drug. The other received paclitaxel plus a platinum drug. While Paclitaxel interferes with the machinery cancer cells need to divide and multiply, 5-FU interferes with the way cells make and use DNA, which stops rapidly growing cancer cells from multiplying. The platinum drugs damage the DNA of cancer cells, making it difficult for them to grow and divide. Both groups were scheduled to receive four rounds of treatment, three weeks apart. All participants were under 70 and had undergone surgery for penile cancer that had spread to lymph nodes and had at least one feature associated



with a high risk of the cancer returning. Paclitaxel caused fewer serious side effects. The biggest difference between the treatments was in their side effects. Serious treatment-related side effects occurred in 77.3 per cent of patients receiving 5-FU and a platinum drug, compared with 40.9 per cent of those receiving paclitaxel and a platinum drug. Serious blood-related problems occurred in 54.5 per cent of patients in the 5-FU group, compared with 4.5 per cent in the paclitaxel group. Serious digestive problems, including vomiting and diarrhoea, occurred in 40.9 per cent of patients receiving 5-FU and a platinum drug, compared with 4.5 per cent receiving paclitaxel and a platinum drug.

Nearly half, 45.5 per cent, of patients in the 5-FU group had to be admitted to hospital because of treatment-related side effects. The figure was 9.1 per cent in the paclitaxel group. Paclitaxel was also easier to administer. 5-FU usually has to be given continuously through a vein over several days, sometimes using a pump. Paclitaxel can generally be given as an intravenous infusion in a day-care or outpatient setting. More patients completed treatment. About 83 per cent of patients receiving paclitaxel and a platinum drug completed all four planned rounds of treatment, compared with 48 per cent of those receiving 5-FU and a platinum drug. Patients in the 5-FU group also needed more medicines to increase their white blood cell counts and more reductions in their chemotherapy doses. The researchers also looked at how long patients remained free of cancer and how long they survived. Patients receiving paclitaxel and a platinum drug remained free of cancer for a middle period of 19.6 months, compared with 12.4 months in the 5-FU group. The middle survival time was 36.7 months and 21.3 months, respectively. But these figures cannot establish that paclitaxel improves survival. The study was small and was not designed to give a definite answer on which treatment controls the cancer better. “The interpretation from the study should be that paclitaxel-platinum is safer and leads to fewer side-effects than 5FU-platinum; leads to fewer severe toxicities that require hospitalization for management, and higher treatment completion rates,” Dr Noronha said. Dr Noronha said the findings should encourage earlier recognition of penile cancer in India. Men with penile sores or other changes that do not go away, a tight foreskin, bleeding, discharge, or a wound or lump that does not heal should have an early medical examination rather than being repeatedly treated for a presumed infection, she said. Cancer can spread to the groin lymph nodes even when they do not appear enlarged during an examination. “Nodal involvement is the strongest determinant of survival and delayed treatment is associated with substantially worse outcomes,” Dr Noronha said.

Govt issues advisory to regulate stem cell therapy

New Delhi: The government on Thursday said it has issued an advisory to regulate stem cell therapy, saying the therapy is permitted as standard care in routine clinical practice only for disease conditions or indications included in the list approved by the Health Ministry. With regard to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the advisory stipulates that the therapeutic use of any type of stem cell in autism is to remain restricted to duly approved clinical trials, in accordance with the National Guidelines for Stem Cell Research, 2017.

The advisory, dated September 16, has been sent to all states and Union Territories that have adopted the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010, regarding regulation of stem cell therapy. The advisory reiterates the existing framework governing stem cell research and therapy. The advisory also draws attention to the consequences of non-compliance with the framework governing stem cell therapy. The Supreme Court, in its judgment dated January 30, 2026, held that non-compliance with the statutory mandate must attract consequences, including professional misconduct under Regulation 7.22 of the IMC Regulations, 2002, as well as action under Sections 32 and 40 of the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010, which provide for cancellation of registration and penalty. “The Ministry has accordingly requested the concerned state and District Regulatory Authorities and clinical establishments to ensure strict compliance with the



applicable framework governing stem cell research and therapy,” the statement said. Moreover, the National Medical Commission (NMC), in its advisory, reiterated that stem cell therapy may be offered as standard clinical care only for the approved indications. The advisory further states that unauthorised administration, prescription, promotion or advertisement of stem cell therapy beyond the approved indications would constitute professional misconduct. According to the statement, the NMC has further advised State Medical Councils to examine cases of alleged violations brought to their notice and, where professional misconduct by a Registered Medical Practitioner is established after due process, take appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the applicable statutory and regulatory provisions.

Abhishek's storm leaves Afghanistan battered – 108 off 34 in unforgettable blitz



New Delhi: Storms usually give some warning before arriving to leave a city's weather cycle in a mess and leave people wondering when it really came, hit them hard and then vanish as if it never came in the first place. Similar scenes unfolded at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Thursday night. Abhishek Sharma, taking strike for his first delivery of the night, had to push defensively to cover as Fazalhaq Farooqi got some good away shape. But on the very next ball, with fans around the Mohinder Amarnath stand chanting 'Abhishek, Abhishek,' Farooqi bowled a half-volley which had 'hit me' written all over, Abhishek brought out his signature loft over extra cover and the 'India walle' song from Happy New Year blared from the speakers at the stadium.

From there, for the next 50 minutes Afghanistan were caught in a storm and were literally blown away by the carnage unleashed by Abhishek. By the time he was out in the 10th over, Abhishek had made 108 off just 34 balls. He had hit 11 sixes and nine fours, reached the fastest men's T20I hundred by an Indian batter, the quickest ton by a batter from a Full Member nation and put the game beyond Afghanistan's reach. The loud cheer at the toss hinted at what the 26,230 fans wanted. When Afghanistan captain Ibrahim Zadran chose to bowl, they roared as India had won the toss and fielded first in both earlier matches, and though they won the matches, the fans had been waiting to watch the world champions bat first with nothing to hold them back.

By the time, India's innings ended at 221/7, despite making 79 runs in the final overs, the fans could not have asked for more. For all the talk of a dead rubber, the people who paid to be there got far more than their money's worth, and most of it came from one bat – of Abhishek's. After a gentle opening over, Abhishek showed signs of hitting the fifth gear quickly. Azmatullah Omarzai was pulled over square leg for six and 'Jai Ho' song was played by the DJ. Suddenly the crowd began to chant, 'Ek chakka aur maar (Hit one more six)', and for a moment it felt like going back to the Salim Durani era, where the stylish batter would hit sixes on appeal from fans. Abhishek then came down the pitch at Omarzai, the first time all night he charged a seamer and lifted him down the ground for four – going in the completely opposite direction of what the fans appealed to him. Their request, though, was fulfilled on the last ball of second over when Abhishek crunched Omarzai over deep cover for six, leaving the stands in a frenzy.

When Farooqi came back and pitched it up again, he was taken for two sixes and two fours. Holding the bat handle high, Abhishek's strengths have been pretty simple – to hit seamers cleanly on both sides of the wicket with his eye-catching bat-swing. Against spinners, he hangs back and brings out shots to be hit all over the park and at times, makes room to execute his shots. All of it was on show on Thursday. Mohammad Nabi's off-spin suffered the most as at the end of it, Abhishek had raced to 50 off just 16 balls. It was the sixth time he had reached a T20I fifty inside 20 deliveries. His mentor Yuvraj Singh, Colin Munro, Finn Allen, Dasun Shanaka and Adil Butt have done it three times each. It was also the fifth time Abhishek got to fifty inside the powerplay, which no other batter from a Full Member side has done more than twice. Afghanistan then did something they rarely do – bring in Rashid Khan inside the first six overs. Abhishek hit him for two fours, then came down the track and hit a straight six off him, as he had in each of the three matches.

It was his seventh six in the power-play (and 37 in all in T20Is this year, again a record in men's T20Is), and it took India to exactly a century of runs in power-play, their highest six-over score in T20Is and the joint fifth-highest in the format. It was the fourth time India had gone past 90 in the powerplay, and each time Abhishek had led the way –

in Mumbai, Guwahati, and the T20 World Cup final in Ahmedabad. His own power-play contribution was 76 not out off 22 balls, the highest by any batter at the end of a T20I powerplay on record. Even after the fielding restrictions ended, Afghanistan could not find a way to stop Abhishek. Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Abdullah Ahmadzai paid for small errors, as the others had. Abhishek went from fifty to a hundred in only 14 balls and amassed 51 runs along the way. He reached three figures with a single in the ninth over – no batter had ever got to a men's T20I hundred earlier in an innings. The previous best mark was also his, 10.1 overs against England at the Wankhede last year and bettered what Rohit Sharma had done before – a 35-ball ton against Sri Lanka in 2017. Amidst the crowd rising to applaud an unforgettable blitzkrieg, which included his father Rajkumar Sharma beaming with pride and being congratulated by spectators in the hospitality stand, Abhishek looked puzzled. He turned to Sanju Samson, who later hit a 35-ball fifty, to ask what was going on, and Samson had to tell him he had just reached his hundred. After all that noise, his celebration was completely still. After holding his helmet and bat aloft, Abhishek did not leap or punch the air. He took off his helmet, sat down on the turf and settled into a meditative pose with his eyes closed and chanted 'Om Namah Shivaye'.

Though it left a few people laughing over the latest entry into unique milestone celebrations in cricket, including head coach Gautam Gambhir and rest of the Indian team having a smile, that was just a glimpse into what Abhishek's mindset was – absolutely in zen mode and blowing away the hapless Afghanistan bowlers. The end came in the 10th over, when he tried to hit a Rashid googly out of the ground and edged it to Rahmanullah Gurbaz behind the stumps. Abhishek had made 108 off just 34 balls at a strike rate of 317, while the rest of India's batters managed 112 off 86 balls at 127. Of his 108 runs, 102 came from boundaries – which translates to 94.44 per cent, the highest share of boundary runs in any men's T20I hundred.

Apart from notching up his third T20I century, it was Abhishek's 10th hundred in all T20 cricket, level with Virat Kohli for the most by an Indian men's batter. The boundary-hitting carnage meant more because of what happened with Abhishek before coming to New Delhi for the series. At the T20 World Cup he made 141 runs – a mixture of three ducks (and being messed up by stomach infection), before hitting fifties in must-win clashes, including the final. Though he got 563 runs in IPL 2026 for Sunrisers Hyderabad, the fight for places at the top of the order for India was getting tighter via Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's entry. Against Zimbabwe in July, Abhishek made 1, 8 and 2. Suddenly, the murmurs over him retaining his spot in the playing eleven rose. When Abhishek is in form, doubt does not seem to stay with him. But when he is not, that harshness with himself is visible. His technique for T20 cricket, though, was never the problem. A quick fifty in the series opener on Sunday suggested the good old Abhishek was coming back and Thursday's game settled the debate.

The rest of India's innings was quieter – just like the calm after the storm. But the damage caused by Abhishek, especially in the powerplay, made the result a foregone conclusion. "Look, I'll tell and want to say one thing. It's not about the hundred that he scored here. I can sit here and keep talking about his 100. But it's just the impact." "The only thing that we talk about in that dressing room is about how much impact we can create with the bat and how much impact we can create with the ball and that has been our ideology and philosophy since the last two years. T20 cricket is not about runs or wickets. It's about how much impact you can create and for both Sanju and Abhishek, I think you can easily sit here and say one got a 50 and the other one got a 100." But for me, I think the biggest positive was when we got a 100 in the power-play – that we have never done in my coaching tenure. So I think that was a very clear message that if you're going hard, just keep going hard," said Gambhir in the post-game press conference. Gambhir would also suggest that hitting 300 in a T20I is the next target then for his marauding batters. "That is what the message and that is exactly the message that's going to be in future as well that we still haven't reached 300. "So that's probably the next target because the kind of talent we have in that dressing room, we should be doing some incredible things. So we still have a lot to achieve," he added. On Thursday, as he brought out a storm of sheer six-hitting in New Delhi, Abhishek showed it may not be far away.



lesser Indian likelihood though. Like weightlifter Mirabai Chanu's pursuit of the elusive Asiad podium, or a badminton singles gold – a good time for Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty to spring back to life. India also hasn't won a rowing gold since Dattu Baban Bhokanal, Sawarn Singh, Om Prakash and Sukhmeet Singh got home the Quadruple sculls top spot in 2018, but lightweight's Ujjwal Kumar has had a good year. The Asian Games really gets exciting on match-ups though: CWG 60kg champion boxer Sachin Siwach taking on Uzbeki royalty Abdumalik Khalolov. Or 51 kg breakout pugilist Sakshi Chaudhary going up against Chinese Olympic champ Wu Yu for gold. Or Jyothi Yarraji, who won a silver at Hangzhou, once again getting flanked by old Chinese rivals, Wu Yanni and Lin Yuwei, in the 100m hurdles. The first medal up for grabs will pit 10m Air Rifle shooters Elavenil Valarivan-Tilottama Sen-Sonam Uttam Maskar against the latest Chinese sensation, Wang Zifei. All of India's attention has shifted to Pistol though, as seeking redemption in Japan is former world champion Rudranksh Patil. Interestingly, Patil won the world title while still a teen in 2022, but failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics. The boy who won bronze when Patil won gold, Chinese Sheng Lihao, spearheads their shooting bunch, while only 21 years old, but already a double Olympic champion. There are a few other names that haven't fulfilled their touted potential. India has endless patience for the talent of 97kg wrestler Deepak Punia, but Nagoya might be a good place to put it past Russian-born Bahrain heavyweight, Akhmed Tazhudinov. India hasn't won an Asiad wrestling gold since Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia's 2018 triumphs

Pakistan, sports and handshakes: Cricketers need to understand they aren't 'more patriotic'



Picture the Asian Games. An Indian kabaddi player shakes hands with a Pakistani opponent. A squash player does the same. Hockey players high-five each other before the anthems. Boxers touch gloves. Then, the cricket match ends, and Indian players turn around and walk away. What, exactly, would that imply? Not merely that cricket has adopted a different protocol. The visual, and the message, would imply something far more uncomfortable — the rest of you can shake hands; we are more patriotic.

This possibility was raised after India refused to accept the trophy from Asian Cricket Council President Mohsin Naqvi, after winning the Women's Asia Cup on Sunday. Earlier in the tournament, Harmanpreet Kaur's team had continued Indian cricket's no-handshake policy against Pakistan. The "policy" began with Suryakumar Yadav-led India at last year's men's Asia Cup, in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack and the dramatic deterioration in ties between the two countries. India played Pakistan because it was a multinational tournament, but Suryakumar's side refused the customary handshakes. After beating Pakistan in the final, they also refused to accept the trophy from Naqvi. The women's team has now followed that template. India has a Pakistan policy in sports. Why should cricket be distinct? The government decides the broad parameters of engagement. India does not play bilateral cricket against Pakistan, but participates in multinational events in which Pakistan is also competing. That is why India played the Asia Cup. That is why Indian and Pakistani athletes will compete against each other at the Asian Games, starting Saturday.

But cricket has now created another distinction. You can play Pakistan. You can compete against them for a continental title. But shaking hands? That, apparently, is where patriotism begins. And now comes another line: Ac-

Raksha Khadse meets V-Cs of 93 universities to boost youth initiatives

Hyderabad: Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports Raksha Khadse chaired a high-level meeting with Vice-Chancellors of 93 universities from across the country on Friday in Delhi to strengthen the engagement of higher educational institutions with major youth-focused initiatives of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

The meeting brought together Vice-Chancellors of 40 Central Universities, 38 State Universities and 13 Deemed and Private Universities, along with representatives of NSU, Manipur and LNIPE, Gwalior. The meeting provided a platform to brief university leadership on the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2027, Nasha Mukta Abhiyaan and Yuva Connect Programme and discuss their active engagement in these initiatives. Addressing the Vice-Chancellors, the Union Minister emphasised that building a Viksit Bharat is a collective responsibility and that schools, colleges and universities have an important role to play in this journey. Referring to the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for Viksit Bharat @2047, she highlighted the importance of empowering young people with opportunities to lead, participate and contribute to nation-building. Send Money Overseas

She said that schools and colleges are among the foundations of nation-building, providing young people with knowledge, values, skills and opportunities to participate meaningfully in society. She called upon university leadership to create an environment that encourages students to engage in national initiatives, community participation, leadership and constructive dialogue. Mrs. Raksha Khadse highlighted that its diverse themes and tracks represent important pillars of the Viksit Bharat vision, giving young people platforms to contribute ideas, creativity and solutions across different areas of national development.

She encouraged universities to actively facilitate participation in VBYLD 2027, emphasising that participation can open an array of opportunities for young people, including exposure to leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, dialogue and engagement with policymakers and

cepting a trophy from a Pakistani official who also happens to hold a continental sporting office. Naqvi is, unquestionably, a complicated figure. Besides being an ACC administrator, he is also Pakistan's interior minister and chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board. That is why the decision to avoid him has a political dimension beyond an ordinary presentation ceremony.

What happens at the Asian Games, though? What if a Pakistani sports administrator holding a continental position is asked to present medals? Suppose Naqvi himself, in his capacity as ACC president, is involved in a medal ceremony connected to cricket. Would an Indian cricketer refuse the medal? Indian athletes at multi-sport events compete against Pakistanis. They shake hands. They share arenas and podiums. They follow the protocols of international sport. And nobody suggests they are less patriotic for doing so. So what makes cricket different? Nothing — except that the cricket board is richer and the game is more politically charged. But those are precisely the reasons it should be more careful about the messages it sends. The BCCI says their decision is to respect the "prevailing sentiments in the country" to align with the government. Nowhere has the government stated, at least publicly, that cricketers — or any athletes — should not to shake hands with Pakistanis or not to receive trophies from Pakistani officials. The BCCI has spent decades guarding its autonomy. When questions of regulation, transparency and public accountability arise, Indian cricket is quick to emphasise that it is different from other sports. But once Pakistan enters the frame, autonomy gives way to nationalism. It cannot work both ways. Nor can cricket establish a hierarchy of patriotism among Indian athletes. Hockey players of both nations were seen giving high-fives to each other when they met at the FIH World Cup in Amstelveen in August. If an Indian hockey player can greet a Pakistani counterpart without compromising on patriotism, why can't an Indian cricketer? The BCCI is entitled to argue that the India-Pakistan relationship demands caution. What it cannot do convincingly is play Pakistan when the tournament demands it, draw a line at a handshake or a trophy ceremony, and then allow those gestures to suggest a higher form of national commitment. One day, at an Asian Games or another multi-sport event, the larger picture may become impossible to ignore. Indian athletes will shake hands with Pakistanis. Some will share a podium. Some may receive medals from officials they would not otherwise choose to meet. If the cricketers alone turn away, it won't make them look more patriotic.



experts. The Minister also emphasised the role of educational institutions in strengthening awareness and youth-led action under the Nasha Mukta Abhiyaan and in connecting students with opportunities through the Yuva Connect Programme. She stressed that universities can help take youth initiatives beyond campuses and into communities through student participation and institutional partnerships. The Union Minister appealed to the Vice-Chancellors to ensure greater participation of their universities and students in VBYLD 2027 and to encourage young people to make full use of the opportunities available to them. She emphasised that active participation by educational institutions can help create a stronger ecosystem for youth leadership, social responsibility and nation-building. The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2027 is a national platform to identify, nurture and empower young leaders and provide them an opportunity to contribute ideas towards Viksit Bharat @2047. The initiative follows a grassroots-to-national journey and includes tracks such as the Viksit Bharat Challenge, Cultural Track, Design for Bharat, Hack for Social Cause, Youth Entrepreneurs Challenge and Youth Parliament. The National Dialogue will bring selected young participants together with policymakers, domain experts and national leaders, providing an avenue for young Indians to contribute to nation-building.

India women cruise into Asian Games semifinals after eight-wicket win over Japan



Nisshin: India women's cricket team began its gold medal defence at the Asian Games in style, registering a comfortable eight-wicket win over hosts Japan in the fourth quarterfinal at Korogi Sports Park here on Friday.

Shafali Verma smashed an unbeaten 40 off 15 balls, while Sree Charani picked up a four-wicket haul as the Women in Blue chased down a meagre target of 58 in just five overs. Shafali set the tone for the paltry chase, opening with the promoted G Kamalini. While the young Kamalini was dismissed for a two-ball duck, Shafali unleashed her aggression with four boundaries in a 17-run first over.

Following Kamalini's dismissal in the second over by Nonoha Yasumoto, India also lost Bharti Fulmai for six runs in the third over. But Shafali remained unfazed by the two dismissals, hitting three more fours in the fifth over before sealing the game with a six. Richa Ghosh also had a brief stay in the middle, scoring 12 off six deliveries with a couple of fours. Earlier, No. 1 T20I bowler Charani starred with an-

other four-wicket haul. Charani, who picked up 4-20 in the Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka, scalped 4-10 in her four overs against Japan as her spell played a pivotal role in keeping the hosts in check. While Charani did the majority of the damage, Shafali also picked up a couple of wickets. Returning from a long injury layoff, Shreyanka Patil and Deepti Sharma scalped one wicket each to complete the downfall of the hosts. India will now meet Bangladesh in the second semifinal on Sunday. Bangladesh advanced to the semifinal after their quarterfinal against China was washed out. As Bangladesh were the higher-ranked side, they progressed to the semifinals. Pakistan and Sri Lanka will meet in the first semifinal, which will take place earlier in the day on Sunday.

Bhukya Yashwanth's 'The Unnamed' book released in Shillong

Hyderabad: Indian mountaineer Bhukya Yashwanth's coffee-table book, The Unnamed, was released in Shillong in the presence of Assam Rifles Director General Lieutenant General Vikas Lakhera, AVSM, SM, senior officers of the force and other distinguished guests. The Unnamed documents Yashwanth's Ladakh expedition, capturing not only the mountains and high-altitude challenges but also the people, experiences, emotions and moments that shaped the journey. The book takes readers behind the expedition — from preparations and harsh conditions to the challenges faced at high altitude and the human stories connected with the mountains.

Guns N' Roses India shows: Girish and The Chronicles, Parikrama to open in Bengaluru, Guwahat



Mumbai: India's homegrown bands Girish and The Chronicles, along with Parikrama, will be seen opening the act for global rock band Guns N' Roses in Bengaluru and Guwahati, respectively. The Bengaluru show will be held on November 14, 2026, while Parikrama will take the stage in

Guwahati on November 17, 2026. Bringing two distinct chapters of India's rock story to the tour, the bands will set the tone for an evening of live rock before Guns N' Roses take the stage. Representing the energy of a newer generation of Indian rock, Girish and The Chronicles will kick off the Bengaluru show with their hard-hitting sound, powerful vocals and high-energy live performance as per a statement.

Their setlist will feature songs from their repertoire, including 'Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Stay', 'Hush', 'Disintegrate' and 'Generation Coward'. In Guwahati, Parikrama will bring over three decades of rock legacy to the stage. One of India's enduring rock bands, they have built a lasting connection with generations of listeners through songs such as 'But It Rained' and 'Open Skies'. Produced and promoted by BookMyShow Live, the Bengaluru and Guwahati shows promise a full evening of live rock, bringing global icons and homegrown favourites together on the same stage.

Last year, the band performed in Mumbai on May 17, 2025 at the Mahalaxmi Racecourse. This marked the legendary rock band's return to the country after over 12 years. The gig was a part of the band's 2025 tour. Prior to this, the band performed in India in December 2012 as part of their maiden India tour. At the time, the band was led by Axl Rose and featured the "Chinese Democracy" era lineup rather than the classic lineup with Slash. The concerts included staples such as Sweet Child O' Mine, November Rain, Paradise City, and Welcome to the Jungle. Guns N' Roses was formed in Los Angeles, California, in 1985, as the result of a merger between local bands L.A. Guns and Hollywood Rose. The classic lineup featured Axl Rose, Slash, Duff McKagan, Izzy Stradlin and Steven Adler. Their 1987 debut album, Appetite for Destruction, became one of the best-selling debut albums in history, driven by hits such as Sweet Child o' Mine, Welcome to the Jungle and Paradise City.

Nani explains why he does not want 'The Paradise' called pan-Indian

Chennai: Telugu star Nani, who is now gearing up for the release of his upcoming action entertainer The Paradise, has explained why he keeps insisting that people do not call his films "pan-Indian". Interacting with the media in Chennai ahead of the release of director Srikanth Odela's eagerly awaited film The Paradise, Nani said, "I have been saying this actually for every film of mine, whenever they call it 'pan-Indian'. But the moment I say it, it is becoming a discussion.

"The reason for saying don't call my film pan-Indian is because I really don't want any film to be called pan-Indian. For example, if a Hindi film comes and it becomes a big success in Telugu, in Tamil and in Malayalam, that Hindi film is not called pan-Indian. It's still called a Hindi film," he pointed out. "When we see a 'Jawan' or a 'Pathaan' doing very well in the Tamil version, in the Telugu version, it is not called pan-Indian. It is still called a Hindi film. But when a Telugu film or a Tamil film or a Kannada film does well across the country, it is called a pan-Indian film. "So, I don't understand the word pan-Indian. Why is it introduced for South Indian films? Why is it not for Hindi films? So, I've always said, for every film, please don't call my film pan-



Indian," he explained. The actor further said, "I can't stop everyone from calling films pan-Indian, but that word doesn't make sense to me. And my films, I will always try to reach out to my Tamil audience, my Hindi audience, my Malayalam audience, and my Kannada audience. And this will always be the process. "But I don't want them to use those tags on my films, but it will still be used. I cannot do much about it. I can only mention or request."

Ranveer Singh visits Lalbaugcha Raja, pledges to support education of 1,000 girls



It has been a good year for Ranveer Singh. The actor delivered his biggest hit ever, Dhurandhar 2, on the heels of the success of the first iteration. He and wife, actor Deepika Padukone, also announced their second pregnancy. As the actor reached Mumbai's iconic Lalbaugcha Raja to seek the blessings of Ganpati Bappa, he said he is here to thank the lord for his many blessings. Speaking to News18 during his visit, Ranveer said, "Bahut achha lag raha hai yahan aake. Jo picchla saal guzra hai, mere liye aur mere parivaar ke liye, khushiyon se bhara raha Bappa ki kripa se. Toh yahan

aaye hain unke darshan karne, unko dhanyavaad kehne, unka aashirvaad lene aage ke safar ke liye, jeevan ke safar ke liye (It feels really good to be here. By Bappa's grace, the past year has been filled with happiness for me and my family. So, we have come here to seek his blessings, thank him, and seek his blessings for the journey ahead and for the journey of life)."

Several photos and videos of the actor from his visit have surfaced online. Ranveer stepped out among fans after a while and made sure to give them a memorable experience. He took selfies with them, stopped to pose for pictures and was in his element as he interacted with the crowd. He was dressed in white and sported the look for his next, Pralay. On the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday and Ganesh Chaturthi, Ranveer also announced his pledge to support the education of 1,000 girls under the Seva Sankalp Abhiyan. He said, "Ganesh Chaturthi ke shubh avsar par aur humare adamiya Pradhan Mantri Shri Narendra Modi ke janam din ke avsar par, main Seva Sankalp Abhiyan se jud kar 1,000 betiyon ki padhai mein madad karne ka sankalp leta hoon. Aasha hai ki iske chalte Bappa prasann honge aur unka aashirvaad hamesha humare sir par rahega (On the auspicious occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi and on the occasion of the birth anniversary of our respected Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, I pledge to join the Seva Sankalp Abhiyan and support the education of 1,000 girls. I hope that Bappa will be pleased with this initiative and that his blessings will always remain upon us). "Ranveer and Deepika are expecting their second child together; they already have a daughter named Dua Padukone Singh, who was born on September 8, 2024.

dustry step into the kitchen.

"I'm incredibly excited to finally share this with everyone. Celebrity MasterChef Tamil is unlike anything I've done before, and that's exactly what made it impossible to say no. Food has a wonderful way of bringing people together, creating memories, and revealing a side of you that the cameras don't usually get to see," she said. "What I'm most excited about is watching some of our favourite Tamil celebrities step into the kitchen, take risks, make mistakes, surprise themselves, and compete with a lot more passion than you'd expect! I wish I could tell you who's cooking, but where's the fun in that? I can't wait for everyone to experience what we're cooking up with Sony Vizha," she added. Chef Sashi Cheliah, the winner of MasterChef Australia

Taimur told Saif Ali Khan to forgive his attacker: 'He wanted money for mother's surgery'



Kareena Kapoor has opened up about one of the most difficult chapters in her family's life, revealing that her son Taimur was the one who encouraged Saif Ali Khan to forgive the man accused of stabbing him during the January 2025 attack at their Mumbai home. In a conversation with Barkha Dutt on her YouTube channel Mojo Story, Kareena discussed Saif's decision to forgive the attacker and the complicated emotions surrounding the incident.

"I don't think anybody would have thought that this could happen. Justice is different for everyone. My son Tim and Saif both believe that he should be forgiven. It was actually Tim who told Saif, 'Abba, forgive him.'" Kareena said the family's reaction was shaped in part by what they were told about the accused's circumstances. According to her, that was when Taimur told his father to forgive him. She said, "One of the cops came home and told us that he said he was looking for money. That's what he actually told the nanny at home as well – that he wanted Rs 1 crore. He said he was looking to send it to his mother. That's what he confessed, that he wanted the money because his mother needed to have surgery. Obviously, we were like, this would not have happened if things had not panned out this way. So that's when Tim was like, 'Forgive him.'"

While Taimur's response was one of forgiveness, Kareena acknowledged that the incident left Saif with physical and emotional pain, making the question of justice far more complicated for her. "The fact is that Saif did suffer, so how do I get justice for that? The pain that I felt for so long? So it

is obviously very complex." Saif was stabbed multiple times after an intruder entered the family's Bandra residence in the early hours of January 16, 2025. The actor was taken to Lilavati Hospital, where he underwent surgery after sustaining serious injuries, including a wound near his spine. He was discharged from the hospital several days later.

What Saif Ali Khan said about forgiving his attacker Saif had previously spoken about his feelings towards the accused while talking to Barkha Dutt. The actor said he wanted to forgive him. He said, "I even want to forgive this guy because I think he made a huge mistake, and I don't think he was even looking for a fight. I probably shouldn't have jumped him. I could have talked him out of it, and it could have been all right. Now he's probably going to spend a long time in jail. I would be happy to forgive him."

Saif also looked at the incident through the lens of economic inequality and suggested that the accused may have been motivated by financial desperation. "I think it's really a question of haves and have-nots. It's the kind of inequality that's led to this. I know it's unfair, what happened. I think he was just looking for a meal or a buck or something. And if I had put the light on and he had seen what he was doing, he might have said, 'Oops, I've made a big mistake.'" In a recent conversation with Bombay Times, Saif again expressed empathy for the attacker and suggested that desperation for money may have been a factor. "These things happen because of inequality. Because someone is looking for money and he is desperate. I don't think he knew where he was or what he was doing. If he had known, it wouldn't have happened. It's a very unfortunate incident. He was very unlucky, because I think he is in a lot of trouble for a long time. I was almost paralysed. I couldn't feel my leg for a while. It nicked my spinal cord but didn't cut it," Saif said.

He also spoke about how he dealt with the aftermath of the stabbing, admitting that while he and his family moved on, the experience still affects him. "I think the person most affected was my wife, who is generally a very sensitive person. We kind of got over it quite quickly. It was insane though. I am still not 100% over it because if I see a knife, it just makes me react," he said. The attack on Saif Ali Khan The January 2025 incident occurred at the family's Bandra home, where an intruder entered the premises and confronted the actor.

Suchitra 30-year age gap with ex Shekhar Kapur: 'My mom touched my feet, said don't marry'

Suchitra Krishnamoorti was a teenager when she first met Shekhar Kapur, and she was instantly in love. In a recent interview, Suchitra, who is best known for playing Shah Rukh Khan's love interest in Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa, opened up about her love story with the director and said that she was a complete "fangirl" when she met him. In a chat with Hauterrfly, Suchitra said that she was not wooed by Shekhar. Instead, she was the one who wooed him. "The first time I saw him, I was in 11th standard. He was a chief guest at my college, and he looked at me, and he said something, and I was like... I was a fangirl," she said. Shekhar and Suchitra have a 30-year age gap.

She recalled that veteran photographer Gautam Rajadhyaksha sent her to meet Shekhar when she was 18 for a film, but the film never got made. "After I met him, he would call, take me out. My sister used to be furious. She would say, 'Uncle, leave my baby alone'," she recalled with a laugh. Since the age gap between the two was 30 years, Suchitra's family wasn't very inclined to her union with Shekhar. He had previously been married for a decade and had gotten divorced five years before he decided to tie the knot again. "My mother touched my feet and said, 'Don't do this'," she recalled. After eight years, the two decided to separate, and at this point, Suchitra's parents offered their unequivocal support. "When things started to go wrong, my parents... This is the kind of support I wish every girl has. My mom was like, 'You don't have to put up with anything disrespectful or dishonouring you. You are not some orphan'."

Vibe movie review: Kunal Kemmu's goofy spy saga has a vibe

Vibe movie review Vibe movie review: The film stars Kunal Kemmu, Sparsh Srivastava, Preity Zinta, Vanshika Dhir and others. Vibe movie review: It's been a while since Bollywood attempted a full-on goofy spy saga, leaning into it with the right degree of silliness, and made it work. 'Vibe' is a vibe, and I'm here for it.

It's not so much a spoof, but a goof-off, and that's what makes all the difference. Hardik (Kunal Kemmu), whose name leads to the predictable jibe about hardness and nether male regions, which Hindi cinema writers have made much of for years, is a fool who enjoys being one. He is a slacker, and therefore a doper, but haha, inside him hides the smart coder, who only needs that one nudge to make him better. In a smart move, Kemmu surrounds himself with real actors. Sparsh Srivastava as the straight-faced Bugs is a solid foil to the all-over-the-place Hardik, and newcomer Vanshika Dhir is a smash as the looker who hooks our hero, using a series of unlikely wiles.

We've seen Kemmu the eye-catching actor ever since he was a child: have never forgotten how good he was in 'Zakhm'. This is his second directorial outing, and he makes up for his lax lapses in his debut, 'Madgaon Express' by keeping everything zippy. For the sequel, and I'm sure there will be one given the hook it leaves us on, just a little tip for Kemmu: if he gives the others a little more play, it will be much more fun. As befits these kinds of films, the plot is just a device to pile up the jokes, and the film doesn't slip up in creating this little bubble where a svelte Madam H (Preity Zinta) bosses over a bunch of spooks beavering away in ill-equipped dank rooms, helped by her two main men (Yashpal Sharma and Dinesh Lal Yadav) who nail the serio-comic tone to a nicety. And that's something you can say for the whole film, in which Zinta gets to loosen up a little by the time it reaches Bangkok, where some bad fellows speaking gibberish about AI and its potential evil ways (about the only time things get a bit slack) are lying in wait for our pals. In all this, movie references abound in a good-natured, in-



Suchita and Shekhar continued to co-parent their daughter Kaveri, who was six when her parents divorced. But, for Suchitra, co-parenting was different as her daughter primarily lived with her, and she saw Shekhar as a "vacation dad". "Co-parenting basically means that the mother does all the work and the father gets all the praise. I say Shekhar is a vacation dad, but he is the best vacation dad. So Kaveri has the best of both worlds. She keeps zipping off to wherever her father is in the world and I will always say that Kaveri is actually closer to him than she is to me, which is a great compliment," she said. In an earlier chat with Siddharth Kannan, Suchitra said that their marriage started falling apart in the first year itself, but Suchitra decided to stay because she was pregnant. "At the time I got pregnant, I was about to leave my marriage. I got a scholarship at the Berkeley School of Music and wanted to learn music but then I got pregnant. So, I feel fate has a way of unravelling itself. After getting pregnant, I stayed for a few years, but then I said, 'Forget it, mujhse nahi hota,'" she said.



In a smart move, Kemmu surrounds himself with real actors. Sparsh Srivastava as the straight-faced Bugs is a solid foil to the all-over-the-place Hardik, and newcomer Vanshika Dhir is a smash as the looker who hooks our hero, using a series of unlikely wiles.

your-face fashion: a nightclub fight sequence is very 'Kill Bill'; red and blue pills are very 'Matrix' and so on; when they come up, we smile. Psst, a veteran star shows up in a walk-on part – what are family connections for, otherwise – but Sharmila Tagore can be a great comedienne too. I demand a larger part for her next time around. Vibe movie cast: Kunal Kemmu, Sparsh Srivastava, Vanshika Dhir, Preity Zinta, Yashpal Sharma, Dinesh Lal Yadav, Mark Bennington, Salem Kali Vibe movie director: Kunal Kemmu Vibe movie rating: 3 stars