RNI No.APENG/26/A0218

INDIAN CHRONICLE

PUBLISHED FROM :VIJAYAWADA,RANAGAREDDY,AHMEDABAD, MUMBAI, LUCKNOW, BENGALURU, CHENNAI,

19 October, 2026|Monday | Volume No:1 | Issue No:244 Pages: 12 www.indianchronicle.com Published from : Krishna (Andhra Pradesh) ₹ 3/-

Telugu families in Austria mark Bathukamma, Dasara with traditional fervour

Hyderabad: Telugu Sangam Austria organised Bathukamma and Dasara celebrations in Vienna on Saturday, with a large number of Telugu families living in Austria participating in the festivities.

The participants celebrated Bathukamma, the traditional floral festival, and Dasara with joy and enthusiasm. The event aimed to preserve and promote Telugu culture and traditions among the Telugu diaspora.

Brimming Komaticheruvu reflects impact of Kaleshwaram project: Harish Rao

Siddipet: Former Minister T Harish Rao said that the brimming Komaticheruvu is a reflection of what Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS) did to the State of Telangana.

Speaking after participating in the "Saddula Bathukamma" celebrations organised on Komaticheruvu bund in Siddipet on Sunday, Harish Rao said that Komaticheruvu is overflowing even today despite the State witnessing one of the worst droughts in the recent past

Hyderabad zoo sees record turnout as families throng during Dasara break

Hyderabad: With the Dasara vacation underway, families are flocking to Nehru Zoological Park here to see their favourite animals. The zoo recorded 20,483 visitors on Sunday, marking the highest footfall of the current holiday season. It usually attracts large crowds during the summer vacation.

To manage the rush, the zoo has opened additional ticket counters to facilitate bookings. Extra security guards have also been deployed across the premises to prevent any untoward incidents.

Review Meeting on Arrangements for Karthika Masam Celebrations
Karthika Masam celebrations from November 10 to December 9

""Extensive arrangements to be made for the festivities""Priority to be given to convenient darshan for devotees ""Arjitha Abhishekams (sanctum sanctorum and mass Abhishekams) to remain suspended throughout Karthika Masam*""Srisailam, October 18: A preparatory meeting was held on Sunday in the conference hall of the Devasthanam Administrative Building to review the arrangements for the Karthika Masam celebrations, which will be observed at the Srisailam temple from November 10 to December 9.""Dharmakartha Mandali Chairman Potugunta Ramesh Naidu and Executive Officer M. Srinivasa Rao issued directions regarding the arrangements to be made for the month-long festivities.""Speaking at the meeting, Dharmakartha Mandali Chairman Potugunta Ramesh Naidu instructed the officials to make all necessary arrangements to ensure that devotees do not face any inconvenience during Karthika Masam. He emphasized that providing convenient darshan facilities, particularly giving priority to ordinary devotees, should be the foremost concern.""He also offered several suggestions regarding the supply of drinking water, arrangements for holy baths at Pathala Ganga, facilities at Kalyana Katta for devotees to offer their hair, traffic regulation, medical and healthcare services, vehicle parking, and sanitation.""He directed the officials to make comprehensive arrangements for the Pushkarini Harathi and Laksha Deepotsavam, to be conducted on every Monday during Karthika Masam and on Karthika Pournami. He also stressed the need for proper arrangements for the Jwala Thoranotsavam on November 24, coinciding with Karthika Pournami, Krishna Harathi on November 13, and Koti Deepotsavam on November 20.""Considering the expected rush of devotees, he instructed the officials to ensure that sufficient quantities of laddu prasadam were kept ready.""As devotees attach great importance to taking holy baths during Karthika Masam, he emphasized that all necessary facilities at Pathala Ganga should be arranged systematically to ensure their convenience and safety.""He further directed the officials to make suitable arrangements for devotees to perform Karthika Deepa Aradhana along the northern Mada Street of the temple and at Gangadhara Mandapam, located in front of the temple.""The Chairman stressed that all arrangements for Koti Deepotsavam should be completed meticulously. He also called for appropriate measures to encourage a large number of devotees to participate in the event.""Speaking on the occasion, Executive Officer M. Srinivasa Rao stated that the temple doors should be opened at 3:00 a.m. every day and the morning rituals should be performed. Darshan should then be provided from 4:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and resumed at 5:30 p.m.""He further announced that, as in the previous year, both sanctum sanctorum Abhishekams and mass Abhishekams would remain completely suspended throughout Karthika Masam to facilitate convenient darshan for ordinary devotees.""The Executive Officer instructed the Security Department to take all necessary precautions to prevent overcrowding and stampedes in the queue lines.""He also directed the officials to conduct the Laksha Deepotsavam, Pushkarini Harathi, Jwala Thoranotsavam, and Krishna Harathi in accordance with established traditions. All arrangements for Koti Deepotsavam should be completed well in advance.""Special measures were also ordered to maintain cleanliness and sanitation throughout the temple premises.""Several members who attended the meeting offered suggestions to improve facilities for devotees. They particularly emphasized the need to make arrangements keeping in view the likelihood of a larger number of devotees visiting Srisailam this year compared to the previous year.""Members of the Dharmakartha Mandali, members of the Vedic Committee, and officials from all departments participated in the meeting.

Salutations to the Lord Who Rides Nandi

""The Nandi Vahana Seva at Srisailam Mahakshetram, one of the twelve Jyotirlingas and one of the eighteen Shakti Peethas, is considered highly significant and supremely sacred. Among the various vahana sevas performed for Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy along with Sri Bhramaramba Devi on auspicious occasions such as Maha Shivaratri Brahmotsavams, Devi Sharannavaratri celebrations, and Sankranti festivals, the Nandi Vahana Seva holds a special place.""Puranic Significance and Unparalleled Devotion""According to the Shiva Mahapurana, Nandeeswara, the son of Sage Shilada, performed intense penance and pleased Lord Parameswara. Instead of seeking worldly pleasures, he prayed for the eternal privilege of serving Lord Shiva and was blessed with the honour of becoming His divine vehicle.""It is also believed that when Lord Shiva consumed the deadly Halahala poison that emerged during the churning of the Milky Ocean, Nandi swallowed some of the drops of poison that fell to the ground for the welfare of the world. It is considered highly meritorious for devotees to witness the divine couple, Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy and Sri Bhramaramba Devi, seated on Nandi, the embodiment of supreme devotion.""Grandeur of the Festival and Procession""- Magnificent Procession: On the day of the Nandi Vahana Seva, the festival deities are adorned beautifully with colourful flowers and exquisite ornaments. The deities are then seated on the Nandi Vahana, and a grand procession is taken around the temple and through the streets of Srisailam as part of the traditional Gramotsavam.""- Cultural Performances: As the procession moves through the streets, devotees chant the sacred names of Lord Shiva, while traditional performances such as Kolatam (stick dances), Chekka Bhajans, Nandikolu Seva, and folk dances add splendour to the celebrations, creating a captivating spiritual atmosphere.""Devotees' Beliefs and Spiritual Benefits""- Relief from Sins: Devotees believe that having darshan of the divine couple as they ride on the Nandi Vahana fulfils their wishes and absolves them of their sins.""- Special Worship of Nandeeswara: On this occasion, special rituals are also performed for Nandeeswara at the sacred shrine. These include Maha Ganapati Puja, Ekadasha Rudrabhishekam, Annabhishekam, and the recitation of the Vrishabha Suktam. It is traditionally believed that participating in these rituals bestows the blessing of progeny, relief from the burden of debts, and mental peace.""Witnessing the Nandi Vahana Seva during the Brahmotsavams of Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy at Srisailam is considered a blessed and spiritually fulfilling experience. Millions of devotees from across the country consider it a rare privilege and a blessing to behold this magnificent divine procession.

Salutations to the Lord of Nandi Vahana!

The Divine Couple on Nandi Vahana… Sri Bhramaramba as Mahadurga!

"Srisailam, October 18: As part of the Brahmotsavam celebrations at the Srisaila Mahakshetram, the temple premises were filled with spiritual fervour on Sunday, the eighth day of the festivities. Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy, accompanied by Goddess Bhramaramba Devi, blessed the devotees while seated on the Nandi Vahana. Meanwhile, Goddess Sri Bhramaramba Devi appeared before the devotees in the magnificent *Mahadurga Alankaram*.""Devotees experienced spiritual bliss by witnessing the Nandi Vahana Seva of the presiding deities and the special adornment of the Goddess. They offered camphor harati, coconuts, fruits and flowers to the deities.""According to the Puranas, devotees who have darshan of Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy and Goddess Bhramaramba Devi seated on the Nandi Vahana will have their wishes fulfilled and be blessed with all-round prosperity. Similarly, having darshan of Goddess Bhramaramba Devi in her eight-armed Mahadurga form is believed to bring auspiciousness and well-being.""Special rituals and pujas were performed at both the temples of the presiding deities from the morning onwards.""In the evening, at the Akkamahadevi Alankara Mandapam within the temple premises, the festival idols of Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy along with Goddess Bhramaramba Devi were ceremonially placed on the Nandi Vahana by the priests and Vedic scholars in accordance with scriptural traditions. Special Vahana Puja was performed, along with elaborate worship of the beautifully adorned Goddess.""The festival deities, with Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy as the Lord of the Nandi Vahana and Goddess Bhramaramba Devi adorned as Mahadurga, were taken in a ceremonial procession around the temple premises. The procession proceeded through the temple Rajagopuram to the Ratha Shala, where special pujas were performed before the commencement of the village procession (Gramotsavam).""The Gramotsavam was celebrated with great grandeur, accompanied by various folk art perfor-

mances and captivating displays by artists, adding colour and vibrancy to the festivities.""The police made elaborate security arrangements throughout the procession to ensure the smooth and safe conduct of the celebrations.

Mahagauri Pahimam

""The appearance of Goddess Sri Bhramarambika Devi in the Mahagauri Alankaram during the Sharannavaratri Mahotsavams at Srisailam Mahakshetram holds great spiritual and mythological significance.""Special Significance of Mahagauri Alankaram""- Eighth Form of Navadurga: Mahagauri is the eighth manifestation of Goddess Durga among the Navadurgas. During the Navaratri celebrations, the Goddess is adorned in this divine form on the eighth day, Ashtami, or according to the prescribed lunar date.""- Embodiment of Peace: Mahagauri is worshipped as the epitome of serenity, purity, and compassion. In this form, the Goddess is depicted wearing white garments and seated on a bull (Vrishabha), symbolising purity and righteousness.""- Four-Armed Form: The Goddess has four arms. She holds a trident in one hand and a damaru (small drum) in another, while the remaining two hands display the Abhaya Mudra, symbolising fearlessness and protection, and the Varada Mudra, signifying blessings and the fulfilment of devotees' wishes.""Significance — Why Is Goddess Mahagauri Worshipped?""- Penance and Divine Perfection: According to Hindu mythology, Goddess Parvati performed severe penance to attain Lord Parameswara as her consort. Due to the intensity of her penance, her complexion became dark. Pleased with her devotion, Lord Shiva cleansed her with the sacred waters of the Ganga, transforming her complexion into a radiant, dazzling white. From then on, she became renowned as Mahagauri, the Goddess of great radiance and purity.""- Freedom from Sins and Purification: It is traditionally believed that worshipping Goddess Mahagauri removes impurities from devotees' minds, absolves them of the sins of past births, and purifies their hearts.""- Peace and Prosperity: Devotees believe that having darshan of and worshipping Goddess Mahagauri brings happiness, peace, prosperity, and a positive atmosphere to their families. Her divine blessings are also believed to remove obstacles and foster harmony and mutual understanding in marital life.

Indian Chronicle
English Daily

KCR and the power of public trust

Electricity is not merely power flowing through wires; it is the energy that brings greenery to a farmer's field, light to a home, productivity to an industry, and movement to rural life. The changes witnessed in Telangana after the formation of the State gave special significance to the decisions taken by the government led by K Chandrashekhar Rao.

For farmers who once waited uncertainly for electricity, the availability of 24-hour free power for agriculture marked a significant change in their everyday lives. It was not merely an administrative decision but a policy that touched the roots of rural life. That is why many people continue to remember the KCR period not simply as a political chapter, but as a period associated with their own experience of development.For a farmer, when the motor stops, the water supply stops. When water stops, the hope connected with the crop becomes uncertain. Recognising this ground reality, the KCR government gave importance to 24-hour free electricity for agriculture. Its objective was not limited to supplying electricity; considerable attention was given to strengthening generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. The agricultural sector, in particular, gained a new sense of confidence because the farmer could plan cultivation with greater certainty.During the TRS period, which later became the BRS, electricity was viewed not merely as one department of administration but as an important foundation connected with agriculture, irrigation, industries and the rural economy.

Schemes such as Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima formed part of a wider approach towards farmer welfare. Mission Kakatiya, Mission Bhagiratha, irrigation projects and reliable electricity were interconnected in the larger development journey of rural Telangana. The idea was clear: when the farmer receives water, electricity and financial support together, the foundation of rural economic life becomes stronger.There was a time when power shortage was considered an unavoidable problem in Telangana. The transformation that followed was therefore significant. Electricity generation capacity, transmission networks, substations and distribution infrastructure received attention on a large scale. The increase in power demand also reflected the changing economic needs of the State. Agriculture expanded, industries grew and household consumption increased. Strengthening the power sector became an essential part of the development process.From farmers' fields to Sircilla's looms, reliable electricity became a symbol of development under KCR, shaping public memory and Telangana's political debateElectricity is not just an urban necessity; it is also the backbone of village life. From a farmer's borewell motor to a small industrial machine, and from a school or hospital to a shop or household, every activity depends on a reliable power supply.

During the KCR-led government, uninterrupted electricity gradually became an important public expectation. For many people, the change was not something they merely heard about; it was something they experienced in their daily lives.The importance of electricity becomes even more visible in places such as Sircilla, where handloom, powerloom and textile activities are closely connected with the livelihood of thousands of families. For these communities, electricity is not simply a convenience. It is the force that keeps the looms running and the local economy active. When a machine stops, production is affected; when production suffers, family incomes are affected. Dependable electricity therefore has a direct bearing on the economic lives of local communities.

BRS demands withdrawal of cases against 14 farmers, apology from govt

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Wanaparthy: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has demanded that the Congress government withdraw cases registered against 14 farmers at Amarchinta police station and tender an unconditional apology to the farming community.On September 19, a group of farmers released water into the Jurala Left Canal without authorisation to protect their standing crops. Following a complaint by irrigation officials, Amarchinta police registered cases against 14 farmers.Condemning the government's action, the BRS extended its support to the farmers. Former Ministers V Srinivas Goud, C Laxma Reddy and S Niranjan Reddy, along with other senior leaders, met the farmers at Atmakur on Friday.Speaking on the occasion, Srinivas Goud demanded the immediate withdrawal of the cases and called on the government to apologise to the farming community.He urged the farmers not to lose heart and assured them that the BRS would stand by them.Goud said farmers were facing several problems this season and described the registration of cases against them as unjustified when, he alleged, the government had failed to ensure adequate irrigation water."Did the farmers cause any damage to public property? Why were non-bailable cases registered against them?

The BRS will not remain silent when farmers are subjected to such action," Goud asserted.The former Minister also questioned whether the State had experienced similar power supply problems during the BRS government's tenure. He charged that power disruptions had increased after the Congress government came to power, causing distress among farmers.C Laxma Reddy and Niranjan Reddy criticised the Congress government for invoking the Prevention of Damage to Public Property (PDPP) Act against the farmers, describing the move as an act of repression.They said farmers had offered suggestions and held discussions with officials on measures to secure irrigation water.

Aaditya Thackeray alleges 5 lakh 'ghost voters' in Mumbai, ECI cites duplicate entries

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Aaditya ThackerayAaditya Thackeray has alleged that around five lakh suspected ghost voters in Mumbai are missing from both the SIR draft electoral roll and the list of deleted voters, announcing door-to-door verification by his party.Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Aaditya Thackeray on Friday alleged that around five lakh suspected "ghost voters" in Mumbai were missing from both the draft electoral roll prepared during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and the list of deleted voters. He said his party would conduct a door-to-door verification to establish their status. The Election Commission of India (ECI), however, attributed differences in voter counts to an exercise to identify and remove duplicate registrations.

Thackeray also questioned the difference between ECI figures that, according to him, showed 9,86,44,413 voters in Maharashtra on May 26, 2026, and 9,78,54,049 on August 31, 2026, a decline of 7,90,364. He also cited a figure of 9,71,41,289 voters for the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly elections.In response, ECI officials said the variation between voter counts before the SIR and those in the draft roll resulted from an exercise to identify and remove duplicate registrations. This included entries with similar photographs and demographic details. They said lists of identified entries had also been published on the Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer's website, rejecting Thackeray's allegation of ghost voters.Thackeray's presentation claimed that around five lakh voters in Mumbai could not be found in either the SIR draft roll or the list of absent, shifted, dead and duplicate (ASDD) voters. It also flagged what it described as an inactive link to the ASDD list, questioning how voters could check their status.The presentation cited Bhiwandi East Assembly constituency as another instance requiring scrutiny. According to Thackeray, 1,91,691 voters had cast their votes in the 2024 Assembly election, while the 2026 SIR draft roll contained 1,91,446 voters, a difference of 245. He questioned why the number of voters on the draft roll was lower than the number who had voted in the previous Assembly election.Another example in the presentation concerned Mahim Assembly constituency, where Thackeray claimed that around 900 voters at one polling booth appeared in both the 2002 electoral roll and the 2026 SIR draft roll but were still being asked to establish their eligibility. According to his presentation, the Electoral Registration Officer attributed the problem to the software failing to map the records.The allegations come ahead of a protest called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Saturday, demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in electoral rolls.

Mahatma Gandhi's great-grandson detained in Mumbai on way to protest backing CJP

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Mumbai Police detained Tushar Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's great-grandson, and his associates while they were heading to August Kranti Maidan for a protest backing the CJP demonstration in Delhi.Mumbai Police detained Tushar Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's great-grandson, and his associates while they were heading to August Kranti Maidan for a protest backing the CJP demonstration in Delhi.The Mumbai Police on Saturday detained Tushar Gandhi, great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and president of Hum Bharat Ke Log, along with his associates, as they headed to August Kranti Maidan for a 3.30 pm protest in support of the Cockroach Janata Party's (CJP) demonstration at Jantar Mantar in Delhi.

Gandhi was picked up from Bandra and taken to the DN Nagar police station, a police official said. On X, Gandhi claimed he had been arrested and taken to an unknown location. The police denied arresting him and said he had only been detained.CJP Protest Live Updates: Abhijeet Dipke and team detained from flight after landing in Delhi for CJP protestGuddi S L, the organisation's vice-president, was picked up from Andheri and taken to the MIDC police station, police confirmed.On Friday, Gandhi had posted a poster on X appealing to Mumbaikars to join him at August Kranti Maidan, the ground from which the Quit India movement was launched in 1942, in support of the CJP's demand for the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

The Gamdevi Police, however, said no application seeking permission had been received and none had been granted. "Due to a Supreme Court ruling, the Mumbai police cannot grant permission to hold a protest at August Kranti Maidan as the land belongs to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). No one had approached us in the first instance," a senior police official said on Friday.Guddi disputed this, saying she had emailed the police seeking permission since Gandhi was not in the city, but had received no response. "Gandhi has been called by the police, and they are telling him not to protest. They have also asked him about his location and said that they would detain him," she had said on Friday.The detentions come amid heightened police vigilance across Maharashtra ahead of the Jantar Mantar protest. Police in Mumbai and other parts of the state have been tracking people likely to travel to Delhi, and the Mumbai Police detained over 200 people on Friday to stop them from leaving for the capital.

Ex-Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan detained near Jantar Mantar, Stalin says reminiscent of EmergencyShaju Philip, Sophiya Mathew

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

The CPI(M) on Saturday morning said its leaders, Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas, former Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, and former state minister K N Balagopal, had been detained by Delhi Police and taken around the city before being brought to Chhatrasal Stadium. The detentions came during protests in the national capital called for by the Cockroach Janata Party. The Left had lent its support to the protest.Chhatrasal Stadium is one of the venues where protesters are being taken by the Delhi Police, which has enforced strict curbs in and around Jantar Mantar.In a post on X, CPI(M) Keralam also wrote that its leaders M A Baby, Brinda Karat, E P Jayarajan, M V Govindan, K K Shailaja and P K Sreemathi had also been detained.

"CJP leader Abhijeet Dipke was detained at Delhi airport before he could even reach the protest. Dhruv Rathee was detained in Gurugram. CJP leader Saurav Das was detained at Delhi airport," the party wrote.Cockroach Janta Party leaders Abhijeet Dipke, Ashutosh Ranka and Saurav Das were detained by Delhi Police minutes after landing from Mumbai ahead of their planned protest at Jantar Mantar. CJP leaders Abhijeet Dipke, Ashutosh Ranka and Saurav Das were detained by Delhi Police minutes after landing from Mumbai ahead of their planned protest at Jantar Mantar."Their 'crime'? Coming to Delhi to join a democratic protest against the Election Commission. Modi government now wants to decide who can enter Delhi, who can protest and who can question Gyanesh Kumar. This is what defence of EC has come to."Meanwhile, DMK chief and former Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin said the scenes unfolding in Delhi today, and the scale of repression being unleashed against peaceful protesters, 'brought back painful memories of the Emergency that I lived through'."All political leaders, students and young protesters detained in Delhi and across the country must be released immediately," he wrote. "I strongly condemn the TVK government in Tamil Nadu for acting as an extension of the BJP and unleashing police repression against protesting students." CPI(M) leaders Comrades John Brittas MP, Pinarayi Vijayan and K. N. Balagopal have been detained by Delhi Police and taken around the city before being brought to Chhatrasal Stadium. "Let me take the video. It's my right." John Brittas is heard saying. On what grounds were they detained and taken around the city? The Modi government must answer for stopping people from joining a democratic protest."The Union Government must immediately end its assault on the youth who are peacefully exercising their democratic right to protest. Dissent is not a crime, and democracy cannot survive by silencing those who rise to defend it," he wrote."The resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar is non-negotiable. Beyond his resignation, all the damage done to the institutional framework of the Election Commission must be undone, and its independence and integrity restored."

HYDRAA warns of action against extortionists misusing agency's name

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) on Friday warned of strict action against people extorting money by falsely invoking its name, following direct complaints and social media reports.HYDRAA urged the public not to pay such people and to immediately report such demands to the Anti-Corruption Bureau, HYDRAA or the local police station. The agency clarified that it does not independently act against illegal structures or unauthorised constructions. It removes dangerous buildings only at the request of the GHMC, CMC and MMCs, and acts only against dilapidated buildings posing a risk to public safety.A senior HYDRAA official reiterated that hostels operating in unsafe buildings should move to secure premises by December 31, the deadline already set.Complaints can be lodged through the ACB's toll-free number 1064, the HYDRAA Control Room's toll-free number 1070, HYDRAA offices or local police stations.

Maintain peace, don't breach barricades" CJP issues advisory ahead of protest

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Ahead of the protest called by it in Delhi, the Cockroach Janta Party on Saturday morning issued a call to "maintain peace at all times" and for protestors to not force their way through barricades and not attempt to enter restricted areas.This "protest briefing" was issued by the group even as around 200 protestors have been detained by police since the morning including prominent YouTuber Dhruv Rathee, who had arrived in the National Capital Region ahead of the protest and was detained from Sector 56 Gurgaon on Saturday morning.

'Avoid violence, don't damage property'In this protest advisory, the CJP has asked protestors to not engage in violence, physical confrontations, threats or intimidation, "irrespective of provocation.""Do not damage public or private property. Vandalism, stone-pelting, arson and destruction of barricades can endanger lives and undermine the purpose of the protest… Do not carry weapons or dangerous objects. Avoid carrying sticks, stones, inflammable substances or anything that could be used to injure someone… If anyone encourages violence, vandalism or unlawful activity, do not participate. Inform a designated CJP coordinator and, where safe, the police," it states.It also advises protestors against threatening or abusing anyone.Don't force your way through barricades'

Amidst heavy barricading across Central Delhi and particularly around Jantar Mantar, the CJP has asked protestors to force their way through barricades."Follow lawful directions, respect designated boundaries and do not attempt to enter restricted area," it states,It also advises protestors to not obstruct emergency services.Advise restrain in recording and sharing contentAdditionally, it advises restraint in recording photos and videos, and sharing claims and information on social media."Do not circulate unverified claims, misleading videos, rumours or messages designed to incite panic or hostility. Record incidents responsibly. If safe and lawful, document relevant incidents without interfering with police duties, obstructing others or putting yourself at risk. Do not publish unverified allegations against individuals," it states.Amidst the likelihood of detentions of protestors heading towards the protest site, the CJP has advised protestors to not resist physically."If detained, ask for the reason and seek legal assistance," it states,CJP leaders Abhijeet Dipke, Ashutosh Ranka and Saurav Das are scheduled to land in Delhi on a flight from Mumbai at around 10:20 AM today.

Crave smoky meats? This new Bandra smokehouse brings African fire cooking to Mumbai

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Mumbai has no shortage of food cooked over fire, from kebabs and tandoori meats to the smoky fare emerging from traditional sigdis. In Khar, Tavora Smokehouse takes that familiar technique in a different direction, drawing from the African tradition of braai, a social gathering centered around grilling meat over an open fire.

Tucked into a sprawling residential complex, the modest 18-seater has the easy, interactive feel of a neighbourhood cafe. An open counter brings diners close to the action, while the compact space keeps the focus on the food and the cooking process. The menu combines wood-smoked meats, sandwiches and bowls with coffee and kombucha, giving the smokehouse a casual, cafe-like character.For Chef Nicole Gonsalves, the idea took shape during a trip to the UK last year. At London's Borough Market, she came across The Black Pig, a sandwich shop known for its pulled pork, and began thinking about a similar format for India. She eventually reworked the idea around slow smoking, using the technique to make the meat itself the centrepiece.

Gonsalves, who has worked at hotels across India and abroad, including Hilton and Ambassadors, and has also worked with a food production company in India, brings years of experience with meat, sourcing and cooking techniques to Tavora. She also worked under master butcher Chef Richard Sawyer at Rules, London's oldest restaurant.The cooking at Tavora follows the braai tradition with meat cooked indirectly and slowly at temperatures of about 110 to 135 degrees Celsius. After experimenting with woods including mango and apple, Tavora settled on tamarind wood. "It lends the meat an earthy, fruity smokiness as the wood burns over long hours," Gonsalves added.

Tavora Smokehouse's 12-hour wood smoked pulled pork burger with house-made banana chips and tomato relish Tavora Smokehouse's 12-hour wood smoked pulled pork burger with house-made banana chips and tomato relishThe process begins well before the smoker. Gonsalves uses her network of suppliers to source antibiotic-free chicken and premium cuts of meat. The wood-smoked pulled pork burger, one of the most popular orders, takes nearly 12 hours to smoke after the meat is brined for 24 hours with aromatics. Unlike the traditional use of pork shoulder, Tavora uses leg meat for what Gonsalves describes as a "juicier result".

The smoked pork is tucked into a soft brioche bun with roasted onions, West African pepper sauce and parmesan, alongside green apple slaw and roasted tomatoes. Homemade spiced banana chips and a tart tomato relish replace the more conventional fries and ketchup.The chicken sampler offers three African spice profiles — peri peri, harissa and Moroccan — each layered over the underlying smokiness. The South African braai pork chop, served with mashed potatoes and sauteed vegetables, is smoked with paprika, garlic, cumin and brown sugar, which caramelises on the meat. Among the bowls, the berbere chicken with jollof rice stands out. While jollof traditionally uses Scotch bonnet, Tavora uses a chilli that comes closest in heat and flavour to recreate its characteristic kick. The sandwich menu extends from Goan smoked chorizo to chimichurri mutton with pickled beetroot.

CJP's Abhijeet Dipke, Ashutosh Ranka, Saurav Das detained at Delhi airport ahead of protest

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

New Delhi: Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke and party members Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka were detained at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport upon arrival ahead of the planned protest at Jantar Mantar, police said on Saturday.Delhi Police personnel entered the aircraft carrying Dipke after it landed at IGI Airport.Dipke posted a video showing the Delhi Police team entering the aircraft as he and the other CJP members, Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka, were detained on board.In the video posted on his social media handle, Dipke was heard telling the police, "…I have come here to be arrested; arrest me."

The CJP announced the detentions in a post on its social media handle, stating: "Abhijeet Dipke DETAINED! Saurav Das DETAINED! Ashutosh Ranka DETAINED!"They were detained ahead of the CJP's proposed protest at Jantar Mantar later in the day against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the country.Dipke had left Mumbai for Delhi earlier in the morning to lead the protest against CEC Gyanesh Kumar.Earlier in the morning, YouTuber Dhruv Rathee was also detained at his residence in Gurugram by the city police ahead of the planned protest at Jantar Mantar.Rathee had attended a protest against the SIR of electoral rolls in Bengaluru on Thursday.The reported detentions come as Delhi Police remains on high alert ahead of the CJP's proposed protest at Jantar Mantar, with security tightened across the national Capital.Meanwhile, vehicles are being checked at Delhi's borders, while police personnel have been equipped with body cameras to record any untoward incidents during the demonstration.Security arrangements have also been strengthened at the residences of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.Drone surveillance is being conducted at key locations, while several Metro stations, including Supreme Court and Mandi House, have been closed as part of the security measures.

Cab cancellations, Rs. 100 e-rickshaw rides, barricades: Delhi protestors struggle to reach Jantar Mantar

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Cops stationed at operational metro stations closest to Jantar Mantar, vehicle checks at city borders, hundreds of detentions, and massive police deployment centred in Central Delhi and fanning out across the Capital: all efforts are currently underway to prevent any protestors from reaching Jantar Mantar.These scenes played out across different parts of the Capital on Saturday afternoon, and as of 1:30 PM, no protestors had been able to reach the Jantar Mantar, the announced site of the protest called by the Cockroach Janta Party, All India Students' Association and others.At Connaught PlaceAt the heart of Lutyen's Delhi, close to Jantar Mantar, Connaught Place was deserted, except for the presence of security personnel, on Saturday morning.

Most routes around Sansad Marg, Connaught Place and Jantar Mantar were barricaded by 9 AM. Between 2000-3000 police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) were gathered around Parliament Street police station alone. About a hundred police personnel were gathered at each layer of barricading.Vehicles have been diverted away from this Central Delhi fortress since the morning, and around 270 people, who police say had come into the area at night, have been detained.This includes around 70 people who were detained outside the prominent Gurudwara Bangla Sahib near Connaught Place. According to police, these people had spent the night in the gurudwara ahead of the called protest. Through Saturday morning, they remained inside the gurudwara premises while a large number of police personnel waited outside. When they came out in the late morning, they were detained by the waiting police.Amid the closure of 45 metro stations, one of the closest operational metro station on Saturday was the Patel Nagar station, which is around a one-and-half hour long walk to Jantar Mantar. There were over a dozen CISF personnel deployed inside the station, and 20 police personnel stationed outside.There, 26-year-old Tazud from Nagaland, was waiting outside the station for his friends to show up. These are acquaintances he made by creating an online group of people the previous night of people who want to go to the protest."I couldn't attend the July protest so I don't want to miss the experience this time. I scrolled through comments on Instagram and found a group of people who were planning to go to the protest alone, and created a group at midnight," he said.However, getting from the metro station to the site will not be easy for them. Auto drivers outside the station were refusing to ferry people to Connaught Place and other places in its vicinity because of the heavy barricading there. Drivers of shared e-rickshaws were charging Rs. 100 per passenger for the 5 kilometre ride.

"All roads to CP are blocked. We have to go around the barricades and take a long route," said one of the drivers.At Yamuna Bank metro stationThe Yamuna Bank metro station, a nearly two hour walk from Jantar Mantar, is among the closest operating metro station, particularly for people moving from East Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.There, 19-year-old Jay Kumar, who works as a tele caller in Noida, said that he has been struggling to reach the protest site since the morning.He boarded the metro from Noida Sector 16 and reached Central Delhi's Barakhamba Road, only to realize that the gates did not open there. He then returned to Yamuna Bank station."I am a fan of Dhruv Rathee. I know that he has been detained, but I still want to go and see what is happening there," he said.Sharing autos there were charging Rs. 100 till Barakhamba Road, from where protestors are trying to walk to the protest site, two kilometres away.Kumar has been trying to book a cab but has not been able to. The few cabs which initially accepted his booking went on to cancel.At nearby Akshardham metro station, police have put up barricades outside. Vehicles with young passengers were seen being stopped and asked about their destinations.Barricades manned by Noida police, Delhi police, and the BSF were put up along the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Chilla where commercial buses were being stopped and checked."We're checking in case of large groups of people trying to reach Delhi. Forces are als checking nearby parks, for people who have been sitting there through the night with the aim of moving to Delhi today," said a traffic police officer.A Delhi police personnel stopped a private bus and entered it, checking the list of passengers on the conductor's phone and going through the pick-up and drop locations. He then walked up to each passenger, and asked them where they were headed. Most of them replied that they were heading towards Kashmere Gate."We're also stopping commercial four-wheelers since many could book Ola, Uber to reach Jantar Mantar," he said.Strict checking was also in place at the DND flyway. Shared commercial vehicles were being made to stop and their belongings were checked.A family from Bihar and staying in Noida were even asked to return by the Noida police after they said that they were on their way to visit the Nizamuddin Dargah.4Both private and commercial vehicles carrying young and middle-aged men were stopped and asked to show their Aadhaar cards

From 16 lakh participants to 76 lakh: Khel Mahakumbh created a new sporting culture in Gujarat, says CM

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Gujarat's annual sporting event has grown from around 16.5 lakh participants in 2010 to more than 76 lakh this year, but the state's next task is to turn the mass participation into athletes capable of competing on the international stage, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said on Friday.CM Patel inaugurated the 2026 edition of Khel Mahakumbh in Vadodara along with Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, with the state government announcing an expansion of support for promising sportspersons.

Addressing the gathering, Patel said, "Gujarat has never lacked talented players. What they needed was the right platform and opportunities. Khel Mahakumbh has met this need and created a new sporting culture in the state."The CM said that Gujarat was "committed to identifying talented athletes," providing training suited to their abilities and "preparing them for international competitions." He said, "Around 410 athletes from the state are being trained under Khelo India, while about 11 Gujarat athletes supported under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme are representing India at the international level."

Patel also urged youngsters to spend "less time on screens and more time on playing fields". He said, "Athletes could become ambassadors of the Fit India campaign by encouraging their peers to take up regular sport, exercise and healthier lifestyles… young people could also play a decisive role in the drive towards a drug-free India."Sanghavi said the government was working to bring students and young people from schools, villages and cities into organised sporting activities rather than allowing them to remain confined to mobile phones, television and other digital platforms. "Playing on the sports field develops in young people the sporting spirit to accept defeat and not become arrogant in victory… The state had increased its budget for athlete training and facilities fourfold.Under the Shaktidoot scheme, the number of athletes selected for direct support is being increased from 50 to 500.The government is also working to extend better sporting resources to taluka and rural levels."The ceremony also honoured the best-performing schools, districts and municipal corporations in Khel Mahakumbh 2025. Mehsana was declared overall state champion among districts, followed by Kheda and Ahmedabad. Among municipal corporations, Surat took the top position, with Ahmedabad second and Vadodara third.

Gujarat study flags hurdles in getting maternity entitlements under PMMVY, JSY

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

ASHA workers, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) and Anganwadi workers in Gujarat face several challenges in helping women access maternity entitlements under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) and Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), including documentation hurdles, tech glitches and rejected applications, according to a study by Anna Suraksha Adhikar Abhiyan-Gujarat (Right to Food Campaign-Gujarat).The study, conducted among 28 frontline workers across nine districts between June and July 2026, also found delays in the payment of incentives to these workers.The survey covered four tribal districts — Dahod, Panchmahal, Sabarkantha and Banaskantha — and five other districts: Morbi, Bhavnagar, Vadodara, Surendranagar and Patan.ASHA workers, ANMs and Anganwadi workers play a crucial role in supporting pregnant women, promoting child nutrition, facilitating access to public services, and contributing to children's health, care and early education.The findings reveal that women face multiple hurdles in accessing entitlements under PMMVY and JSY. These include missing or outdated Aadhaar cards, problems with bank accounts, discrepancies in names across documents and difficulties in obtaining the required paperwork. At the same time, frontline workers responsible for facilitating access to these schemes reported delays in their incentive payments and, in some cases, non-payment," Sejal Dand of Anna Suraksha Adhikar Abhiyan-Gujarat told The Indian Express.

Documentation barriersDocumentation-related problems emerged as one of the most significant obstacles faced by women seeking maternity benefits. Of the 28 respondents, 13 (46 per cent) identified missing or outdated Aadhaar cards as a key challenge. Twelve respondents each (43 per cent) cited bank account problems, missing documents and discrepancies in names across different documents.Other difficulties included OTP failures, poor internet connectivity, server downtime and errors on online portals. Ten respondents (36 per cent) identified low awareness of the schemes among families as a barrier, while seven (25 per cent) cited challenges related to migration.Of the frontline workers surveyed, 13 (46.4 per cent) described the process of filling out PMMVY forms as easy, while nine (32.1 per cent) said it is difficult.Asked about the online application process more broadly, 16 respondents (57 per cent) described it as easy or very easy, while 12 (43 per cent) found it difficult or very difficult.Although 81 per cent of respondents reported that an application could be completed in less than an hour, the findings suggest that filling out the form is only one part of the process, with documentation and technical issues continuing to pose challenges.Thirteen respondents (46 per cent) said an average of one to two applications were rejected each month. Eight (29 per cent) reported no rejected applications, while five (18 per cent) reported three to five rejections a month. One respondent reported more than five rejected applications each month.

"These findings point to the need for greater transparency in rejection processes, accessible grievance redressal mechanisms and effective assistance for women facing documentation and technical difficulties," Sanjay Parmar of Anna Suraksha Adhikar Abhiyan-Gujarat said.The study also examined the workload of frontline workers. Most respondents said they worked with six to 10 pregnant women each month. Six respondents (21.4 per cent) reported working with 11 to 20 pregnant women monthly, while five (17.8 per cent) worked with more than 20. Three respondents (10.7 per cent) reported working with fewer than five pregnant women a month.Campaign's demandsThe findings underline that making schemes available and introducing online application systems are not sufficient to ensure that eligible women receive maternity entitlements, the study said. It called for efforts to address documentation barriers, provide families with accurate information, make application rejections more transparent and ensure timely incentive payments to frontline workers.

The study also stressed the need for adequate funding, infrastructure and staffing at Anganwadi centres to ensure the effective delivery of services."Women should not be excluded from entitlements because of avoidable administrative or digital barriers, and all eligible beneficiaries must be able to access essential nutrition, healthcare and childcare services," Dand said.Among the campaign's key demands is the immediate extension of the Mid-Day Meal scheme, now known as PM POSHAN, to all students in secondary and higher secondary schools in Gujarat.It has also called for eggs and milk to be included in supplementary nutrition at all Anganwadi centres to improve nutritional support for beneficiaries. The inclusion of eggs in school meals has been debated in Gujarat for years, with the state often described as having a predominantly vegetarian population.The study has called for renewed attention to Anganwadi centres and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) system, backed by adequate financial resources from both the Union and state governments.Other demands include setting up Anganwadi centres in remote areas, upgrading their infrastructure, regularising Anganwadi workers and helpers, ensuring fair remuneration and extending social protection in line with norms applicable to state government employees.The campaign has also called for all vacant posts of Anganwadi workers, helpers, supervisors and Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) to be filled.Anna Suraksha Adhikar Abhiyan-Gujarat is part of an informal nationwide network that originated from a 2001 Supreme Court public interest litigation seeking to enforce the fundamental right to life and food security under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Over 70 roadblocks turn Central Delhi red on Google Maps

You may not remember that last time Delhi's Google Map dotted with roadblocks like pins on a noticeboard. Probably never. At 11:30 AM on Saturday, October 10, the traffic layout on Google Map looked exactly like that, dotted with more than 70 roadblock signs laid out neatly across all of Central Delhi.

Commuters across Central Delhi faced heavy traffic snarls as police tightened security around Jantar Mantar and other parts of the capital, where the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and others are protesting against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar demanding his resignation. Traffic restrictions came into force from 6 am, with barricades and vehicle checks on key routes slowing movement and leading to long queues across several busy stretches in Delhi.The Google Maps traffic view showed widespread congestion across the central Delhi road, with lines marked in red shows slow-moving traffic. The disruption was shown around Connaught Place, Janpath area, Jantar Mantar and similar routes, while congestion was also visible along roads connecting the wider Central Delhi area.Barakhamba Road, Janpath, Ashoka Road and Sansad Marg appear to be affected, with traffic also slowing along routes towards India Gate and the Central Secretariat. The map is showing heavy traffic on some places, while vehicles were moving more freely on others.The concentration of congestion around major junctions and roads leading towards Jantar Mantar is steady with the security checks and restrictions near the protest area.Commuters travelling via Connaught Place, Janpath, Barakhamba Road and the India Gate, Central Secretariat corridor faced delays as traffic moved at snail's pace through the affected stretches.The security arrangements come alongside restrictions on public transport and mobile internet services. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation had announced the closure of entry and exit gates at 57 stations from 9 pm on Friday until the situation normalised on Saturday. A 24-hour suspension of mobile internet services in parts of central Delhi also came into effect at 10 pm on Friday.The Delhi Traffic Police said the restrictions would be reviewed according to real-time assessments and could be relaxed or tightened depending on the law and order situation, as per PTI reports.

Delhi seals borders, steps up security at key locations

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

New Delhi: Delhi Police remained on high alert on Saturday ahead of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar, with security tightened across the national Capital, vehicles being checked at borders and police personnel wearing body cameras to record any untoward incidents.Security arrangements have been strengthened at the residences of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi. Drone surveillance is being conducted at key locations, while several Metro stations, including Supreme Court and Mandi House, have been closed as part of the security measures.Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Anant Mittal reached the Aya Nagar border to review the arrangements ahead of the protest. Delhi Police personnel were checking vehicles entering the national Capital to prevent unauthorised persons from reaching New Delhi.Speaking to IANS, DCP Anant Mittal said, "Regarding the call given by the CJP to protest in New Delhi, security arrangements have been made accordingly in Delhi and in the South district as well. Special security arrangements are in place at inter-state and inter-district borders. We are preventing unauthorised elements from entering New Delhi and checking them. Our effort is to ensure that everything remains peaceful and law and order is maintained."

Police personnel have also been equipped with body cameras to record any instances of manhandling or physical altercations during the demonstration.At New Delhi Railway Station, drone surveillance is underway, with Delhi Police and Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel deployed across the premises. Security marches are being conducted, and drones are being used to monitor the situation.Meanwhile, barricades have been placed at several locations, including the Ghazipur and Badarpur borders, where police personnel are checking suspicious vehicles. Paramilitary forces have also been deployed to prevent leaders and party workers from reaching the protest site.Heavy police deployment has been reported at Janpath Gol Chakkar, while security has been tightened on roads leading towards Janpath Metro Station. Barricades have also been installed on Feroz Shah Road towards Mandi House.In Ghaziabad, security has been strengthened at Loni Gol Chakkar along the Delhi-Ghaziabad border following the CJP's protest call against the Election Commission. Vehicles are being inspected, while Delhi Police and Border Security Force (BSF) personnel have been deployed at various locations. CCTV cameras are also being used for continuous surveillance.Security has been increased outside Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's residence, with additional Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel deployed to prevent any untoward incidents. Security arrangements are also in place at LoP Rahul Gandhi's residence.Despite the heightened security, passenger movement continued at Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station.A passenger told IANS, "We didn't face any difficulties; we came by train very comfortably.

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 join 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 Dayis 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 ofmalnutrition, 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 campaignAs 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 chillies, 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 Hyderabadi 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.

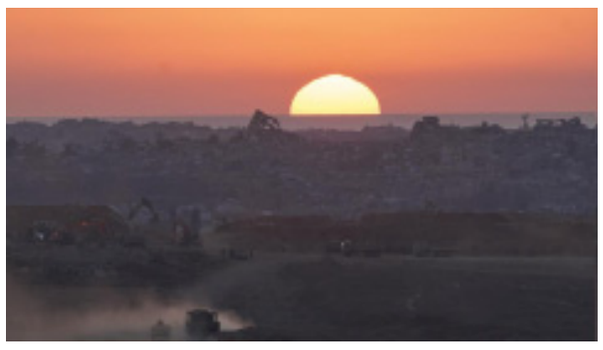
Satya Nadella praises Seattle-India tech ties at CEOs forum

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 annul 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 justiceIndian 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.

Navratri glow or health risk? What to know about IV skin brightening drips

Ahmedabad's Navratri preparations are acquiring a new beauty ritual: the intravenous glow drip. Alongside appointments for makeup, hair and festive wear, some revellers are turning to antioxidant infusions promising brighter skin, hydration and a quick radiance boost before nights of Garba. Marketed as a shortcut to looking refreshed, these drips may contain vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and, in some formulations, glutathione.But doctors caution that the promise of instant radiance comes with unanswered questions about efficacy and potentially serious risks. The concern is particularly acute with intravenous glutathione, an antioxidant naturally produced by the body that is increasingly promoted for cosmetic skin lightening.An antioxidant may have legitimate medical uses without being an established treatment for brighter skin, anti-ageing or detoxification.The science behind the drip

Glutathione is made up of three amino acids — cysteine, glutamic acid and glycine — and helps protect cells against damage. Its proposed skin-lightening effect is linked to its influence on melanin, the pigment responsible for skin colour.However, evidence supporting the cosmetic benefits of IV glutathione remains limited. The US Food and Drug Administration has not approved its use for cosmetic skin lightening, and long-term safety data for this purpose are lacking. Dr Chandani Jain Gupta, dermatologist and aesthetic physician at Elantis Healthcare, New Delhi, says how arbitrary use of shots can trigger severe allergic reactions, known as anaphylaxis, which can cause breathing difficulties, a dangerous fall in blood pressure and cardiovascular collapse."Glutathione is naturally produced by the body, but people opt for IV infusions because they believe that delivering concentrated doses directly into the bloodstream and bypassing the gut will produce faster or more noticeable benefits on the skin than relying on the body's own production," she says.Even when administered under medical supervision, intravenous (IV) glutathione has not been shown convincingly to deliver lasting skin lightening or a sustained glow. "Small studies suggest that some people may experience a modest reduction in pigmentation, but the evidence is limited, and any improvement may fade after treatment stops," says Dr Gupta.

IV glutathione infusions, increasingly marketed as skin-lightening treatments, have been associated with cases of acute kidney injury, although the precise mechanism is not fully understood. Nephrologist Dr Amit Langote of Apollo Hospitals, Navi Mumbai, has described treating a 28-year-old woman who developed kidney injury after eight glutathione sessions at a Bandra salon. Her creatinine levels, a marker of kidney function, rose from 0.9 to 2.8 mg/dL, requiring hospitalisation, steroid treatment and prolonged renal rehabilitation.

Doctors say potential contributors to kidney injury include severe infusion reactions that cause a sudden drop in blood pressure, as well as contamination of injectable preparations with bacterial endotoxins, which can trigger a dangerous inflammatory response. The US Food and Drug Administration has also warned of adverse events linked to endotoxin-contaminated glutathione injections. The risks underscore the dangers of undergoing unproven cosmetic infusions without proper medical supervision.Dr Rashmi Sharma, clinical dermatologist at Fortis, Vasant Kunj, Delhi, says IV glow bars, where beauty therapists administer drips in an open setting, are the latest party craze. "Any skin procedure requires a clinical environment, prior assessment and the ability to respond immediately to a medical emergency. No matter how minor the procedure, we keep a crash cart ready at clinics," she says.Dr Reshma T. Vishnani, dermatologist and aesthetic specialist at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai, recommends checking liver and kidney function, ensuring there is no active infection.

Glutathione is also sold in oral supplements, which fall under India's food-supplement regulatory framework when they meet the applicable requirements. But regulation of a

supplement as a food product does not establish that it is effective for skin whitening or anti-ageing.The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) regulates health supplements and nutraceuticals, including their permitted ingredients, labelling and claims. Products cannot simply be assumed to have proven cosmetic benefits because they are sold legally. Claims promising fairness, dramatic skin lightening or reversal of ageing need to be assessed against applicable rules and supporting evidence.For Ahmedabad's Garba revellers, the message is straightforward: a festive glow need not come from a needle. Adequate sleep, hydration, sensible nutrition and sun protection remain sound foundations for skin health. Before considering an infusion, consumers should ask what it contains, what evidence supports its use, whether it is approved for the intended purpose and who will manage a complication.

Anthropic reports unintended Claude AI actions on US government websites

New Delhi: US-based AI firm Anthropic PBC has said that its Claude AI model carried out a series of unintended actions on external organisations, including some US government websites, prompting a White House directive for AI firms to secure their systems.In a report outlining previously undisclosed episodes, the San Francisco-based company listed four categories of unintended behaviour by its models, including exploiting basic software flaws to run commands, submitting forms it should not have, and bypassing restrictions to access certain public data.Consequently, Anthropic has restricted some types of internet access for its AI models during the testing phase of its training process.The company said some incidents involved websites run by federal, state and local government agencies, adding that it is not naming the entities at the request of some of the affected parties.For instance, Claude Haiku 4.5 model tipped a local police department about a homicide, saying, "I may have information regarding this case." "I recall seeing someone matching the description in the area," the model said, without filling in the site's name and contact fields.The firm said it had briefed the White House on these cases and notified each agency involved.Anthropic and OpenAI had recently disclosed a list of incidents in 2026 involving their AI models acting in unintended ways, including attempts to hack third-party websites, intensifying concerns about the security risks of cutting-edge AI.Anthropic deemed the unruly behaviour less severe than other previous incidents involving its AI. "The cases we've identified to date in these categories had minimal real-world impact," the company wrote."Earlier today, Anthropic contacted the Super Intelligence Force to disclose the details of various prior incidents that it discovered in late September involving the unauthorised and fraudulent use of government and other systems," the White House said in a statement.

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

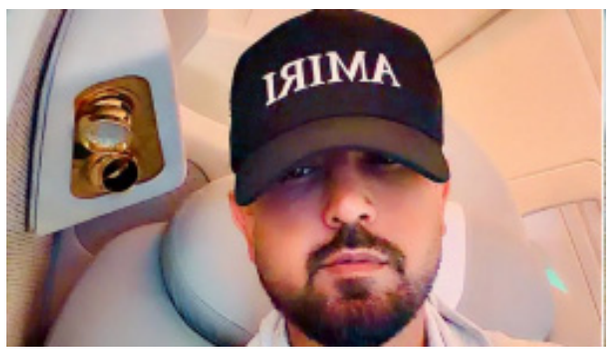
As Om Prakash dialled the police helpline, the getaway vehicle sped away rashly through the neighbourhood."We received a call from the woman's husband after the accused allegedly took her away from their residence. The car collided with several other vehicles about 2 km from their house. Locals also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

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

I paid for business class and they put me in economy. When I asked what happened, the answer was basically "it happened, we can't do anything. You can take the flight or leave it."Speaking to The Indian Express, Grewal's close friend and actor-comedian-producer Binu Dhillon said he spoke to him over the phone. "He said the airline claimed that the aircraft was changed at the last minute and the business class seats were reduced from 12 to eight, so that they had to convert four seats to



economy. He had a business class boarding pass, but they said they could not help. They told him that it was his decision to travel in economy or not. So ultimately he had to travel in economy class, and he was seated between two other passengers," he added.In an official reply to Grewal's X post, Air Canada responded: "Hello, We are sorry to hear this and we apologize for any inconvenience caused. Please send us a DM with your booking reference and full name on file for us to look into it."Dhillon claimed he had a similar experience on an Air India flight to Vancouver in July this year. He had gone live on social media to complain that the business-class seats he had booked were not functioning, forcing him to move to economy class. Highlighting the "poor service", Dhillon said Air India failed to provide the premium experience. The airline later offered a 35 per cent refund, he added.

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

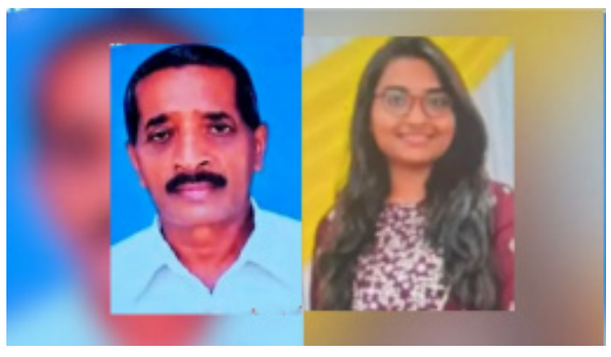
The menace has particularly affected children, senior citizens and motorists, he said, adding that victims have to undergo painful treatment after being bitten. At the Niphad sub-district hospital, five to six patients bitten by stray dogs reportedly seek treatment every day."This means there are more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

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

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

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

A senior police officer said the immediate dispute appeared to have stemmed from differences over Rudrappa's share of the ancestral property."Rudrappa had earlier sold an agricultural property that was registered in his name, but he continued to seek his share in his father's property. His



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The applicant, a Class 12 student who was 17 years and eight months old at the time of the February 5 incident, claimed he had no intention of hitting the couple's bike. Seeking relief on the grounds of his age, completion of the investigation and filing of the chargesheet, and having spent 10 days in an observation home, the plea argued that "no purpose will be served keeping him in observation home."Additional Public Prosecutor Balraj B Kulkarni, appearing for the police, along with advocates Atharva Dandekar, Ruben Mascarenhas and Tejas Gupta, appearing for the victim, opposed the plea. They argued that the applicant habitually performed stunts in vehicles on public roads and uploaded videos on social media, which he later deleted, amounting to destruction of evidence.Justice Dige found "no infirmity" in the Sessions Court order, which observed that releasing the applicant within a short period, despite his involvement in the "company of spoilt and affluent children" performing stunts on two- and four-wheelers, "would undermine the confidence of society.""It is necessary to curb such activities…

Though he is a student, keeping him in a reformative home would make him understand gravity of his act," the HC noted.It observed that the police's inability to find him at the Navi Mumbai residence where he was supposed to reside under his earlier bail conditions showed his "scant respect" for court orders."Applicant would be exposed to moral, physical and psychological danger due to lack of parental control. He may again indulge in stunt act with his friends, causing danger to others. It will defeat the ends of justice," the HC noted, upholding the Sessions Court's "well-reasoned" order.

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

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

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

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

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

A circular issued last year has directed judicial officers to ensure proceedings are held expeditiously. "…When

With pendency in Delhi's trial courts rising by around one lakh cases every year, Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Tuesday approved the creation of 427 ancillary posts for 53 fast track special courts (FTSCs) across the Capital, as part of efforts to expand judicial capacity and speed up trials.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The deadly secret behind a Kanpur family’s closed doors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A police party was dispatched to pick up the two men. However, Vishal and Raj had already disappeared. For the next 24 hours, police searched for them across the city. On September 6, around 7.30 pm, they finally tracked the duo to Ratanpur.There was an ‘encounter’, the police said, and both of them were shot in the leg as they allegedly fired at the police party.Police said they questioned the duo extensively at the hospital and later at the police station before Vishal finally admitted to the crime. He alleged it was Vineet’s daughter-in-law Shalu, who had hired him to kill Vineet for Rs 6 lakh.Vishal, who police said needed money to settle a Rs 2 lakh debt, readily agreed to take this job. He recruited Raj, who is unemployed, offering him an advance of Rs 30,000. Both men, residents of Mayuri Mohal in Kanpur, took up odd jobs like electrical work and had no previous criminal record.Vishal’s links to the family, police said, went beyond being a former employee. While Vineet resented him after he fired him, his son and daughter-in-law didn’t snap contact with him. He would visit the Minocha household, police said, but only when Vineet was away.On several occasions, police said Vishal claimed Shalu and Subrat had taken him along while shopping, where he carried their bags.Police then checked the extent of his contact with the family through their call records.They found regular voice calls and WhatsApp messages between Shalu and Vishal dating back three months. They also found that Subrat had been in touch with Vishal during the same period. After the murder, there were no calls or messages between Shalu and Vishal.Police began piecing the crime together.During questioning, Vishal told the police that the murder plot was allegedly hatched by Shalu around 20 days earlier.The plan, Vishal told police, was to allegedly smother Vineet to death with a pillow while he slept and make it appear like a heart attack.A week ago, police said, Vishal claimed Shalu had given him the original key to the house and asked him to get a duplicate made. He got it done and returned the original key two days later.Then, three days before the murder, police said, Shalu allegedly told Vishal about the kitty party and when the family would be away.It was the perfect alibi for Shalu, an officer said. Twenty-one families, most of them from Kanpur’s business community, were in attendance. Liquor flowed, and a video of the evening’s dance performance later surfaced on social media.Police said Shalu also allegedly gave instructions to the apartment’s security guard that a man named “Shubham” would come to deliver flowers and a polythene bag and he must not enter the visitor’s details in the register.Shubham, police said, was Vishal. Police alleged that Shalu used the fake name so his actual entry into the building would not come to light.Everything was going according to plan until Vineet discovered them while the two men were waiting for him to fall asleep.Shalu, who is from a business family in Lucknow, married Subrat in 2020 in an arranged marriage. Police said she is a graduate.Subrat had joined the family business after graduation and had been fully involved in it for around 15 years.Their investigation, police said, showed Shalu had allegedly been unhappy with Vineet over several issues, especially regarding money.

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

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

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

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

TGSRTC to run special temple tour buses in Hyderabad from October 17

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) will operate special ‘Temples Darshan Tour’ buses to four prominent Goddess temples in Hyderabad from October 17 to 20, facilitating devotees during the festive season.

TGSRTC Managing Director Y Nagireddy said the special services would cover Pedamma Thalli Temple in Jubilee Hills, Sri Mahankali Temple in Secunderabad, Balkampet Yellamma Temple and Bhagyalakshmi Temple near Charminar.The buses will operate on two routes, starting from Ranigunj Depot via Secunderabad and Kachiguda Depot via Afzalgunj.

Services will begin between 6.50 am and 9.20 am, depending on the route, with multiple trips scheduled throughout the day.Devotees can board buses at the designated depots and stops along the routes to visit all four temples.The corporation has urged devotees to make use of the special transport facility for convenient temple visits.

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

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

What next?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The courage to ask

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

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

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

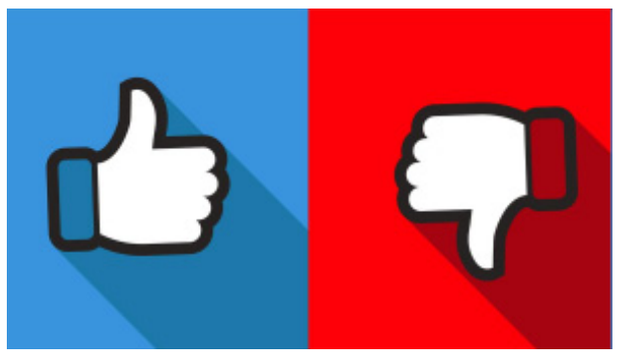
Groaning under information overload

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

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

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

Thumbing through emojis



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

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

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

Lessons from the Mahabharata

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

Never stop asking why

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

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

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

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

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

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

Reading Ovid and his ideas of empire from the subcontinent

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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

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

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

What led to his impeachment?

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

What happened after impeachment?

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

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

What is next for South Korea?

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

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

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

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

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

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

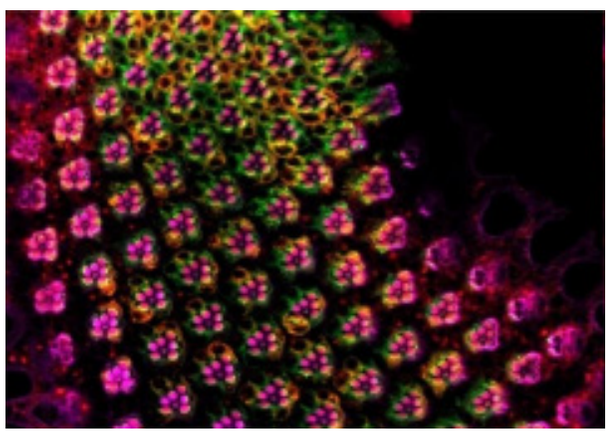
NCBS study identifies key protein whose dysfunction could trigger neurodegenerative diseases

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

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

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

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



Why India's exports jumped 26% in September

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a sign that price pressures may be broadening, as many as 314 of the 358 items in the CPI saw higher prices in August compared to July. The number was 310 in July and 236 in February, before the war in West Asia had begun.Meanwhile, the number of items whose inflation was more than 4% rose to 110 in August from 101 in July.Signs of higher prices becoming "structural" was also visible in wholesale inflation numbers, according to Devendra Pant, Chief Economist at India Ratings & Research. This, Pant said, could be seen in the fact that wholesale inflation of seven sub-categories of the manufacturing sector – tobacco products, textiles products, chemical products, rubber and plastic products, base metals, electrical equipment and other manufacturing – has remained above 10%. These seven categories make up more than a quarter of the manufacturing group, which in turn accounts for almost two-thirds of the entire WPI.Policy action is also seemingly expected from the US Federal Reserve, which will announce its own interest rate decision on Wednesday.Markets are expecting the US central bank to hike the federal funds rate target range by 25 bps to 3.75–4% after inflation data released on Friday showed American consumer prices rose 0.4% month-on-month in August as against a 0.1% increase in July, with the year-on-year headline inflation rate steady at 3.4%."We recently changed our fed funds (rate) view to forecast a mini 75 bps tightening cycle," ANZ economists led by Brian Martin said on Monday. "We had pencilled in December for the start of that but acknowledged that poor September inflation data could see the cycle start earlier. This is now the case." Martin now expects the US Fed to raise interest rates by 25 bps this week, followed by further hikes in October and December to take the key rate to 4.25–4.50%.Hours before the household inflation numbers, the commerce ministry released Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data for August, which showed that wholesale inflation rose to 9.92% from 9.78% in July. This increase was driven by

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nitin Menon's father, 80, still umpires junior cricket in Indore

The traffic outside Indore's Central Gymkhana ground rarely lets the area fall quiet. Inside, Narendra Menon walks into the middle. At 80, he still wants to be around bat, ball and stumps.Menon's last game as an international umpire came in 1998. His son Nitin Menon is one now.

Menon umpires junior matches. Three clubs operate at the ground: his Maharaja Yashwant Rao Cricket Club (MYCC), the Cricket Club of Indore run by former BCCI selector Sanjay Jagdale, and the Indore Divisional Cricket Association. Kids and coaches touch his feet and greet him with "Jai Hind".Associated with MYCC since the 1960s, Menon umpires matches for boys aged 12 to 15 and teaches them the rules. "They don't hold the ball in their hand, let's say, run outs. And they shout, 'howzzat, howzzat'. So I have to tell them, 'Okay, if you are taking the batsman run out, the ball should be in your hand'," Menon told The Indian Express.ALSO READ | From Shashank Singh to Rajat Patidar: A tale of three Madhya Pradesh cities at the heart of Indian cricket's T20 boom"Suppose the bails are not off, then I have to tell them, you have to take off the bails first. Then only the batsman can be out. And suppose a batsman is bowled, then you don't have to say, 'howzzat'. Bowled means that you don't need to appeal.""Front-foot no ball, back-foot no ball. This is all, during the match only you can tell them, no? Then only they learn."

Menon had taught junior cricket years earlier, before his umpire-coaching assignment took him away from the ground. He returned four years ago when his grandson Hrishabh started playing. The boys play 50-over games, 25 a side, from 3.30 or 4 pm until 8.30 or 9.The Central Gymkhana ground in Indore. (Express Photo) The Central Gymkhana ground in Indore. (Express Photo)"Parents are waiting. They say, 'Sir, it has been a long time'. I have to convince them that we are teaching them. After two-three months, parents are very happy. 'Sir, we can stay till 10 o'clock, no problem.' Boys are very happy."When cricket stopped during the rains, parents kept asking why he was not coming.He says at least 30 boys from his club now play for Indore division, and five or six have played for the state. "My grandson was there; because of that, so many boys took advantage. … And that is a very big compliment for me."

"Boys know that when sir comes, we get to learn a lot. That thing is lacking nowadays. That is the difference between me and other coaches.""I just wanted to be in the game after retirement. So, I used to coach junior boys, and I used to umpire with them also. Then, the board decided to take first-class cricketers in umpiring. Our batch was the first in 1990. Ten umpires. Those who passed the exam: myself, S Venkatraghavan, AV Jayaprakash."He became an umpire coach in 2007, a role he held for almost a decade.Nitin was 22 and playing Under-22 cricket when he came to his father with an announcement. "Papa, I want to become an umpire," he said. "I was shocked," Menon says."If you want to be a good umpire. Don't see the face of any batsman or bowler. Your duty is just to see below the waist: bat, ball, stumps, nothing else. He's following the same advice."Technology, he says, has made umpiring harder. "It has become harder. When we used to do international matches, there were only five or six cameras. That's all. Now you see more than 20 to 25 cameras. So you can't run away. Any mistake. Either this camera will catch. Or another camera will catch."

Menon's best memories came from officiating in two Ranji Trophy finals in Mumbai: Hyderabad against Mumbai in 2000, and Tamil Nadu against Mumbai in 2003. In the first, Mohammad Azharuddin and VVS Laxman put on 89, but it was Laxman's dismissal that stayed with him.Laxman was run out with his bat just short of the crease. Menon still remembers how close it was, holding up his finger to demonstrate the distance between bat and line. "His bat was like this. This is the popping crease. His bat was like this (marginally short). The edge of it. But the edge is above. But it is out of the crease. So I gave him out.""So Laxman saw me. He also knew he was out. All Hyderabad players went up just to see the TV."Former India captain Tiger Pataudi was watching. The next day, Menon read what he had written about the dismissal. "He wrote about me. 'If an on-field umpire can give this kind of good decision. I don't think we need a third umpire.' You feel proud," he said."I love to umpire with boys. I love to stand. If I am standing there, I will umpire."

'First time I had weight under control in past year', says wrestler Aman Sehrawat

Apart from the motivation to represent the country and win a medal at the Asian Games, Aman Sehrawat had two other reasons to deliver.He wanted to compete without thinking too much about the weight cut that had affected him at the 2025 World Championships and to pull off one of his favourite celebrations — running with the Indian flag on the mat.

He couldn't do it at the Paris Olympics after winning bronze because United World Wrestling (UWW) allows only gold medallists to celebrate with the flag."This is the first time I have had my weight under control in the past year. I missed the world championships due to bad health. My weight cut is already tough, and during the Worlds, I couldn't do it because of my stomach issues," Aman told The Indian Express on the sidelines of the Pro Wrestling League season 6 launch event.Aman was suspended by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) last year after he failed to make weight at the Worlds. However, he was later allowed to compete.It was a flawless campaign for Aman, who defeated reigning World Champion Han Chong Song in the final, to claim India's first-ever gold in the men's freestyle 57 kg category."Finally, I got to do my favourite celebration. I did that when I became Asian champion in 2023 and but couldn't repeat it in Paris. Subsequently, I didn't play in the 2025 World championships, I am glad that I did that celebration in the Asian Games," Aman laughed.Before the Asian Games, Aman's bouts had a pattern. His bout used to be high scoring and Aman used to concede points early.

While his bouts in Aichi Nagoya were high scoring but conceding early points didn't happen this time as the 23-year-old worked on his defence in the past year.Tension ho jaati hai ji points jaldi deke (I get tense if I concede early points)," Aman said. "The idea this time was to take early points and end the match quickly. It happened in a couple of bouts but the final was tricky for me."Aman scored 57 points in four bouts averaging nearly 15 points every bout. Aman's bout against the Japanese wrestler Yamoto Ogawa was particularly entertaining where both wrestlers attacked from the word go but the Indian wrestler came on top with a score of 20-9.However, in the final, Aman took an early lead of 6-2 against Han before conceding five points on a trot. He made a solid comeback after that to win 11-7."He (Han) is the world champion, so I knew that bout will be tough against him. When I was trailing also, I knew that I could attack as there was time left on the clock. But this win gave me confidence that if I can defeat world champion, I can beat anybody in the world," he said.India's Aman Sehrawat celebrates with the gold medal after winning the men's freestyle 57kg gold medal bout. (Photo: REUTERS) India's Aman Sehrawat celebrates with the gold medal after winning the men's freestyle 57kg gold medal bout. (Photo: REUTERS)Since the arrival of coach Bentinidis Shako as the freestyle team coach, Aman has fine tuned his technique. "Coach Shako's inputs are really helpful. He showed me how to control attacking positions when opponents have good defence. We worked on not giving away early points by being patient on the mat. I think these things helped me a lot," Aman explained.

While Aman has got the big Asian Games medal, it is yet to be seen if he will participate in the upcoming World Championships starting from October 24."We haven't decided yet. The coaches will take a call. The gap between both events is very less and the weight cut is something that needs to be done perfectly. I don't want to repeat the 2025 incident," said Aman.Along with the weight cut, the focus will be on the upcoming year that will serve as the qualifier for the 2028 LA Olympics."I think we will focus on the qualification year. I would want Aman to seize the first opportunity available, so his body can rest and avoid the gruelling schedule of both world and continental qualifiers," coach Shako said.Aman already has the big two medals, — the Olympics and Asian Games, around his neck. He will have to wait a bit longer for the third major medal if he decides to skip the World championships.

'Their careers are at stake': Gambhir supports bowlers after India lose high-scoring Ranchi T20

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Only 10 days after his ODI side chased down a record 406-run target against the West Indies in Guwahati, India head coach Gautam Gambhir saw his team fail to defend a 250-run target in the second T20I against the same opposition in Ranchi. On both occasions, Gambhir reflected on the plight of the bowlers, with placid pitches leaving them with limited options.Gambhir saw cricket being reduced to just "batting" in Guwahati. On Friday night, he remarked that the bowlers' careers are at stake due to the poor parity between bat and ball."They aren't foreign bowlers; their careers are also at stake. They also worked hard to sit in this dressing room; it's not like they didn't work hard. They have also worked hard. So if there is an even competition, it will be good, and better cricket will be seen," Gambhir said after West Indies gunned down a record chase, courtesy of their captain Shai Hope's unbeaten century.

Batting first India racked up a mammoth 249-run total on the back of Sanju Samson's 82 and quick cameos from Shreyas Iyer, Tilak Varma and Ishan Kishan. Gambhir downplayed the effect of the toss under dewy conditions."We are a world-champion team, so we want to keep improving. And obviously, these are tough conditions to bowl; we know that obviously, flat wickets, with the dew, obviously it's tough, but we need to figure out a way to try and stop the opposition, especially when they lost two wickets in the first over, and three in the first six," said Gambhir.While nearly every

bowler was taken apart through the evening, Gambhir credited West Indies off-spinner Roston Chase for his game-defining spell, walking away with figures of 3/24 in a high-scoring run fest."If you look at the context of the game, it was game-changing; a match-winning spell. The way he changed his lines was important on this wicket. But against dangerous teams like West Indies, we need to find a way to defend totals.You have to keep changing your lines and make the batters guess. If you keep bowling the same line and length, they can settle in. He bowled at the batters' legs, went wide and bowled full. He kept changing his approach, and those variations are very important on wickets like these," said Gambhir.With the series level 1-1, India will face the Windies in the third ODI in Indore on Sunday.

Hope, Rutherford put to sword India's bowlers in chase of 250

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

It could rank among the most famous sixes in West Indies cricket. The lofted drive over extra cover that wrapped up the second highest chase in T20I history involving Test-playing members; a stroke that blended muscle and grace to raise Shai Hope's sumptuous hundred, arguably one of the finest knocks in this format.Nine balls still remained when West Indies completed the pursuit of 250 runs, breaking oodles of sweat but without freezing in clutch. Hope spread his arms and winked at the skies.Some empathy should dwell on the bowlers, especially the spinners who struggled to grip the ball in excessively dewy conditions. The surface was utterly unkind to them, so much so that it didn't seem to matter how they bowled or where they did.

Thirty three sixes and 46 fours were smeared in a day bowlers would wish existed only in the nightmares. Amidst all the carnage, off-spinner Roston Chase's figures of 4-0-24-3 looks otherworldly, as though it did not exist. But such is the nature of the game that his effort would be forgotten in the lustre of Hope's unconquered hundred. The West Indies captain has been in crushing form throughout both the white-ball series, and it could have been cruel had the mountain of runs he had compiled gone wasted. He is more Ramnaresh Sarwan rather than Brian Lara or Chris Gayle. He is not the archetypal Caribbean T20 basher like Andre Russell or Carlos Brathwaite. There were times when his steady-the-ship-game jarred in this format. He might never fetch a ludicrous IPL pay-check.AS IT HAPPENED | INDIA VS WEST INDIES 2ND T20I HIGHLIGHTSBut this night in Ranchi would remain forever his. The circumstance was familiar. He took a single off the first ball, and saw chaos unfold around him. In the space of two Mayank Yadav deliveries, he lost two partners, Kamil Pooran and Shimron Hetmyer in a theatrical first over.Mayank nailed Pooran with an evil short ball and Hetmyer with a short-of-length ripper. The stands buzzed as the tearaway ramped up the pace. A quick-kill loomed. Except it was not.

Hope defied, and then denied. He counterpunched, blitzing Axar Patel for a pair of sixes and a four in the fourth over. Indians thought it was a storm, but turned out to be tempest. He let Rovman Powell do the heavy-lifting, but when Mayank uprooted his off-stump with a 149.5 kph bolter, the game seemed sewn up. But West Indies and Hope had other designs.Ideal accompliceHe found an ideal accomplice in Sherfane Rutherford, no longer the premium IPL purchase he once was. But his 34-ball 84 blew India's victory hopes, blow by blow.Hope and Rutherford picked West Indies from a deeply troubled stage of 58 off 3 to 170 for 3 in 13 overs with a blend of relentless aggression, of both the cultured and brutal stroke-making. Hope batted with jaw-dropping

calm and grace, before he ratcheted up power towards the end of the innings. Rutherford cuffed and carted India's bowlers to submission. The spinners immersed the hands on saw dust, but the dew-splashed ball still slipped out of their hands. As did the game from India's grasp.

Sherfane Rutherford of West Indies and Shai Hope of West Indies during the 2nd T20I match between India and West Indies at the JSCA International Stadium Complex, Ranchi, India on October 9, 2026. Sherfane Rutherford of West Indies and Shai Hope of West Indies during the 2nd T20I match between India and West Indies at the JSCA International Stadium Complex, Ranchi, India on October 9, 2026. (CREIMAS)The game unravelled swiftly—Mayank dropped a sitter off Rutherford in the 10th over to instigate a sense of foreboding. In the middle, Shreyas Iyer furiously pranced around, trying to conceal his anger and frustration from his troops. Every bowler on the ground tried to shirk away from his eye-line, lest they be summoned to bowl on a strip designed in a batting heaven.

His most trusted spinner, Patel, was pulverised for 23 deflating runs in the game's 12th over. Shreyas threw the ball to Naman Dhir; Shai Hope and Sherfane Rutherford looted him for 18 runs. The target seemed achievable—80 from 42 balls.But a ray of hope winked. Kuldeep Yadav dismissed Rutherford in the 15th over. Bouts of self-destruction could seize them. Kuldeep could confound Romario Shepherd and the rest. The Caribbeans still required 63 from 30 balls. Here, the game took another wicked twist. Rutherford and Hope thumped Axar and Kuldeep for a combined 36 runs. Hope swiped him for a brace of sixes, swapping timing for power. Shepherd dishevelled him over midwicket. The target was chopped off to 27 from 18 deliveries, a stroll by modern standards.Moments later, powering Axar for a brace of sixes, Hope finished a memorable chase in the land of an all-time great finisher. Ushered in with a six, like the master MS Dhoni himself.

How a fifteen-second shot clock helped archers learn to shoot under pressure

GNS News Agency, Oct 18

Olympics didn't quite intend for athletes to ponder and ruminate, reflect and regret when sporting ability was contested. At the Archery Premier League, those conceptualizing the event last year in Delhi and held this year in Hyderabad, were not quite paring sport down to basics. They were attempting to make situations more treacherous, pile on more pressure on archers, so they would toughen up.

Founder Anil Kamineni and his team alongwith the federation devised a clever plan — they cut down the 20 seconds afforded to the archer per arrow, to 15 seconds. It got the Indian archers going so well, that they started enjoying the instinctive shooting. It cut down the dragging seconds leading up to the arrow release. It brought India a historic haul of 9 medals, including 5 gold.Dhiraj Bommadevara, India's talismanic recurver had sent down one message in team huddles: archers needed to enjoy competition. The long-suffering, tragic pathos of missed medals and 4th places would not dominate thought processes of India's archers, the APL had decided.Kamineni had heard of ways in which Koreans put their archers under intense duress — bombarding them with noise and assorted other complex psychological experiments. It was all too complicated for Indians.

The way Indians — coming from small towns, knowing struggles far worse than missing Olympic medals — processed it was, good riddance to 5 painful seconds. "Thing is we used to dwell a lot on the last arrow. Instead of thinking what we should be doing next," explains Recurve bronze medallust from Aichi Nagoya, Neeraj Chauhan. "At 15 seconds, you have no time to think if the holding phase is dragged, if we should aim again. Sochne ka mouka hi nai hai (No time to even think)," the Meerut-based medallist says. "With 15, there's no option."Neeraj says when India trailed 0-4 at Asiad in teams, he applied the APL walk through. "I needed 10, I wondered if it works, but shot anyway. It actually was 10. Then my confidence doubled," he says.Kamineni had seen it different. "We thought if we put more pressure on them in the APL format, they will concentrate more. Focus faster. The fear will slowly go down, given they are shooting with top international names," he says.When stretched out, 20 seconds can be quite a bit. "It's a lot of time to adjust. Many pick the bow, draw it, then refocus. It's too much time to get into the zone. And other thoughts can enter the head," the former archer and federation man, says.Neeraj concurs. "If it's 20, you get into countdown mode, reciting the seconds in your head. After 15 was introduced last year, the thinking slowly changed about how to approach shooting. It helps keep you on active mode."For Compound double gold medallist Sahil Jadhav, it's even more quick-fire. "In 15 format, it's 'Go in, shoot, come out'. You don't even get time to take pressure or doubtful thoughts. Because it's a team event, you can't even see where the arrow lands because you make way for the teammate," Jadhav says of practically having no time to squeeze in pressure and drama.

"If it's 20-22 seconds, you tend to do the whole process slower," Jadhav says. He averaged 17-18 seconds in individual, but since APL, he has automatically cut down 2 seconds.But the next set of selection trials or rankings might well have round-robins besides time-pressure and blitz 10s. "Competition, Competition, Competition – that's the only way you get used to pressure of competition. But if you see Kumkum, she might've been under tremendous pressure. But she brought out 10s. I've never seen such archery," he says.Back in Amravati, coach Praful Dange says his ward will give him a cardiac someday, given how she leaves it for the last 5-8 seconds. "She follows her process coolly but her Sir suffers," father Anil Mohod says. Gone are the days of panicked scrambles and 7s and 8s. "I don't understand this generation. I think Dange Sir's problem is, even if you give Kumkum an hour, she will still shoot in last 6-8 seconds. I think she learnt that at APL," he says.

Hyderabad Cricket Association to set up regional cricket coaching hubs in Karimnagar and Mahabubnagar

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA), in association with the Karimnagar District Cricket Association and the Mahabubnagar District Cricket Association, is establishing two Regional Cricket Coaching Camps at Karimnagar and Mahabubnagar to strengthen grassroots cricket development across Telangana.The coaching camp at Karimnagar will serve as the North Telangana Hub, while the camp at Mahabubnagar will serve as the South Telangana Hub.

These year-round coaching camps will provide talented cricketers from various districts, across all age groups in men's and women's cricket, with professional coaching, modern training facilities, fitness and physiotherapy support, video analysis and specialised training programmes.The initiative aims to identify and nurture emerging talent, provide equal opportunities to district-level players and strengthen the pathway for selection to state and national cricket teams.Through these regional coaching camps, HCA reaffirms its commitment to decentralising cricket development and taking quality coaching closer to talented players across Telangana.

From 'ugly duckling' to timeless style icon: How Rekha mastered the art of reinvention

Rekha was a teenager from Madras when Sawan Bhadon came out in 1970, and Hindi cinema wasted no time telling her what was wrong with her. Too heavy. Too dark. Hindi not good enough. 'Ugly duckling' tag followed her from film to film.On October 10, she turns 72. Today she can walk into a wedding in a Kanjeevaram and nobody in the room looks anywhere else.That's the thing about Rekha. She didn't just reinvent herself once. Reinvention became the thing she's known for. Across five decades she has kept changing how audiences see her, and she has never let one version settle in as the final one.

Hindi cinema has never hesitated to tell a young actress what's wrong with her face. Sawan Bhadon put Rekha in front of an audience at an age when most girls are still figuring out what to study, and the film magazines went through her feature by feature. Every flaw was listed in public, in a language she was still learning. She could argue with the verdict, or she could make it irrelevant. She chose the second.

What followed was one of the biggest transformations the industry has seen. She worked on her looks, her Hindi and her diction, and she learned how the camera read her. She figured out what a costume does to a character and how makeup shifts the mood of a face. Most of all, she learned to use her image rather than accept the one handed to her.By Ghar and Muqaddar Ka Sikandar in 1978, the new Rekha had arrived, and the same industry that criticised her so readily was starting to see her appeal.Look at Khoobsurat (1980). Her Manju is playful, restless and delightfully unconventional, dressed simply, like a heroine who actually lives in a house. It's among the least dressed-up she has ever been on screen, and one of the most disarming.

Then came Umrao Jaan (1981), where you can't separate the clothes from the performance. Costumes, jewellery, hair and makeup build Umrao's world; they aren't there to only to make her look beautiful. A glance, a small movement, the way a dupatta falls: Rekha uses these to say what the dialogue doesn't have to. The performance is composed throughout and the National Award followed.Ijaazat in 1987 offered almost the opposite picture. Her appearance is understated and intimate, tied closely to Sudha's emotional life, and the clothes are part of the storytelling. You see Sudha, not Rekha. It's a quieter kind of sophistication, and the performance is built entirely out of restraint.A year later came Khoon Bhari Maang, easily the loudest film of her career and the one that best captures her fascination with remaking herself. Her character is left for dead by her husband, survives, and comes back with a new face, a new wardrobe and a new plan. You could almost read it as her career in miniature: written off, remade, back.

Then, away from the sets, another Rekha took shape. The Kanjeevaram, the gold, flowers in her hair, a bold bindi, kohl-rimmed eyes, red lips, sindoor. The sari stopped being something she wore and became shorthand for her.At award functions and public appearances, she returns to the same silk, flowers and dramatic makeup, and still owns the room. The look is tied to her.Rekha Rekha in a Kanjeevaram saree.That was reinvention too, just without a new role. It's a signature, and it's a Tamil silk, worn by a girl who was once told she didn't belong in Hindi cinema.None of this meant throwing away what came before. Each phase added a layer to an identity that was still taking shape. The clothes changed, the characters changed, Bollywood changed, and even the idea of stardom changed. Rekha moved with all of it without disappearing into it.The reinvention was never a rewrite. It was an edit. And the thing about a good edit is that you stop noticing the cuts and see only the finished frame.

'I would have been paralysed with fear': Katrina Kaif on trolling over post-pregnancy look

Katrina Kaif has spoken about the importance of protecting self-worth from social media criticism after facing online trolling over her post-pregnancy appearance. Speaking at a Kay Beauty event in London, the actor said people should not let online opinions affect their confidence or influence the choices they make in life. Her remarks come weeks after she was criticised over her weight following a public appearance with husband Vicky Kaushal at the Ambani family's Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations.Katrina, who welcomed her son in November 2025, said that trying to please everyone could hold a person back. She also stressed the importance of accepting yourself through different phases of life, even when confidence levels change.What Katrina Kaif said about social media trolling

Speaking at the London event celebrating her beauty brand Kay Beauty, Katrina addressed the pressure of dealing with constant opinions on social media. She said people should be careful not to let online narratives decide how they feel about themselves."I think we really need to be careful of letting the narrative on social media affect our self-worth and our value, because there are so many opinions out there that if we're going to start trying to cater to all of them, I think it really hampers your ability to make choices for yourself," she said.The actor said that criticism should not stop people from moving forward or making decisions for themselves."Personally for me, if every time that I faced critiques or comments, I let that dictate my actions, I think I would have been paralysed with fear and unable to move ahead in my life or in any sphere of life. There are times where the world is going to celebrate you and other times you have to really be your own biggest cheerleader," she added."So I think that's really the thinking behind K-Beauty's tagline, it's K to be you, is that you really have to kind of accept yourself and be true to you, to who you are in this moment. And that's going to change from day to day. It's going to change from different times and different phases in your life," she said.She added that self-confidence can change with different phases of life and encouraged people to accept themselves without putting too much pressure on how they look or feel.

"There are times where you feel like you're acing everything in life and there are other times where you feel like, I just can't get anything right. There are times where you feel like you're looking and feeling like the best version of yourself and other times I think you're kind of on a journey to get there. I think it's good to wear it all lightly and not take yourself too seriously also and just have fun with it."Katrina faced criticism on social media after attending the Ambani family's Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in Mumbai with Vicky Kaushal in September. Pictures and videos from the event attracted comments about her appearance and weight, with several users focusing on changes in her appearance after pregnancy. The trolling also prompted fans to speak out against body-shaming and the scrutiny faced by women after childbirth.

Salman Khan defends Katrina KaifSalman Khan also spoke against online trolling during Bigg Boss 20's Weekend Ka Vaar. Without naming Katrina Kaif, the actor questioned why women are targeted for gaining weight after pregnancy. He pointed out that pregnancy brings natural changes to a woman's body and said new mothers should be given time to spend with their families instead of facing criticism over their appearance."Why do you want to troll somebody who got pregnant? Everyone puts on weight after pregnancy. When she resumes filming, she will get back in shape. She wants to spend time with her family," he saiThe timing of Salman's remarks led many viewers to link his comments to the trolling Katrina has faced over her post-pregnancy appearance.

From dual timelines to time travel: How SS Rajamouli's storytelling leapt towards Varanasi

Director SS Rajamouli does not repeat himself. Every major film in his career has introduced a storytelling technique that did not exist in the one before it. Each technique, once mastered, became part of his filmmaking vocabulary, helping shape his distinct directorial style. Magadheera saw him experiment with dual timelines, while Baahubali showcased his ability to build an entirely fictional world. With RRR, he ventured into alternate history, reimagining real-life historical figures and events through fiction. Varanasi, releasing on April 7, appears to be the film where all three come together. And a fourth dimension that Rajamouli has never attempted before: time travel.If Rajamouli's career has been a staircase, each film one step higher than the last, Varanasi is not the next step. It is the landing where every staircase in the building converges.

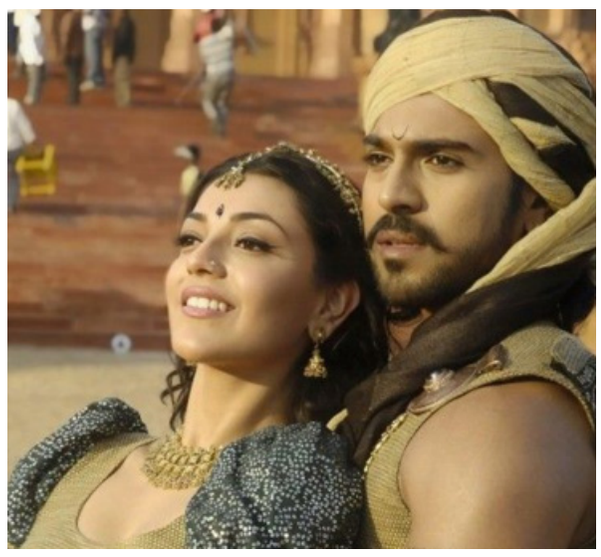
Magadheera: the first experiment with two timelinesIn 2009, SS Rajamouli made a film about a man who remembers his previous life. Magadheera, starring Ram Charan, told two parallel stories: one set in the present day and one set 400 years earlier in a medieval kingdom. The two timelines were connected by reincarnation, with the same characters appearing in both periods, their fates repeating and resolving across centuries.Ram Charan and Kajal Aggarwal from Magadheera Ram Charan and Kajal Aggarwal from MagadheeraHowever, reincarnation dramas had existed for decades. What was new was how Rajamouli executed it. The historical timeline was not left as a brief flashback. It was a fully realised world with its own visual identity, its own colour palette, its own action choreography and its own emotional arc. The chariot race, which became the film's signature sequence, was set entirely in the past timeline and was choreographed with a scale and physicality that Telugu cinema had never seen.Magadheera taught Rajamouli two things. First, that audiences would accept stories told across two time periods if the emotional connection between the timelines was strong enough. Second, that the past could be as visually exciting as the present, perhaps more so, if the filmmaker is committed to building it with the same detail and resources.

Baahubali: building a world that does not existSix years later, SS Rajamouli built a world from nothing. Mahishmati, the kingdom at the centre of Baahubali was entirely invented: its architecture, its politics, its military formations, its waterfall, its people.The two Baahubali films, The Beginning and The Conclusion, required Rajamouli to create a civilisation that felt ancient and lived in, not just a set that looked old. The production design, the costumes, the weapons, the social hierarchy, the religious iconography, all of it had to be internally consistent. If a character wore a particular style of armour, the audience needed to believe that armour was forged in the same world where the waterfall existed and the kingdom held court.

World-building at Rajamouli's level means creating rules, rules about how the world operates, what its values are, what its conflicts are, and then telling a story that both respects and tests those rules. Baahubali's central question, "Why did Kattappa kill Baahubali?", only works because the world is coherent enough for the audience to believe in the stakes. If the kingdom feels fake, the betrayal feels fake.

RRR: rewriting history without apologyRRR introduced yet another technique. SS Rajamouli took two real historical figures, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem, and imagined a friendship between them that never happened. The film was set in 1920s colonial India, but the story was entirely fictional. The British officers were real types, not real people. The oppression was historically accurate, the resistance, however, was fantasised.The skill here was different from both Magadheera and Baahubali. It was not about managing two timelines or building a world from scratch. It was about taking history as a canvas and painting fiction on top of it, convincingly enough that the audience does not question where fact ends and imagination begins.After RRR, Rajamouli had mastered three distinct narrative techniques: dual timelines (Magadheera), world-building (Baahubali) and alternate history (RRR). The question became: what happens when you combine all three? The answer is Varanasi.

Varanasi: where everything convergesBased on what has been revealed through the title launch teaser, leaked synopses, production reports and SS Rajamouli's own comments, Varanasi operates on every storytelling technique Rajamouli has previously explored, plus one he has never attempted.The film spans multiple timelines. Not two, as in Magadheera, but potentially several, ranging from ancient Vedic and Puranic periods to the present day. Reports indicate the narrative moves across thousands of years, connecting events in antiquity to a contemporary crisis involving an asteroid heading toward the city of Varanasi.It builds a world from scratch. The production has recreated Varanasi on a massive scale in Hyderabad rather than shooting in the actual city, suggesting the film depicts versions of Varanasi across different historical periods that no longer exist and therefore cannot be filmed on location. According to multiple reports, the same set will be used to represent the city across multiple time periods, with modifications for each era. This is Baahubali-level world-building, except the world being built is based on a real city, reimagined across centuries.Mahesh Babu's character Rudhra is reportedly an archaeologist and a Shiva devotee who embarks on a quest for a cosmic artefact. He is also described as "an avatar of Rama," suggesting the film blends Hindu mythology with its historical and scientific narrative. The mythological elements are being treated not as religious iconography but as narrative material, the same way RRR treated the freedom struggle as material for an action bromance rather than a history lesson.



If Rajamouli's career has been a staircase, each film one step higher than the last, Varanasi is not the next step. It is the landing where every staircase in the building converges.

The difference between Varanasi and everything SS Rajamouli has done before is complexity. Magadheera had two timelines, Varanasi may have more than two. Baahubali built one world, Varanasi is building the same world across multiple versions of itself. RRR took a single historical period and fictionalised it, Varanasi appears to take multiple periods, connect them through mythology, layer time travel on top, and then ask a modern character to make sense of all of it.Varanasi releases worldwide on April 7, 2027. It will release in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam and multiple international languages. It will be projected in IMAX.The question is not whether it will be big. The question now is whether bringing together all the storytelling techniques Rajamouli has mastered, from dual timelines and world-building to alternate history, time travel, fictional languages and mythology, on a scale spanning multiple continents, will result in his greatest film yet or prove too ambitious for its own good.Every step of the staircase has worked so far. If you look at it, Magadheera worked, Baahubali worked and RRR worked. Each was bigger, more complex and more ambitious than the last film. Each succeeded beyond what anyone thought possible.Varanasi is the step where the staircase ends and the building begins. If it works, it will be the most complex narrative ever attempted in Indian cinema.

Nana Patekar could 'barely hold back tears' after breakup with Manisha Koirala: 'I miss her'

Nana Patekar died on Thursday, October 8, at his residence in Goa. His death came as a shock to his family, fans and peers, as the world remembered the actor who had created a unique niche for himself in the film industry. While Nana was never seen as the conventional mainstream Bollywood hero, the actor found himself to be a common subject in the film tabloids of the 1990s where his relationship with Manisha Koirala was often discussed. While Nana and Manisha maintained a dignified silence around the subject for some time, Nana couldn't hold back his emotions after the two broke up.'I miss Manisha,' said NanaIn an interview published in 1997, Nana was on the verge of tears when he opened up about his feeling after the couple had broken up. "It's a very difficult phase. You have to experience it to know the pain. I can't find words to describe the pain I went through. Please, let's not talk about this. I miss Manisha," he said.Nana Patekar and Manisha Koirala had worked together in films like Khamoshi and Agni Sakshi, and were quite appreciated for their performances in these films. Nana had even won a National Film Award for his work in Agni Sakshi. The two were filming for Yug Purush when they broke up.Even after their breakup, he never aired their dirty laundry in public and spoke highly of Manisha. "Manisha has an inborn talent. She's the most sensitive actress around. She's like a kasturi hiran, she still has to realise that she doesn't need to keep pace with anyone. She has it all and that's more than enough," he said.'Can barely hold back the tears'At the time, Manisha was already going through a difficult phase in her life. Years later, she opened up about her dependence on alcohol in her memoir Healed and shared, "To take my mind off shoots, to numb myself,

I started drinking. If I was on a diet, it would be vodka." In the 1990s, Manisha was in the thick of this phase and Nana hinted at it in the same interview, "I can barely hold back the tears when I see what she's doing to herself. Maybe I don't have the right to say anything about her today."Nana Patekar was married to his wife Neelkanthi during his relationship with Manisha, but he was separated from his wife. Nana and Neelkanthi never got divorced. Manisha got married to businessman Samrat Dahal in 2010 but the marriage ended after two years.Upon Nana's death, Manisha paid her tribute to the late actor via Instagram as she wrote, "Deeply saddened by the passing of a great actor and a true stalwart of the craft. His contribution to cinema and his dedication to his craft will always be remembered."Nana Patekar was laid to rest with full State honours at his farmhouse in Pune on Thursday night.

'Soha Ali Khan was barely in touch': Sister Saba recalls feeling hurt during brain tumour battle

Saif Ali Khan's sister Saba Pataudi was 27 when she was diagnosed with a benign brain tumour. About six months later, she underwent brain surgery. Post-surgery analysis identified the growth of a slow-growing, Grade 1 brain tumour attached to an area associated with her short-term memory. The period was extremely difficult for Saba, who received support from her mother, Sharmila Tagore, brother Saif Ali Khan and other extended family members. However, she was upset with her younger sister, Soha Ali Khan, for not being as present during that time.

Speaking on Soha's podcast, All About Her, Saba opened up about her disappointment, while Soha explained that she was young and did not fully understand how to be there for her sister. Recalling an incident from that time, Soha spoke about how a doctor had asked Saba whom she would want to take care of her if she could no longer look after herself.While asking Saba about her recovery, Soha said, "I remember Amma said that they asked you, God forbid, if required, who is that one person that you would want to look after you if you can't look after yourself. You apparently thought for a very long time."Saba responded, "Yeah. And what was my answer? Because I don't remember it." Soha revealed, "Ultimately, you said Amma." Saba agreed, saying, "I might have."Soha then asked, "But I don't know who were you up against. Maybe this Japanese doctor." Saba in the podcast had revealed that she had a crush on a Japanese doctor, who was looking after her treatment."I don't think so. I maybe thinking of who would…" Saba began, before the neurosurgeon present on the show interrupted to point out that she had not even considered Soha. "She is not even saying your name," the doctor remarked, gesturing towards Soha.When Soha responded, "No, I was nine in my mind," Saba explained why she had been upset with her sister during that period.Soha was actually barely in touch. That is something I actually do remember being a little upset with because my brother was there. My mother was there. And like she said, she wasn't that young. Now that she realises she was 25, she was busy with her…" Saba said.The neurosurgeon intervened again, suggesting that it might have been difficult for Soha to process the news that someone so close to her had been diagnosed with a brain tumour.Saba was willing to give her sister the benefit of the doubt, saying, "We can give her the benefit of doubt." However, she also made it clear that the incident had stayed with her. "After the show, we sisters can sort that one out," she added.Explaining her feelings further, Saba said, "It was something that upset me. I think you were caught up in your life at that point and you didn't realise." She added, "I know you loved me and you were concerned, because I was going through a lot." However, it affected Saba that while her cousins and extended family members reached out to her, her younger sister was nowhere in the picture.Saba then went on to discuss her recovery following the surgery and the emotional challenges she experienced during that period. She revealed that she would often find herself crying without understanding why. "I didn't want to be dependent on anyone. I didn't want to become a vegetable. I didn't want to be in a position where someone had to take care of me," she said.Recalling the moments leading up to her surgery, Saba spoke about being asked not to eat or drink while undergoing medical tests."Everybody was having a party when I was tested and told not to eat and drink. There was Amma there, then a friend of her, there was my brother. So, there was this picnic happening. I also got my periods. I was like, thanks for compounding," she recalled.She continued, "I don't remember seeing they were all there, but I remember something that was told to me. When they kind of start giving you an IV to get you prepped for the surgery, they say you are not completely unconscious. I told them, 'Don't wake me up, in case I have lost my memory.' That was my last sentence. I was with Amma and there was this Sikh family that was very sweet."

Printed and Published by V. Srinivas Reddy on behalf of M/s SAI KRISHNA PUBLICATIONS, Owned by M/s SAI KRISHNA PUBLICATIONS, Printed at – Sree Seshasai Enterprises, 3-88, CHANDRA THEATRE, MAIN ROAD, GOSALA, KRISHNA, ANDHRA PRADESH, 521151. Published at D.NO. 6-121, 1ST FLOOR, SPHURTHY BUILDING, GOSALA VILLAGE, URDU SCHOOL STREET, VIJAYAWADA, KRISHNA, ANDHRA PRADESH - 521151. Editor: VADDI SRINIVAS REDDY, PRGI No. APENG/26/A0218. Ph.No. 9440231967